

**JOHN MIX STANLEY REDISCOVERED
AN ARTIST'S LEGACY RISES FROM THE ASHES**

Extended News Release

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CODY, WY—Today, 150 years after the Smithsonian gallery housing his paintings burned to the ground, premier painter of the American West John Mix Stanley is receiving a long overdue retrospective exhibition at three western art venues, including the [Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming](#). Featured June 6 to August 29, 2015, in the Center's Special Exhibition Gallery is *Painted Journeys: The Art of John Mix Stanley*.

Stanley traveled thousands of miles crisscrossing the western territories in the mid-1800s, venturing as far as the kingdom of Hawaii. The prolific artist is best known for his portraits of American Indians created for his [Indian Gallery](#). The Center's groundbreaking exhibition features sixty of Stanley's key surviving works including his famous Indian portraits and scenes from military and government survey expeditions in the West.

"In his day, Stanley was viewed as the premier painter of American Indians," says exhibition co-curator, [Peter H. Hassrick](#), Senior Scholar and Director Emeritus at the Center. "His motivation was to give America's Native people a face as the subjects of fine art—unlike artists George Catlin and Karl Bodmer who were driven more by the restraints of science and the desire to record the moment. Without Stanley, we would be hard pressed to find artistically well-considered images of Native Americans that span the entirety of the western United States."

Hassrick continues, "John Mix Stanley was one of the [most traveled artists](#) of his time. His adventuresome spirit and his quest to be exposed to the broadest possible spectrum of Native cultures and western scenes is quite remarkable. This outstanding exhibition provides a rare opportunity to look more closely at this complex artist. Through the course of his western journeys and artistic development, viewers can chart Stanley's progress in achieving this desire."

After being reared in upstate New York, John Mix Stanley (1814 – 1872) began his fine art career as an itinerant [portrait painter](#) in Detroit. His initial travels through Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois inspired him to create an Indian Gallery of portraits and scenes of Native people, and their life ways in order to preserve and enrich their legacy.

Over the course of eleven years, Stanley pursued opportunities to explore the American West. He spent time in Indian Territory in modern-day Oklahoma. He traveled the Santa Fe Trail, joining General Stephen Kearny's Army of the West as they marched toward California. He wandered between Oregon and Washington Territory as a member of Isaac

Stevens's Pacific Railroad survey expedition. He even sailed as far west as Hawaii, where he painted the portraits of the King and Queen.

In 1852, Stanley entrusted his [Indian Gallery](#) of more than 150 works to the Smithsonian Institution. The gallery grew to in excess of two hundred paintings, and scholars and art aficionados praised it for its superior artistic merit and historical value to the nation. It remained on display in the nation's capital for thirteen years until 1865, when a fire at the Smithsonian destroyed all but seven of Stanley's paintings. Despite this tragic loss, he continued his quest to paint the West and its inhabitants, and attempted to rebuild his gallery in various formats.

Stanley painted during a contentious time of competing regional interests in America. The burgeoning national desire for westward expansion ultimately resulted in several major American wars. With his art, Stanley navigated the prickly history of the pre-Civil War American West, uniting the forces of civilization and unconstrained nature. In so doing, he reconciled a receding Native America with one of aggressive Anglo expansion by idealizing both, but privileging neither. He hoped to bridge the gap between the contrasting American perceptions of the West, both as a static natural paradise and a theater of progress.

The Buffalo Bill Center of the West's retrospective highlights Stanley's aesthetic and philosophical vision. Find out more about the exhibition on the museum's [website](#), as well as on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) using the hashtag #JMStanley.

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Since 1917, the award-winning Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming, has devoted itself to sharing the story of the authentic American West. The Center, an affiliate of the [Smithsonian Institution](#), is now in its summer schedule, open daily 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. For additional information, visit centerofthewest.org or the Center's pages on [Facebook](#) and [Google+](#).

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