

Ed Smida & Chris Morel

Nedra Matteucci Galleries, June 21-July 12

IN THE EXHIBITION *A Lifetime of Learning: Two Artistic Journeys*, sculptor Ed Smida and painter Chris Morel are highlighted by their individual visions and shared enduring pursuits of art at Nedra Matteucci Galleries in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Morel's oil depictions of the Southwest and American West, often accomplished in plein air, create vivid contrast alongside Smida's emotive textural forms in cast bronze and iron.

Morel says, "Seeing [these] works side by side allows you to take in and experience one format as you exhale another, and repeat. Pairing these works together feels as natural as breathing." His impressionistic landscapes provide a gratifying backdrop to Smida's three-dimensional figures.

Smida's recent work includes an ongoing series inspired by past and present New Mexico. "A major reason I choose to live and work in the Southwest is the wonderful aesthetic combination of land, sky, light and palette. I find this expansive backdrop a perfect foundation for my figurative work. Santa Fe is filled with rich, diverse, soulful subject matter. This place has been crucial for me to understand and tell my own story," says the sculptor. The emotion and tension within his compositions toes the line of tradition and modernism, offering a uniquely fresh perspective.

This show marks the first of 2024 for Nedra Matteucci Galleries. Recognized around the world for its collection of contemporary and historic art, the gallery has supported the growth and reputation of fine art and artists in the Southwest for over 50 years. Today, it specializes in 19th- and 20th-century American art, notably the Taos Society of Artists, the early Santa Fe art colony and masters of the American West.

Being a part of the gallery's portfolio for 15 years has given Morel a lot to be thankful for. "What an honor it is to work with the best and most prestigious gallery representing the art of the Southwest and American West. To exhibit not just with wonderful contemporary living artists, but to be blessed to display art



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Chris Morel, *Rose Garden*, oil on linen, 40 x 30.

Ed Smida, *Ancestors*, bronze, ed. of 9, 30 x 20 x 10.

Ed Smida, *The Goosehunter, Homage to E.I. Couse*, bronze, ed. of 11, 21 x 14 x 13.

Chris Morel, *September Chamisa*, oil, 22 x 28.



alongside my historic heroes like the Taos Society, Native American painters and sculptors, the Modernists and Los Cinco Pintores is the highlight of my career," he says.

For these two New Mexico-based artists, a shared exhibit is not just a manner of documenting artistic development. They are also putting a love for the region on display and contributing to the history behind what has inspired so many to gravitate toward New Mexico and its special brand of enchantment. "One thing [Chris and I] share is a strong belief that art can serve as a catalyst for a lifetime of learning," says Smida. And within that curriculum, the New Mexico landscape, form, culture and rich beauty serve with rewarding depth. —Jenn Rein

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