



Title: SPANISH HERITAGE
Artist Rowland Cheney
Size: 4' x 6'
Medium: Oil on Canvas

Rowland Cheney, of Lodi, California, was a rancher, art professor and was among the first to recognize the importance of Oregon's Kiger Mustang. He worked tirelessly to celebrate the horses through his paintings, sculpture and lectures. In the early 90's he went on to memorialize this Mustang for children everywhere when he created the models that are now included in the famous Breyer horse collection. Cheney was truly dedicated to the celebration of the Kiger--a horse he saw as a symbol of the American West as well as an important genetic treasure. This is his story of his first encounter with the Kiger Mustang.

Journey Through Time by Rowland Cheney

I am often asked what Kiger Mustangs are and how in the world did I become involved with them? It has been a wonderful journey which began in August of 1988 and continues to be a major force in our family life.



While on a family vacation we were driving from Crater Lake, Oregon and headed toward Salt Lake City. The route happened to take us past the Burns BLM wild horse facility. Having had a penchant for horses forever, not to mention the special romantic place in my heart for wild horses, I just had to turn into this facility.

The buckaroos at the corrals were just closing up for the afternoon, but they said if we drove down to the BLM office we might be able to get permission to come back and see the horses. We drove to the office and Lloyd Mulholland said he would be happy to show us around.

My background in art history and my interest in things primitive led me to ask Lloyd if they ever had horses of "Primitive Coloration" come through the corrals. Lloyd responded by asking where I had heard about "their" horses. When I said I hadn't, he said "Come on I have something to show you," and led us to a corral in the far corner of the yard where we had a look at our first Kiger. He was a pale grullo, six year old stud with a light streaked black mane that hung to his forearm and a forelock that touched his nostrils. Only one of his big, soft, curious eyes was visible under that tangle of hair. What a sight! My heart was pounding so hard, it about jumped out of my chest! The sun was setting and there was a glow around that proud little stud that was downright ethereal. It was an unforgettable picture.

Before we left that afternoon, I did a couple of sketches of that stud, handed them to Lloyd and told him that if they ever needed a hand from an artist to let me know. He said he would give the sketches and my number to his boss Josh Warburton. Warburton followed up with a call to me a few weeks later. We chatted a while, and he told me of a new association he was trying to form, and would like to be a part of it? I said "Sure" and we set it up for me to be at a meeting in Bend a few months in the future.



"Mesteno"
Kiger Stallion by Rowland Cheney.

In the meantime, around Christmas of '88, I got a phone call from the BLM in Washington, D.C. saying that Josh had sent copies



Ron Harding

BLM Wild Horse Specialist
Credited with the foundation of the
Kiger Mustang.
Photo: Kim Kellogg

of my sketches, and would I be interested in illustrating a brochure to help explain and protect the Kiger herd. As a BLM District Manager, Warburton felt these horses were extraordinary and needed special attention. Because of Bill Phillips' and Ron Harding's initial interest in them, they had been set aside and kept separate. There was, however, real concern that without outside help the herd could be disbursed or their genetic integrity compromised in some way.

I finally met Josh in Bend in 1989. We shared our thoughts and visions about the horses before joining a number of others for our first Kiger Mesteno Association meeting. There had already been an adoption or two, and quite a few people were already showing real interest in this unusual group of horses including Oregon media.

Our meeting was focused on trying to determine the most effective way to maintain the Kigers as a genetic resource. The words "national treasure" and "western heritage" were used a lot, and there was a sense of real dedication from everyone in the room. I believed then, as now, that this founding group was on the right track. It was generally agreed that without public recognition of the unique character and essential value of these horses, there would be little chance of saving them. Establishing perceived value through effective promotion was seen as the surest method of keeping them together and safe.

One phase of our promotional efforts was to establish, with the support of the BLM, a viewing area where the public could catch a glimpse of the horses in their native habitat.

Somewhat later, Josh, Ron and I got together to discuss the possibility of me doing a cast bronze plaque commemorating the Kiger herd. We chose old Mesteno

As a BLM District Manager, Warburton felt these horses were extraordinary and needed special attention.... There was, however, real concern that without outside help the herd could be disbursed or their genetic integrity compromised in some way.

as the horse to represent the Kigers. I did the plaque and Warburton orchestrated the dedication ceremony to coincide with the next Kiger round up in October of '89. Local ranchers, BLM officials and media folks gathered at the herd viewing area to officially unveil the plaque. That same weekend, my family and I were invited to watch the Kiger roundup. We were standing around near the catch pens with Ron Harding, Josh Warburton, Mark Armstrong and the rest of the BLM crew. The helicopters were working the horses into position to come through a low pass, then down through an arroyo and into the hidden catch pens. Elwin Wines was an observer also, and he built a blind for Cheryl and me on a side hill within a few yards of the path the horses would be taking. We waited, cameras in hand, for what seemed like forever, listening to the muffled sounds of the helicopter in the distance.

Suddenly, they came! Almost close enough to touch! They came in groups of three and four, then more and more, all those beautiful clay colored bodies flashing past us in the early light of that crisp, October morning. Talk about thrilling! I have enough memories from just that one occasion to provide me with images to sculpt and paint for as long as I live.



Title: Brio Condido
Sculpture
Edition #6/20
Medium: cast bronze

Later that same year, or perhaps in early 1990, (time does blur things a little) Josh Warburton, while at the Kentucky Horse Park, met Peter Stone of the Breyer model horse company. Josh and Peter hatched the notion of producing a series for Breyer, telling the story of "Mesteno" the Kiger Mustang Stallion. I did the original sculptures for the "Messenger Series", which were published for Breyer from 1991 through 1996.



Artist: Rowland Cheney
Title: Buckaroo Dreams
Size: 16X20 inches
lithograph Black on Ivory paper.

My efforts on behalf of the Kigers have been a labor of love. I believe fervently in these beautiful horses, as do so many others. Each of us contributes what we can in our own way.

*We have truly honest horses . . . let them be our guide.
Thanks for listening,*

Rowland Cheney

