

The Calgary Stampede Trophies

By Catherine Laycraft



Circa 2012 Catherine Laycraft, Jay Contway at the Bronze Trophy competition.

The Calgary Stampede first awarded bronze trophies in 1938 starting with the North American Saddle Bronc Riding Championship only. By 1940 trophies for the Chuckwagon Race and Wild Steer Decorating Contest were added, and subsequent years saw more bronze trophies added to select rodeo events. Charles Beil of Banff, Alberta, sculpted all of the initial trophies. With the exception of the Chuckwagon trophy, all other trophies were won outright. The Chuckwagon bronze was a perpetual trophy that had to be won three times (not necessarily consecutively) before becoming the property of the winner. Each year a metal replica in the form of a plaque was given to the winner until it was won three times by the same outfit.

In 1967, as Beil was winding down his career, all the event trophies became perpetual and would not be won outright. Rather the winner of each contest was presented with a bronze plaque by Mr. Beil depicting the particular event that was won. In 1972 the decision was made to award bronzes as annual trophies, and a new program was instituted.

Bronzes were commissioned for a five-year series of champions with the winner of each event being given a trophy to keep. Eventually two more bronzes were struck per series: one to present to the sponsor of each event and one for the Stampede to retain in its collection.

Competitions have been held on a five-year cycle to determine the artwork and artists commissioned to provide the trophy bronzes. The format and rules for the bronze competition have also evolved over the years; categories and events have come and gone, as have artists and trends. At the latest competition held in 2017, there were 27 artists exhibiting 198 pieces of sculpture for consideration in 24 categories.

Over the course of the program, the relationship between The Calgary Stampede and the artists has developed beyond business. Yearly contact, deliveries; and building excitement over an upcoming competition has created many friendships and memories.



Circa 2012 Jay Contway, Con Williams: friends first, competitors for the Bronze Trophy Program second.



Circa 2012 Artist Gina McDougall Cohoe and Jay Contway, Bronze Trophy Program selection evening.

trophies are cherished as much for their beauty and their rarity as they are for the championship that they represent. The Stampede is proud to continue its tradition of bronze artwork as a unique and authentic championship presentation.

Thank you, Jay, for being such a large part of it.

Artists have competed and been awarded commissions over many series. Jay Contway is one who enjoyed longstanding success in the program as his work is distinctive, filled with movement and emotion. Since 1988 Jay has had a sculpture in every consecutive series. His final Calgary Stampede Trophy will be awarded in 2024, concluding an impressive and unprecedented thirty-seven-year span.

Jay's work is reflective and authentic in the depiction of horses, cattle, and the realities of the Western sports they depict. He would often request access to the back barns to gather inspiration and material to create the next piece. That realism is evident in the pages of this book.

The bronze program allows for beautiful artistic depictions of the various events in celebration of the Western athletic sports of rodeo and chuckwagons. Bronzes are not a common award in western competitions. The Calgary Stampede