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***Playing Cowboy* Exhibition to bring Private Collection of Vintage Toys to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum**

Major exhibition uses Western toys to explore pop culture depictions of the American West, comparing them to historical realities

**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK** – Opening February 10, 2023 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, *Playing Cowboy* is a new exhibition exploring the topic of the American West as represented and experienced through Western-themed toys. The exhibition will look at the beginnings of Western toys following the Wild West shows of the 1880s, their growth in popularity in the 1930s through the 1960s and examples of their enduring appeal today.

“Western movies and TV shows created an enormous cast of Western heroes for children to admire and want to emulate, and spurred a Western toy industry that was inescapable in the 1950s and 60s and still plays a role in the toy market today,” said Michael Grauer, McCasland Chair of Cowboy Culture and Curator of Cowboy Collections and Western Art.

This exhibition is drawn entirely from the Johnnie and Bob Terry collection from Springtown, Texas. Bob Terry is a renowned historian of Western toys and appeared as “Woody” in promotions for Disney’s *Toy Story* series. The Terrys operate Wild West Toys, a company that makes molded plastic Western figures and casts toy cap guns from the original vintage molds. More than 800 items from their collection were loaned for the exhibition, which will showcase everything from cap guns to costumes; board games to a coin-operated mechanical horse.

“Nostalgia is a strong emotion, and few things are more nostalgic than the toys we played with as children,” said Michael Grauer, McCasland Chair of Cowboy Culture and Curator of Cowboy Collections and Western Art. “For those who grew up on serial and TV Westerns, carried *Guns* lunchboxes and cap pistols, this exhibition will be an emotional trip down memory lane.

But today’s youngsters will also see familiar examples of Western-themed toys that will also resonate with them.”

“We’re so grateful to the Terrys for this chance to show off their amazing collection,” said Seth Spillman, Chief Marketing Officer. “Our hope is guests get a glimpse of the history behind these toys and how deeply ‘playing cowboy’ has penetrated popular culture around the world.”

*Playing Cowboy* will be on exhibit through May 7, 2023. For photos associated with this release, contact Hannah Stewart at [hstewart@nationalcowboymuseum.org](mailto:hstewart@nationalcowboymuseum.org).

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### **About the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum**

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is America’s premier institution of Western history, art and culture. Founded in 1955, the Museum collects, preserves and exhibits an internationally renowned collection of Western art and artifacts while sponsoring dynamic educational programs to stimulate interest in the enduring legacy of the American West. The Museum is located only six miles northeast of downtown Oklahoma City at 1700 Northeast 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. Annual family memberships are available beginning at just \$40. For more information, visit [nationalcowboymuseum.org](http://nationalcowboymuseum.org).