Born in Ontario, Oregon, in 1949, Tom Browning began drawing horses, wildlife, and Indians at age seven. He attributes his affection for the West to growing up in the ’50s when the West was very much a part of our everyday culture, especially in television and cinema.

In 1970, while taking a break from college, he made a trip to Montana, where he was introduced to the work of Charlie Russell. His interest in Western subject matter soon became an obsession. Perhaps his biggest breakthrough in those earlier years was working with artist Del Gish. He introduced Browning to the importance of lighting and form, and how to properly compare and replicate values. Starting with simple subjects, Browning quickly began applying this idea to other subject matter, particularly figurative and cowboy-related themes. Other important mentors include William F. Reese, Don Prechtel, and Ned Jacob.

Browning later became influenced by the work of American illustrators such as Haddon Sundblom and Saul Tepper. But after seeing the work of the Western painter James Reynolds, Browning became certain that a more direct style of painting was in store. He began to work on new, exciting techniques, which included the strong contrast and fluid brushwork that now distinguish his work in the Western art market. One of the most important takeaways from working with Reynolds was the idea and concept that “less is better, and can sometimes appear to be more.” By simplifying such things as masses and brushwork, detail can be implied without overburdening the entire painting with too much detail. Browning added this concept to his own philosophy and continues today to apply this important technique.

Browning was also influenced by a number of other artists when he was invited to participate in such artists’ groups as Plein Air Painters of America and Northwestern Rendezvous of Art (NWR). Each of these groups had a gathering of members and guest artists that painted together for several days before the actual exhibition and sale took place with a museum-quality show. NWR was Browning’s first museum show in Helena, Montana, and for years he was always the young one in the group. Having the opportunity to spend quality time with other artists of such a high caliber was not only stimulating but very educational. Seeing the styles and techniques used by these artists only raised the bar for Browning, as his confidence and strength in his work continued to grow.

In addition to his gallery and fine art paintings, Browning and his wife, Joyce, started a publishing company in 1986 featuring his beloved and popular Santa paintings. This blossomed into a separate body of work and a commercial business that has spanned several decades and continues today. Many of these designs have been reproduced worldwide in various forms and mediums, making his portrayals of Santa Claus some of the most sought after in the world.

But his love of the West has always been his biggest inspiration, and that love has kept this theme alive on his easel. In addition to cowboys and horses, the Western genre includes women and children subjects, and Browning portrays them as an important part of the settling of the American West. His continued interest in Native Americans and their cultures has also helped expand his repertoire of subject matter.

In 1994, Browning was asked by Northlight Books to write an instructional book titled *Timeless Techniques for Better Oil Paintings*, which has been acclaimed by many schools and painting students as one of the best ever on the market. It created the opportunity for him to combine all of the knowledge he had accumulated for 20 years and present it in an easy-to-understand way, covering the basics as well as explaining and simplifying the most important elements of painting. As a result of this publication, he entered into a ten-year phase of giving back to the art world as he traveled around the country teaching workshops and giving painting demonstrations all in addition to his own rigorous painting schedule.

In 2009, Browning’s portrayal of a pioneer woman, *Dawn of a New Day*, won the *Prix de West*’s coveted Museum Purchase Award at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. Later that same year he was elected to the Cowboy Artists of America, a prestigious organization of Western painters and sculptors that has for years set the standard for Western art. It was an exciting time, as he joined in on the annual trail rides that are still held at some of the most important working ranches in the country. The camaraderie and educational value of being a part of this group only increased his desire to excel at his craft. He went on to win numerous awards for his Western interpretations of the American cowboy at work.

Working primarily in oils, Browning feels that he is currently creating his strongest and most meaningful work. At age 73, he still finds himself in the studio eight hours a day, five days a week, a continuation of the work ethic developed at the beginning of his career. When asked what things stand out in his mind as most influential to his success, he is always quick to acknowledge his wife’s love and support, as well as the long list of collectors who have stood by him and given credence to the hard work and effort he has put into his career.

Tom and Joyce Browning have been blessed with their son, Michael, his wife, and four granddaughters. With studios in both homes, the couple currently divides their time between Bend, Oregon, and Scottsdale, Arizona.

Tom Browning is represented by InSight Gallery, Fredericksburg, Texas; Legacy Gallery, Scottsdale, Arizona; Mockingbird Gallery, Bend, Oregon; and Wilcox Gallery Jackson, Wyoming.

960 words