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# Billy the Kid, Toshiko Takaezu, Mural, Vietnam War Zippos

By EVE M. KAHN

Billy the Kid posed for only one portrait — at least that scholars can agree on.

Around 1879, when he was believed to be about 20, William Henry McCarty, who also used the last names Antrim and Bonney, paid roughly 25 cents to have a tintype picture of himself taken outside a saloon at a former military fort in New Mexico. By then the outlaw Billy had already joined vigilante groups and had been sentenced to jail (from which he'd escaped). Gambling and stealing livestock apparently did not pay well; his clothes in the photo are baggy and rumpled. He soon gave the portrait to a friend named Dan Dedrick, whose descendants have consigned it at [Brian Lebel's Old West Show & Auction](#) on June 25 in Denver.

The fragile metal image, known as the Dedrick/Upham tintype, is about the size of a credit card. It is estimated to bring up to \$400,000. It has spent years in safe deposit boxes and will be "under armed guard" during the June 24 preview, Mr. Lebel said in a recent telephone interview.

Scholars have scrutinized it since the 1980s, when Dedrick's heirs put it on display at a museum in New Mexico. The emulsion is smudged across Billy's hips; his rough sweater may have rubbed it before it dried. His grip on the rifle and the revolver at his waist suggested for years that he was left-handed. It soon became a famous image, and inspired the director Arthur Penn's 1958 western "The Left Handed Gun," starring Paul Newman as Billy. But today the Kid is thought to have been right-handed: tintypes are reverse prints of what the photographer saw.

## A TAKAEZU EXHIBITION

The modernist ceramist Toshiko Takaezu, [who died in March at 88](#), gave away or sold many of her favorite works as her health declined. The Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento and the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin, among others, acquired major holdings, and her friends have lent about 70 pieces for "Toshiko Takaezu From Private Collections: The Memorial

Exhibition,” through July 9 at the [LongHouse Reserve](#) museum in East Hampton, N.Y.

Her spheres and cylinders are arranged in rows in a gallery overlooking outdoor sculptures, which include white chess pieces by Yoko Ono and blue glass spears by Dale Chihuly. The streaked vessels have tiny blowholes, which prevented explosions in the kiln. She kept the interiors mysteriously invisible. “The most important thing is the dark space inside,” she used to say.

On the outer clay walls, her earth-tone glazes resemble “veining like marble, sweeps like the northern lights, defined strokes of a broad brush, calligraphic gestures, patterns of spotty darkness like mildew, or waterfalls of liquid color,” the historian Janet Koplos wrote in a new [monograph](#), “The Art of Toshiko Takaezu: In the Language of Silence” (University of North Carolina Press, edited by the ceramics curator Peter Held).

Her longtime dealer, the Perimeter Gallery in Chicago, has about 80 of her works, priced from \$3,000, for a grapefruit-size orb, to \$75,000, for a five-foot spire.

### **A 1930S MURAL’S RETURN**

Writhing dancers will reappear this month at a gallery at the New School in a newly restored 1932 mural of an Ecuadorian village procession that has spent about a decade out of view.

The Ecuadorian painter Camilo Egas (1889-1962) painted the 17-foot-long expanse of costumed peasants, titled “Ecuadorian Festival,” for a basement niche at the original New School for Social Research building at 66 West 12th Street. Alvin Johnson, the institution’s first president, declared in about 1945 that Egas’s scene “represents the creative, artistic, indignantly pietistic native American culture in its struggle against the suppressive hand of Spanish white race arrogance.” At some point the school protected it with a temporary wall, and in 2005 the torn, stained canvas was rolled up and put away.

Peter Tobey and Lance Lankford, art restorers in Manhattan, have spent the last month using cotton balls to wipe away soot and patching rips with linen squares. Later this month, the canvas will be hung in a summer show titled “(re) collection” at [Parsons the New School for Design](#) on Fifth Avenue at 13th Street.

When the exhibition closes, the mural will be reinstalled at its home. “Maybe we’ll do a little procession back to 66 West 12th Street,” said Silvia Rocciolo, a curator of the New School art collection.

Egas’s other surviving murals are in Ecuador, said Michele Greet, an associate professor of art history at George Mason University. Two 1930s tableaus of grain harvesters, originally on the

mezzanine of the West 12th Street building, are believed lost.

## **RELICS OF THE VIETNAM WAR**

A boxful of metal cigarette lighters used by American soldiers in Vietnam during the 1960s and '70s is now in limbo in Ohio. The owner, the artist Bradford Edwards, has brought together 290 of the lighters that he collected while traveling in Vietnam. Made by the Zippo Manufacturing Company in Bradford, Pa., they are engraved with helicopters, gunboats, parachutes, peace signs and profane inscriptions about cravings for sex, marijuana, beer, enemy killings and home.

[Mr. Edwards](#) had consigned them at [Cowan's Auctions](#) in Cincinnati for an American history sale on Thursday, to be offered as one lot, with an estimate around \$40,000. But Mr. Edwards — who divides his time among Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Hanoi, Vietnam; and Santa Barbara, Calif. — and Wes Cowan, the owner of the auction house, have changed their plans and have said that they hope that the lighters will somehow be kept on public view.

“I envision a traveling exhibit that could be toured to a number of institutions nationally, that would feature the lighters, photos, didactic labels and a ‘story booth’ where Vietnam vets could relate stories,” Mr. Cowan wrote in an e-mail.

In a 2007 book edited by Sherry Buchanan, a historian, about the collection, “Vietnam Zippos: American Soldiers’ Engravings and Stories (1965-1973),” from the University of Chicago Press, Mr. Edwards explains in an essay that he built the collection through dealers who were scouring the countryside. “I became a white-skinned Zippo hunter skulking down the alleys and streets of Saigon,” he writes.

Original owners’ names are etched on a few of the worn chrome surfaces. “People think, ‘Oh, these are from fallen dead soldiers,’ ” Mr. Edwards said in a recent interview via Skype. More likely, perhaps, the soldiers lost or sold their lighters before heading home.

“I did check the names against the database for the Vietnam Memorial,” Mr. Edwards said, but he never found the owners there.