

**Event Celebrating the Installation at the Autry of the Iconic Shirts From *Brokeback Mountain*
a Moving Testament to the Shirt's Powerful Symbolism for the LGBT Community**

Author who conceived idea to display shirts and shirts' owner move the crowd with their heartfelt words claiming Western heritage for the gay community

IGRA archives arrive at the Autry



Los Angeles, CA (August 17, 2009) — Over 70 film enthusiasts, International Gay Rodeo Association (IGRA) members, executives from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), press, and supporters attended a Tuesday morning celebration in honor of the two intertwined shirts worn by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal in the groundbreaking 2005 Focus Features film *Brokeback Mountain*. Guests were treated to a reception followed by a welcome and address by John Gray, the Autry's President and CEO; Stephen Aron, the Autry's Executive Director of the Institute for the Study of the American West; and Jeffrey Richardson, the Autry's assistant curator for film and popular culture. Eloquent speeches were given by author and filmmaker Gregory Hinton, who brought the shirt's owner and the museum together and originated the idea for the gallery display; and noted film memorabilia collector Tom Gregory, who acquired the *Brokeback Mountain* shirts in a charity auction and generously loaned them to the Autry.

The shirts are at the center of the Contemporary Westerns case in order to highlight *Brokeback Mountain's* significance in keeping the Western genre alive and thriving in the new millennium, and to spotlight the LGBT community's struggle for safety and inclusion in the rural, Western communities from where many originate yet often feel forced to flee. Accompanying the shirts in the case are mannequins of Steve McQueen from the historical epic *Tom Horn* (1980) and Jeff Bridges from the revisionist Western *Wild Bill* (1995), along with the gun belts and revolvers worn by Chevy Chase, Steve Martin, and Martin Short in the comedy *Three Amigos!* (1986). A special section devoted to the career of actor-director Clint Eastwood includes mannequins from *Pale Rider* (1985) and *Unforgiven* (1992).

Announced at the event to thunderous applause was the Autry's invitation to house the archives of the International Gay Rodeo Association in its permanent collection. By doing so, the Autry has historically recognized the contributions of openly gay men and lesbian women to the sport of rodeo. On Friday, August 14, 2009, after being driven from Denver, Colorado, by IGRA officials, the archives arrived at the Autry and are currently being processed for accession into the Autry's collection.

The Autry seeks to explore all the peoples of the American West, and the exhibition of the shirts is part of a larger attempt to examine the LGBT community's contribution to the West and the Western genre. The Autry is currently planning an October panel about what it means to be gay in the West.

Excerpt from Gregory Hinton's speech at the Celebration of the Installation of the Iconic Shirts from the 2005 film *Brokeback Mountain* at the Autry National Center on Tuesday, August 11, 2009:



Four years ago, on a brisk Sunday morning in December, I went over to the Grove Theaters in West Hollywood to see the first showing of Ang Lee's adaptation of Annie Proulx's powerful short story, *Brokeback Mountain*. It was opening weekend. I was alone. I parked my car and when I rounded the corner, I saw hundreds of gay men, many my age, lined up to get into the theater. I admit I came with a chip on my shoulder. You see, I come from Wyoming, and what did Ang Lee know about gay ranchers in Wyoming? Besides, I've been burned before by straight Hollywood's depiction of gay men and women. Seeing the curious and hopeful men waiting in line, I fought back tears. I hated that I loved *Brokeback Mountain*. And here we are.

The display of the *Brokeback* shirts and the inclusion of the Gay Rodeo archives at the Autry for me underscore the need for gay men and women who leave their rural communities to reclaim their country heritage. To know us is to love us. When we quit our rural communities, they lose too.

For those of us who come from the West, it's in our blood and never lets us go. When I look at the shirts, I am grateful they will always be together. It makes sense. It's what we all hope for. It's what anybody deserves.

Excerpts from Tom Gregory's speech at the Celebration of the Installation of the Iconic Shirts from the 2005 film *Brokeback Mountain* at the Autry National Center on Tuesday, August 11, 2009:



In the film [*The Grapes of Wrath*], Henry Fonda as Tom Joad defends his vigilante viewpoint against his oppressors by saying: “A fellow ain’t got a soul of his own, just little piece of a big soul, the one big soul that belongs to everybody.” Everybody. What an idea—Gay America, Black America, Native America. Every living being is part of that soul. There is no beginning and no end. America’s promise of freedom and possibility is humanity’s birthright.

Some might think these shirts are just a movie prop, but these are indeed the “ruby slippers of our time.” We no longer will settle for a life lived hiding over the rainbow and beyond the stars. Ours will not be a fanciful happiness in a land that only lives in a little girl’s dreams. We claim our stake with cotton shirts and the conviction that American values are here, represented in this institution. Today, we are claiming our right to the great promise of the American West.

These shirts are a visual representation of love. Two shirts intertwined, stained and soiled with mud and the life-blood of *Brokeback Mountain*, where exhilaration soared for two men who found a deep, passionate, and reverent love with one another, a love that they were never allowed to live. These shirts have become the only tangible reference point for millions who have been touched by Annie Proulx’s story and Ang Lee’s film, including the hundreds of men and women who sent me e-mails and letters emoting for their long lost same-sex love. These shirts command quiet, but they demand a call to action.

About Tom Gregory

Los Angeles–based entertainment and sociopolitical commentator Tom Gregory’s passion for classic Hollywood movies and collectibles reaches back to his childhood. At age four he acquired his first autographed Hollywood portrait photo, and he has since amassed one of the foremost collections in the world. Along with that passion is Gregory’s core belief that the great, golden-era films have timeless values and plentiful examples of keep-your-chin-up grit that would well serve 21st-century viewers. By way of his presence as a media personality, and his thoughtful pieces on current events, social justice, and great entertainment, Gregory is a persuasive voice in connecting the dots between these ideas.

Gregory’s ongoing media forums include his website, www.showbiztom.com, his regular *Huffington Post* column, and radio dispatches for Leeza Gibbons’s internationally syndicated program, *Hollywood Confidential*. He also has been featured on CNN, E!, and Fox News, among other outlets, and is the face of OVGuide.com, the Internet’s premier source for indexing online video content. Recently, Gregory expanded his reach to the Great White Way with his debut as a Broadway producer on the 2009 revival of *Guys and Dolls* at the Nederlander Theatre.

About Gregory Hinton

The son of a country newspaper editor, Gregory Hinton was born in Wolf Point, Montana, on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Raised in Cody, Wyoming, Hinton graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder, which he attended on a creative writing scholarship. He is the author of four critically acclaimed novels, *Cathedral City* (2001), *Desperate Hearts* (2002), *The Way Things Ought to Be* (2003), and *Santa Monica Canyon* (2007). All of his books are endorsed by the American Library Association's *Booklist*, among other national reviews.

Hinton is also an independent filmmaker whose credits include *It's My Party* (1996), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, and *Circuit* (2003), which received international theatrical distribution.

For his fifth novel, *Night Rodeo*, Gregory Hinton has just completed a 2009 Spring Residency at the prestigious Ucross Foundation in Wyoming. To assist him in the completion of *Night Rodeo*, Hinton was awarded an honorarium by the Cody Institute of Western American Studies. Hinton recently spoke at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in the Whitney Gallery of Western Art Summer Art Lecture Series. The title of his lecture was "Waiting for a Chinook: Searching for My Father—A Wyoming Country Editor."

About the Autry National Center

The Autry National Center is an intercultural history center dedicated to exploring the experiences and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West. The Autry celebrates the cultures of the American West through three institutions on two Los Angeles campuses: the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in Mt. Washington; the Museum of the American West in Griffith Park; and the Institute for the Study for the American West, which comprises the Braun Research Library and the Autry Library and is headquartered in Griffith Park.

Autry National Center Mission Statement

The Autry National Center explores the experiences and perceptions of the diverse people of the American West, connecting the past with the present to inform our shared future.

Autry National Center

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Attached images by Abel Gutierrez.

**Additional images in high resolution
are available upon request.**

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