

Saddles and Silver: Collaboration in the Traditional Cowboy Arts, A. J. Mangum, Cary Schwarz, Scott Hardy, Frontier Project Incorporated, 2012, 0985342544, 9780985342548, . "A collaborative partnership cannot take root unless its participants are open to the idea of a shared creative experience. A would-be collaborator must possess a genuine willingness to share ideas and energy; invite the ideas and opinions of a partner, offering both respect and enthusiasm in return; and adapt his working style to accommodate that of his partner, all in the belief that a collaborative experience can offer an unmatched opportunity to grow and improve." It was with the above mindset that saddlemaker Cary Schwarz and silversmith Scott Hardy began a unique creative journey that's resulted in some of the finest western saddles ever made. Saddles & Silver, the first book from The Frontier Project Inc., reveals the story behind each of the pair's collaborative efforts, and offers a rare glimpse inside the creative processes of two of the world's most gifted craftsmen.

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"When a saddlemaker and silversmith work together, it's typically in the context of an order being placed. The saddlemaker requires a specific number of conchos, perhaps a horn cap and other hardware, and provides the silversmith with the necessary measurements and a general idea of design parameters. There's little expectation that the silversmith's creative direction will influence the saddlemaker's process. As for the idea of the two sharing in the decisions that will define and guide the saddle's overall evolution, from concept to finished product, in most cases, the notion is unthinkable. Chalk it up to issues of ownership and control, or to one brand or another of fear.

"Scott and Cary, though, followed a different path. From their initial discussions, they felt a certain kinship. They shared influences and interests -- among them fine art, architecture and graphic design -- and applied aesthetic principles from those fields to their own work. Each had great respect for Old World craftsmanship and a fascination with the work of 19th century European artisans who emigrated to the American West, where they would define much of what people came to know as traditional approaches to making and decorating saddles and other horse gear.

Moreover, each sensed in the other a belief that the work at hand mattered more than the way in which credit might be assigned."

This DVD is a tutorial that breaks down the design-on-paper into bite sized pieces. It is a series of exercises where the viewer, with pencil and sketchbook in hand follow line-for-line a variety of flowers, leaves and scrolls. These exercises force the student to focus on the visual information as it is laid down. I've used these exercises dating back a number of years with good results for a range of abilities. Approximately 45 minutes of instruction.

This DVD is about an hour long and is devoted to executing a simple floral pattern in leather. It starts with sharpening and cutting with a swivel knife. It shows a technique I use when cutting that, when mastered, will help make anyone's cutting smoother, easier and probably faster. I show the use of stamping tools that apply different textures in a progression that is worked out over many years. The viewer will be introduced to some new tools that are variations of familiar ones and how to use them in new ways. Novices and veteran leatherworkers alike will get something out of this DVD.

Not only is Cary an exceptional artist and craftsman, he is a great communicator and teacher who is more than willing to share his knowledge with anyone wanting to learn. Careful attention was paid to correct camera angle so you can see the work being done rather than the back of a hand. Both DVDs are full of valuable information, a real asset for anybody doing or wanting to learn flower stamping.

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Ranch roping is at the heart of ranch work. The vaquero tradition calls for techniques that result in a skillful, graceful throw and catch. Here, Buck Brannaman, a world-renowned master of the art, partners up with writer A. J. Mangum to describe all you need to become a successful ranch roper, whether in competition or in actual cattle work — the essential tools, the mechanics, and the optimal partnership between horse and rider.

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