

THEODORE WADDELL
The Weight of Memory

SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

November 3, 2010 - May 25, 2011

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

GREAT FALLS, MONTANA

Theodore Waddell: The Weight of Memory

SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

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Exhibition curated by Bob Durden

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THEODORE WADDELL

Greycliff Angus III

2003, woodcut, edition #50/50, 29½ x 37¾"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of the artist

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

KATHY LEAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we bring to a close a year-long examination of the Montana landscape and a "sense of place," Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art is pleased to present *Theodore Waddell: The Weight of Memory, Selections from the Permanent Collection*. The exhibition features works that depict the Missouri River near Great Falls, Montana, prints inspired by Waddell's ranching experience and the magnificent *Cloud Landscape #5* (page 24), a bold and dynamic painting that epitomizes the artist's personal vision of the West. All of these works have been generously gifted to the museum's permanent collection over the years, some from the artist and others from visionary collectors and philanthropists. We are truly grateful for their generosity.

This venture reflects a new and exciting focus in The Square's exhibition program that began this summer with *Behind the Vault Doors: Selections from the Permanent Collection*. Over its 33-year history, The Square has been building a modest but notable permanent collection of art work representing some of the best artists working in the region. We have shifted our exhibition strategy to regularly feature work from our permanent collection as a means to reinforce, or perhaps even contradict, the ideas being shared by our changing exhibitions. As part of this strategy, we are now devoting the Wylder Gallery to ongoing exhibitions showcasing contemporary objects from the museum's collection.

It is fitting that we begin the re-dedication of this gallery with an examination of the art work of Theodore Waddell. The generous gifts of this artist's work to the museum have added great value to the legacy contained within the museum vault and represent a breadth of artistic achievement that continues to evolve, inspired by all that is Montana and the Rocky Mountain region. The artist's work also underscores his personal sense of history and dedication to this great place. It is from that point of view that we have taken the exhibition title.

There are many people and organizations that have come together to make this exhibition a reality, including Humanities Montana, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Dana Gallery in Missoula, Montana; and the donors who have gifted these incredible works to the museum. Additionally, John W. and Carol L. H. Green of Billings, Montana, contributed significantly to this exhibition and the museum's holdings with their loan of *Cloud Landscape #5*, a promised gift to the museum. Words cannot express our appreciation for their generosity and partnership.

We also would like to thank the many sponsors whose financial support enabled the museum to produce this beautiful catalog which will aid in the understanding of Theodore Waddell's work and his place in art history: John W. and Carol L.H. Green, Billings, Montana; J. Willott Gallery, Palm Desert, California; Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho; Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Visions West Gallery, Bozeman and Livingston, Montana, and Denver, Colorado.

To all of the above we say thank you for your trust and support. And to Theodore Waddell we offer our most sincere appreciation and gratitude for the passion in your work and your commitment to the people and communities of Montana—past, present and future. Additionally, we thank our museum members and patrons; the citizens of Cascade County; and the Montana Arts Council, a state agency funded by the State of Montana and the National Endowment for the Arts, for their continued support of our programs and exhibitions.



THEODORE WADDELL

Missouri River Drawing #13

1993, oil, encaustic and graphite on paper, 22 x 30"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of the artist

Introduction

BOB DURDEN, CURATOR OF ART

The Weight of Memory is a title perhaps better suited to a retrospective exhibition of Theodore Waddell's work. Still, this title is equally fitting in the context of this exhibition and catalog which examine the artist's commitment to the people and place of Montana as well as his place in the history of the art of the Western United States. Memory is a powerful phenomenon that shapes our lives and knowledge. Those visions from our past inform our present and often direct our sensibilities about how our future will unfold. When we think of memory, it is typically in terms of a personal response to benchmark moments in our lives that shape our thinking and our character. Memories can be the large moments in life, usually built around firsts—the first day of school, a first kiss or the first death of a loved one. Memories can also be a reflection of the subtler moments in life, moments which can be triggered by the most innocuous things—the scent of fallen leaves, the taste of a hot dog on a hot summer day or the ringing of bells. For most of us, shared memories create powerful bonds. And it is this aspect of memory that surfaces in viewing an artist's work. What commonalities in our own experiences are invoked by examining another's visual expression?

Memory is also formed through cultural experiences or historically significant events—learning to read, the first moonwalk or witnessing the destructive power of war. The remarkable thing about these cultural memories is that our personal responses to events are calibrated in relationship to our own experiences and we log the events differently in our psyches. Two people witnessing the same event will relate the story differently. And so it is with viewing a work of art. With this in mind, the words that follow serve as observations about personal memory (Theodore Waddell's background and experience), cultural memory (historical events) and a response to memory (the manner in which meaning can be derived when viewing the artist's work).



PHOTO BY LYNN CAMPION



THEODORE WADDELL
American Family #1
1991, oil and encaustic on canvas, 66 x 64"
Collection of the artist

The Weight of Memory: A Personal View

THEODORE WADDELL

I graduated from Laurel High School in 1959. After working through the summer on the railroad, some of my friends told me that they were going to go to college in Billings at Eastern Montana College. Since I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, I went along. I signed up for pre-architecture as I had taken a mechanical drawing course in high school, about as close as one could get to art in those days. Art was a part of this curriculum so I signed up for a painting class—and there she was—Isabelle Johnson. Within two weeks or so with “Izzie” (we called her that as a term of endearment, but not to her face), I decided that I didn't want to be alive and not make art. That was 51 years ago.

Isabelle had been trained in the East but returned to the family homestead on the Stillwater at Absarokee, Montana. She taught high school and then taught at Eastern. She was a great teacher and “mothered” me. She would take several students who were nuts about art home for hot chocolate and conversation. The most notable student out of that group was Jim Reineking. Jim and I shared an apartment on the south side of Billings for several months. I worked midnights on the railroad and went to school days, so Izzie bought a cot and put it in the tool room next to her office so I could have an occasional nap. I took classes from Ben Steele and Lyndon Pomeroy, and started a lifelong friendship with Donna Forbes, former director of the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings. We had a grocery store gallery where Terry Melton, the first director of the C. M. Russell Museum in Great Falls, and other Eastern Montana College faculty showed along with me. Through Isabelle and Donna, I met another lifelong friend, artist and resident curmudgeon, Bill Stockton. Because of Lyndon Pomeroy, I met Ken Ferguson, the first resident potter at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana, and Dave Shaner, another well-known ceramic artist, who was a resident after Ken.

At Eastern, there were graduate students in the same class as me, just working at a higher level. During those years, I met Bill Sage, a high school teacher, and Mac Lewis, a piano playing graduate student. Mac took me to Bozeman one weekend to meet his artist friends: the DeWeese family as well as Frances Senska and Jessie Wilbur who all became my lifelong friends.

I was 17 at the time. I was astounded by the DeWeeses. In the kitchen, there were drawings and paintings, and paint was everywhere. Bob would hand roll cigarettes with an old-time roller—made them as hard as pencils. He and Gennie would squint their eyes against the smoke as they painted and sometimes drank scotch. I also met Ray Campeau who was a dynamo, a great teacher and watercolorist, as well as other Montana State University faculty over the years: John Buck, Rick Pope, Fran Noel, Deborah Butterfield, Clarice Dreyer and others.

At one point, Isabelle was talking to one of the graduate students about applying for a Max Beckman Scholarship at the Brooklyn Museum Art School. I thought she was talking to me, so I applied and got one. I turned 21 in New York, never having been further away from Montana than northern Wyoming. I spent the summer in Provincetown, making sculptures and selling watercolors for three dollars apiece. After exhibiting in the fall Greenwich Village Outdoor Art Show, I flew home to find my induction papers had been there for two weeks. I spent two years in the army, playing trumpet in the band, doing recruiting tours with a sixteen-piece dance band and playing lots of taps for funerals.

I went back to Eastern in 1965 to get my BS in Education, and went on to graduate school at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, where I graduated with a MFA in Sculpture. I was hired to teach sculpture and drawing at the University of Montana in Missoula in 1968. This period was very important to me. I shared an office with Rudy Autio, arguably one of the most important ceramic artists of the 20th and 21st centuries, along with his friend Peter Voukos. Pete was charismatic and very intense—a great artist. He used to come for a visit every so often, or do a workshop at the Bray, or visit his mother in Bozeman. Because of Rudy, many well known artists came for workshops. Printmaker Don Bunse, who was my other office partner my first year at the “U,” is credited along with Glen Alps for inventing the collograph printing technique. Jim Poor, Terry Melton, Ray Steele, John Armstrong and I formed a co-op gallery in Great Falls. We got together for openings every month or two. Branson Stevenson and other artists would come by the openings; those were rich and wonderful times.

PHOTO BY LYNN CAMPION



The University was also a great mecca for writers because of Richard Hugo. The writing program was one of the best in the country and has produced many fine writers—Bill Kittredge, Jim Crumley, Roger Dunsmore, Denny Blouin and others. We all knew each other and spent time together at various bars and other gathering places. Lee Nye, the photographer, was my fishing partner. When I quit teaching to manage a family ranch west of Billings, my life was filled with friends, new and old: Gordon McConnell was the curator at the Yellowstone Art Museum and Pat Zentz, who had been a student when I was at the University of Montana, was living on a ranch near Laurel.

While teaching in Missoula, I had been living north of Missoula in a town called Arlee. It was located in a mountain valley so narrow that the sun didn't hit the ground until mid morning or so. I had been making metal sculpture during that time period. The human scale of these works made sense in the mountains but didn't fit at all on the plains where I could see 150 miles in any direction. Moving back to drawing and painting allowed me to deal with this large scale and such great distances. Two-dimensional work requires participation from the viewer in that you must accept the notion of illusion, thus you can create vast amounts of space in modest sized paintings.

Since I had been making stainless steel sculpture, influenced by Donald Judd, my transition to landscape evolved at a moderate pace. The first of these works were made from looking out the kitchen window towards the Adam Thompson buildings—an abandoned homestead about two miles east of our house. The *New Thompson Sunrise* works were hard-edged renditions of the sunrise over his buildings. The sky/ground relationship was very simple as there was very little to interrupt it. Two shapes—sky and ground.

Soon, these works gave way to more organic work, made by using house paint and graphite. The paint I used was so fluid that I had to paint them horizontally or the paint would run off the paper. Later, I would begin a series of these works in homage to many artists, beginning with Robert Motherwell, one of my all time favorite artists. He had done a series of works on paper by dribbling paint onto pieces of paper laid out on the floor; it was very lyrical. As I started to make paintings of our great black cows, it seemed natural to do these works. It made sense to use the influence the abstract expressionists had on me during that year in New York in 1962. These works on paper were expanded to become larger paintings, although I have never thought in terms of doing "studies" for paintings.

My life is terrific. I feel like I live in a piece of heaven. I know a variety of people both in Hailey, Idaho, and Sheridan, Montana, that have enriched my life full measure. I don't know as many artists these days as I did in the old days, perhaps because the press of time and what I want to do keeps me focused. I keep pretty good track of my daughters. Shanna is a curator for a private collection in Denver and has become an expert with fabrics, hosting shows in London, Paris, Bilbao and various American museums. Arin is an artist living in Sheridan, Wyoming. She and I have had many shows together over the years and are scheduled to show together in Denver this January. I am lucky to be with my wife, Lynn, who has taught me a ton about photography and writing. We have completed a second children's book—she wrote the text and I did the illustrations—and we are working on a third.

The Weight of Memory: A Historical and Observational View

BOB DURDEN, CURATOR OF ART

The Weight of Memory includes two significant art works created by Theodore Waddell after he participated in a three-day float trip on the Missouri River in 1992. The trip included writers, visual artists, museum staff and outfitters who gathered to witness the effect the river had on the creative/intellectual process in preparation for The Square's exhibition *Paintings, Prose, Poems and Prints: Missouri River Interpretations*, presented February 9-March 27, 1993. Our current exhibition owes much to that earlier presentation which honored the memory of Karl Bodmer's historic journey to the region 160 years earlier. Though this exhibition (two Missouri River drawings combined with ten other works on paper and a magnificent example of Theodore Waddell's signature landscape painting) provides only a sampling of the artist's work, what it represents in the artist's career is monumental. This catalog is offered to provide a larger perspective about Waddell's place in the canon of American art of the West that stretches back to the early 19th century.

First among the notable painters to arrive in the region was George Catlin (1796-1872) who traveled up the Missouri as far as Fort Union at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers in 1832. "Monumental though his work was, Catlin's paintings were clearly overshadowed in quality by the work of an obscure Swiss draftsman, Karl Bodmer [1809-1893], who in 1832 traveled to America as illustrator on a scientific

expedition to the upper Missouri country conducted by Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuweid. With regard to accuracy and sensitivity to the nuances of the people and places of frontier America, especially its Indians, Bodmer's work has never been surpassed."¹ Maximilian's journey was primarily a fact-finding and anthropological venture. Photography had not yet become a viable tool for use in such remote places, and Bodmer's deft skills recorded the splendor of the plains with a journalistic eye and a realism that would serve to illustrate the story of the American West devoid of the dramatic invention found in Catlin's work.

Maximilian's expedition came 29 years after the Corps of Discovery mapped out a passage to the Northwest. But while William Clark's journals capture in words the essence of place and note scientific data, the two-year journey lacked a pictorial mission. Though fortune seekers had already appeared as early as 1806 in what later became known as Montana, and John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company would eventually reap the rewards of cheap labor and abundant resources available in the region, some of the most viable first-hand visual accounts of the West would not be available to the public until Bodmer's watercolors were reproduced and distributed in Prince Maximilian's recount of their journey, *Travels in the Interior of North America 1832 to 1834*, published in Paris, 1839-1841.



KARL BODMER
View of the Stone Walls
1883, watercolor on paper, 9⁷/₈ x 16⁷/₈"
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska
Image courtesy of the Joslyn Art Museum



THEODORE WADDELL

Missouri River Drawing #12

1993, oil, encaustic and graphite on paper, 30 x 40"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of the artist



CHARLES MARION RUSSELL

River Crossing

1901, watercolor on paper, 10 x 14"

C.M. Russell Museum

Great Falls, Montana

Image courtesy of the C.M. Russell Museum

Karl Bodmer, George Catlin and John Mix Stanley (1814 - 1872) were among the most prominent artists who stirred the public's imagination about the native people and places to be encountered in the American West. Where Bodmer strived to capture the West as it was, the latter artists capitalized on the more adventurous and dramatic scenes to be found in the West during the mid-19th century. Perhaps lured by these depictions, Charles Marion Russell (1864 -1926) arrived in Montana from St. Louis at the age of sixteen in 1880.² Russell yearned to experience the rough and tumble ways of the West that were the subjects of his predecessors' drawings, prints and paintings. His life's work would reflect the splendor of place and a way of life that had all but vanished for the First Nation Peoples who populated Montana and Russell's artistic oeuvre. During Russell's lifetime, the automobile replaced the horse as the common mode of transportation, but his artistry focused on the land and the horse culture that continues to evolve and flourish in the American West. Russell's depictions of First Nation Peoples rival those of Bodmer's first-hand visual accounts developed in watercolor during his journey.

Works by Russell continue to endure as one of the best-known cultural treasures produced in Montana, and in a real sense the pictorial tradition that Charlie represents continues as a barometer for what most people understand as the art of the West. This is the backdrop to Theodore Waddell's individual story. Certainly any artist working in the region prior to the mid-1950s found it difficult to veer from the path of Russell, his peers and predecessors. The pictorial tradition that these artists represent has a long and valued history. However, the emergence of modernism in Montana would become undeniable.

Theodore Waddell became one of the artistic voices who lit the way for modern and contemporary art developments in the region, and though obvious visual differences abound, an empathy and continuity exists between the works by Waddell and his artistic ancestors. The over-riding and obvious similarity between them all is the use of a pictorial narrative. The stylistic and intentional differences between these artists' works are a natural extension of their personal responses to place in their respective eras. Mostly gone now are the expansionist attitudes of the 19th and early 20th centuries, but much romanticism and the *pictorial tradition* remain in the region joined by a rich modern/contemporary tradition that Theodore Waddell has helped to define.



THEODORE WADDELL

Missouri River Drawing #7

1992, oil, encaustic and graphite on paper, 30 x 40"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of the artist

Ted Waddell was born in 1941 in Billings, Montana, a city rife with agrarian culture which stemmed from bustling stockyards, slaughter houses and area farms and ranches set in the Yellowstone River valley beneath expansive sandstone cliffs. Ted grew up in Laurel, Montana, an active railroad community located 18 miles west of Billings. The era was filled with the romance of the West. The nation's youth were transfixed by the visions of Buffalo Bob Smith and Howdy Doody broadcast in glorious black and white on the relatively new medium of television. Dramatic portrayals of the American West were conveyed through television serials and movies featuring popular cowboy actors Gene Autry and Roy Rogers and the iconic image of the Lone Ranger. Howard Hawks' movies starring John Wayne and other larger-than-life actors appeared in Panavision and Technicolor and continued the romanticism of the Western American saga. This generation was equally stirred by popular Western novels by authors such as Zane Grey (1872-1939), and Theodore Waddell grew up reading the eminently popular novels written and illustrated by Will James (1892-1942) who had lived on a small ranch south of Billings. James' *Smoky*, 1926, was a bestselling and beloved Western novel that received the Newbery Medal for children's literature in 1927 and was adapted three times by Hollywood film producers. The novel remained popular for decades and a young Ted emulated James' horse drawings. Who could have imagined at the time that Theodore Waddell would become a highly sought-out modernist painter by the 1980s?



WILL JAMES

Two shakes and our ropes split the air into loops

Published in *All in the Day's Riding*, p. 105

Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1933

Yellowstone Art Museum's Virginia Snook Collection

Image courtesy of the Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana

Printed with permission of the Will James Art Company, Billings, Montana



ISABELLE JOHNSON

Newborn in Storm

1966, oil on canvas board, 20 x 24"

Yellowstone Art Museum's Montana Collection

Image courtesy of the Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana

The first person to understand Theodore Waddell's potential and aspirations was his mentor Isabelle Johnson (1901-1992), one of Montana's early modernists. Ted studied with Isabelle at Eastern Montana College (now Montana State University, Billings) from 1959 to 1961, before earning a scholarship to study at the Brooklyn Museum Art School in Brooklyn, New York (1962-63). Isabelle's influence ignited the young artist's passion for the modernist art tenets he would become exposed to while studying in New York. Isabelle was an ardent admirer of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and her depictions of life along the Stillwater River and the family ranch fifty miles west of Billings left a lasting impression. Ted returned to Montana after completing his term of service in the military and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Education at Eastern in 1966. In 1968, Ted earned his Master of Fine Arts degree at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, where he studied sculpture and printmaking before returning again to Montana to join the art faculty at the University of Montana, Missoula, where he taught sculpture and foundations classes until 1976.



THEODORE WADDELL

Angus #24

1982, oil on canvas, 48 x 60"

Collection of the artist



THEODORE WADDELL

Untitled

Circa 1971, Cor-ten steel, 24 x 144 x 27"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of the City of Great Falls

Perhaps it would be interesting to question the path Theodore Waddell's artistic pursuits would have taken had he not been exposed to modernism in his student days in New York and at Eastern Montana College. Would his artistry have flourished more to the literal pictorial tradition of the notable historic artists of the West such as Karl Bodmer, George Catlin and later Joseph Henry Sharp (1859-1953) who maintained a studio sixty miles east of Billings in Crow Agency, Montana, until 1934? Certainly there was a larger audience in the region for such artistic expressions. However, modernism was gaining ground in the "frontier." Though a smaller audience for modernism existed in the region than did in the country's larger metropolitan areas, the audience's desire for all things modern or contemporary would become undeniable and Ted would find himself fixed in the mix of the first generation Montana modernists who were spread out across Montana, predominantly centered in the state's colleges and universities. Among this generation of artists were Isabelle Johnson, Bill Stockton (1921 -2002), Frances Senska (1914-2009), Jessie Wilbur (1912-1989), Bob DeWeese (1920-1990), Gennie DeWeese (1921-2007), Henry Meloy (1902-1951), Rudy Autio (1926-2007), Lela Autio (born in 1927) and Peter Voukos (1924-2002). Some were transplants and others were Montana natives, but in most cases these people remained, led the way and continued to inspire the region's artists and art lovers. The weight of their memories and influence remains heavily on Theodore Waddell's mind and can be found in his work as a lasting reminder of the bonds that were built and insights that were gleaned from and shared with these friends positioned across the distance of time and space.

While teaching in Missoula, Ted and his first wife Betty, along with their daughters Arin and Shanna, lived north of Missoula in Arlee, Montana, where Ted created large sculptures inspired by another predominant art movement, minimalism. Though the austere forms with subtly modulated surfaces created from welded stainless steel or Cor-ten steel might seem antithetical to Ted's earlier paintings, drawings and prints, the sculptures fit within his larger sense of place. He would say of the sculptures: "*When we were living in the mountains, making sculpture made sense, and it fit within the context of the narrow mountain valleys. Scale fit.*"³ The sculptures were devoid of the texture found in his signature impasto paintings, and the scale of the forms coupled with the patina or lack of patina were designed to interact with the natural surroundings rather than compete with it. As a result, the work was sublime rather than ironic. The scale was large but modest in comparison to the surroundings. The true deftness of the work is revealed in the manner that the forms and materials divulge their surroundings. The stainless steel sculptures reflect the ambient colors from nature and the Cor-ten steel sculptures record the pattern of rain and snow that impact the sculptural surfaces in richly oxidized patinas.

At the time of Waddell's return to Montana, the Yellowstone Art Museum (known then as the Yellowstone Art Center) was the only contemporary art center in the state, founded in 1964 in the original county jail in Billings. Over time, Montana's other major urban centers would form their own art centers and contemporary art museums, including the Missoula Art Museum in 1975, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls in 1977, and the Holter Museum of Art in Helena in 1987. Though distances between the urban centers is vast by comparison to other places, Ted and the other modern/contemporary artists formed great allegiances and would travel the state to gather at art openings, which were in a sense a call to action and preservation. This camaraderie created a community of artists, a larger audience for contemporary art and a form of family in the Montana visual art circles that emerged from Billings to Missoula and Grass Range to Bozeman. These connections carried great weight into the 1990s and continue to this day, though many of the early modernists passed on in the last decade.



THEODORE WADDELL
Angus Drawing #54
1984, oil on paper, 20 x 26"
Collection of the artist



ROBERT MOTHERWELL

Altamira Elegy

1979-80. lithograph, 11¼ x 16"

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Licensed by VAGA, New York, New York

Image courtesy of the Dedalus Foundation

In 1976, Theodore Waddell left the security of academia and moved his family to Molt, Montana, northwest of Billings, where he managed his father-in-law's cattle ranch. Ted recalled of this time: "...the space was so vast that human-scale sculpture could not fit in the environment. With painting, one can alter the scale drastically and it is acceptable, so I went back to painting..."⁴ Though the rigors of managing a cattle ranch commanded much of Ted's time, he still found time to paint. *Angus Drawing #54*, 1984, is indicative of the work from the period that retains a primacy continuing to inform Ted's latest works. The spontaneity of the brush strokes captures the tempestuousness of winter storms that threaten the rancher's herd and livelihood. In these works, Waddell pays homage to non-objective painters such as Emerson Woelffer (1914-2003) and Robert Motherwell (1915-1991) while retaining his own identity. The works are a combination of the impressionism of Isabelle Johnson and the minimalism of Ted's earlier sculptures. The surface is activated by swirling pigments pushed around by brush, knife and finger separated by dark strokes that form an indistinct but recognizable shape—the herd in the distance, the herd as horizon. The foreground is left vacant of pigment and conveys the stillness of the frozen snow providing a visual tension that negates the suggested movement of the cattle through the landscape. Waddell leaves behind the literalism of pictorial realism to form something intuitively palpable and poetic. Like Motherwell, Theodore Waddell became a master of cognitive association.

His work could be perceived as non-objective when viewed outside the context of his larger body of work, or it could be perceived as pictorial work in which recognizable images appear in relationship to the viewer's knowledge of the artist's oeuvre. His artistic invention is based upon carefully understood observation and material application.

In 1987, the Waddells moved sixty miles north to Ryegate to ranch on their own. The isolation that might have been felt by an artist working in an agrarian, rural setting in the middle of the northern plains surrounded by sandstone bluffs and the silhouette of the Crazy Mountains to the west, the Judith Mountains and Highwoods to the north, the Bull Mountains to the east and the Bighorn and Beartooth Mountains to the south, was offset by the strong relationships built in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls and Missoula. The memories of these places and more particularly the artists/friends/peers continue to inspire and inform Ted's work. And it was from these rural places that were trod and depicted by artists since the days of Karl Bodmer's trip up the Missouri River with Prince Maximilian, that Waddell would hone his unique artistic voice.

Bill Stockton, a sheep rancher and artist from Grass Range, Montana, roughly ninety miles northeast of Ryegate, would also greatly influence Theodore Waddell. Bill was an ardent proponent of modernism and though he eventually rejected the commercial gallery system, he continued to do his work, inspired by ranching life and views of the Bull Mountains. Bill's early works were pure abstraction that evolved later into drawings of expressive landscapes and closer views of subjects at hand that included wildflowers, coulees and portraits of family members. Though Ted needed no convincing that a relevant artistic point of view was assembled from first-hand and personal experiences, Bill Stockton's life and work would serve to remind him.

The arrival of the Poindexter Collection to the state of Montana in 1962 was equally compelling and important in the region's artistic development. The original gift from George and Elinor Poindexter to the Montana Historical Society in Helena, included works by Willem DeKooning (1904-1997), Franz Kline (1910-1962) and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)—predominant modernists on the international art stage. Subsequent gifts from the Poindexters were given to the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings and included works by Henri Matisse (1869-1954), John Henry Twachtman (1853-1902) and Emerson Woelffer.



In a statement about his journey to understand modernist painting, George Poindexter stated: "I have broken through the barrier of space and color and the experience has changed my life."⁵

The public exhibition of the Poindexter Collection was disconcerting for many viewers but substantiating to artists such as Theodore Waddell and his peers. If the modernism of the East and West Coasts and Europe could exist in Montana's cultural centers, then Montana modernism could also find increased and substantive regional footing and support.

It is understandable that initially modern and contemporary art would be misunderstood in a predominantly rural state such as Montana where artists such as Charles M. Russell, along with his peers and predecessors, had previously defined the art of the West. The work by artists who followed in the European pictorial tradition full of engaging and often active visual narratives (as well as larger than life depictions of the West) may require less visual interpretation than conceptual visual expressions based upon personal introspection. Theodore Waddell bridges the gap between these traditions by compressing the distance between the pictorial narrative of the 19th century and non-objective abstraction of the 20th century. From the lessons learned from his teachers and peers, combined with his own experience, Ted carved out a particular vision of the West that he continues to explore and refine. His work retains a reference to recognizable subjects while infusing a more inwardly reflective emotional response to place epitomized by his emotive use of color, composition, line and brushstroke. Due to his skill and ability to captivate the viewer's imagination with sincere representations of the land, Waddell's work finds a place alongside Bodmer, Sharp, Russell and others as a unique chronicler of the American West.

Right

THEODORE WADDELL

Trophy #8

1983, oil and mixed media on

sun-bleached cow skull

15¼ x 19 x 28½"

Collection of the artist

BILL STOCKTON

Another View of Chinese Mountain

1991, livestock marker, pencil and wax on paper, 30 x 22"

Yellowstone Art Museum's Montana Collection

Image courtesy of the Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana



THEODORE WADDELL

Monida

1999, oil and encaustic on canvas, 120 x 216"

Collection of the artist

Though Theodore Waddell has become most identified by his monumental oil paintings, his mastery of other media is equally compelling. He, like many of his peers, explored materials and methodologies beyond traditional applications—pushing the boundaries of “acceptable” art definitions. During his ranching days in Molt and Ryegate, Ted explored his connection to the agriculture community, outdoorsmanship and his own place in the land by utilizing found materials as part of his repertoire. Cow skulls, road-kill, rattlesnake skins and cow dung—nothing was sacred or above inclusion. In a series of sculptures that were as much a conversation with other artists as with the local community and himself, Ted created objects such as *Trophy# 8*, a painted cow skull mounted to the wall. These sculptures were a play on the trophy mounting of game skulls, but also referenced art



precedents such as C.M. Russell’s famous cow skull signature, Georgia O’Keeffe’s (1887-1986) paintings of floating skulls and even Karl Bodmer’s watercolor, *Assiniboin Medicine Sign*, 1833, all of which allude to a reverence for life and the Western lifestyle. Searching for deeper meaning, these sculptures referenced attitudes about ranching and hunting which at times seemed ironic. Ted conveyed that nurturing livestock and seeing them through life-threatening winters knowing that the cattle would eventually end up at slaughter was a conundrum that led him to leave the business altogether.⁶ The trophy sculptures predate the dissolution of the Waddell’s family ranch in Ryegate and his first marriage, but they are prescient statements about the fleeting of time and the preciousness of life. The application of paint on the bleached skulls creates visually compelling talismans.



Theodore Waddell continues to refine his exploration of media and process as much in his drawings and paintings as in printmaking. Recalling that Ted studied printmaking in Detroit and participated in printing workshops while teaching at the University of Montana, it comes as no surprise that he is a masterful printmaker. For example, *Greycliff Angus II* conveys the compositional complexity of his drawings and paintings with a subtlety related to the works on paper mentioned earlier. *Ennis Horses I* (page 29), a hand-colored lithograph, illustrates the artist's desire to create something unique even when utilizing a method intended to replicate an image. The transference of his original drawing from the printing plate is not negated by a heavy hand in the application of color to paper. The aqueous medium reveals the emotive aspects of the artist's composition bringing the expressive lines further to life. As a result, the image appears more spontaneous than mechanical and is in keeping with the spirit of the subject, amplifying Ted's interest in the sky/ground relationship.

During the 20th century, romanticism became a dirty word in art criticism and modern/contemporary art making, but Theodore Waddell's work exemplifies the creative necessity to buck trends and artistic anthems in pursuit of a "natural voice." Like Russell before him, he follows his intuition and conveys the elegance, beauty and romance that he finds in his surroundings. In his view, urbanity is rarely depicted—the barb wire that closed in the West and other period-defining references are rarely found in his work. Though Ted has created numerous portrait paintings, it is rare that the human form appears in his landscapes and when it does, it appears as a rider merged with his mount to form a visual statement that suggests the interconnectivity of man and beast. He, like other enduring artists before him, creates works that will remain intrinsically valuable beyond the era in which they were created. This is due in part to his avoidance of irony and anachronism to promote a topical political viewpoint. His concerns are more philosophical and expressive, and convey the timelessness that is found in the watercolors of Karl Bodmer. For both artists, scale is defined by the horizon and the creatures that inhabit the pictorial plane.



THEODORE WADDELL
Sun Valley Sheep Drawing #2
1998, oil, encaustic and graphite on paper, 22 x 30"
Collection of the artist

Opposite page

THEODORE WADDELL
Greycliff Angus II
2002, woodcut, edition #40/50, 29½ x 37¾"
Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
Gift of the artist



THEODORE WADDELL

Cloud Landscape #5

1985-86, oil on canvas, 90 x 66"

Intended future gift to Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
Collection of John W. and Carol L.H. Green, Billings, Montana

Installation view and detail on page 31



THEODORE WADDELL
Cloud Landscape #7
1984, oil on paper, 20 x 26"
Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
Gift of an anonymous donor

It is also worth noting that Bodmer witnessed historic human events on his journey with Maximilian but elected not to describe them.⁷ He avoided portrayals of human conflict and instead created modestly sized but sweeping landscapes and a noble body of portraits. Perhaps Theodore Waddell shares a kinship with Bodmer that seeks a more utopian view of the world where human activity does not play the decisive role, as in Waddell's magnificently executed *Cloud Landscape #5*. This painting is a visceral representation of time and place. The grand scale is matched by the physical exertion that was required to paint it. The application of paint is bold to the point of disbelief and rivals Vincent Van Gogh's (1853-1890) sky in *Starry Night*, 1889,

and the surface of Jackson Pollock's late paintings. Requiring over a year's commitment from the artist to complete, *Cloud Landscape #5* is visually seamless and fresh. The painting is not a recounting of a specific moment. It is an amalgamation of all that Waddell witnessed in nature and in art up to this point of creation. The painting goes beyond the visual intention of capturing the tension between sky and ground, becoming a topographical record of emotion and the passage of time that echoes George Poindexter's statement about "*breaking through space and color.*" The storm literally plays out on the surface of the canvas.



THEODORE WADDELL

Red Rock Buffalo #4

2009, oil and encaustic on canvas, 72 x 72"

Collection of the artist

The cynicism of the early 20th century toward romanticism and landscape painting has surfeited and is receding during our time, allowing for a greater appreciation of all aspects of art making. Like Bodmer, Sharp and Russell, Theodore Waddell's artistry continues to call the viewer to magnificent places abundant with glorious natural resources and vastly undisturbed landscapes. Each artist provokes the curiosity in us that seeks solace, beauty and a connection to a place that is beyond our material needs. Waddell's view is not the expansionist or ethnographic view of Bodmer or the nostalgic view of Russell. However, like his predecessors, he desires for us to know what he knows. When viewing his depictions of domestic livestock in the vast landscape, he desires us to sense the Montana light, vastness of space, velocity of wind, smell of late summer wild grass and sweat from cattle grazing under a sweltering summer sun. These are precious memories and though we may not know the nuances as he perceives them, Theodore Waddell portrays these real experiences in a manner that transcends the ordinary moment of a bucolic day into a larger vision captured timelessly and poetically devoid of other fleeting concerns.

Where Russell recorded the action of ranch life through paintings of herding and roping, and depicted the quickly diminishing traditions of the First Nation Peoples of the northern plains at the turn of the 19th century, Waddell has become most identified with his ability to capture the visual essence of the Rocky Mountain region full of grand vistas dotted by ubiquitous domestic livestock.



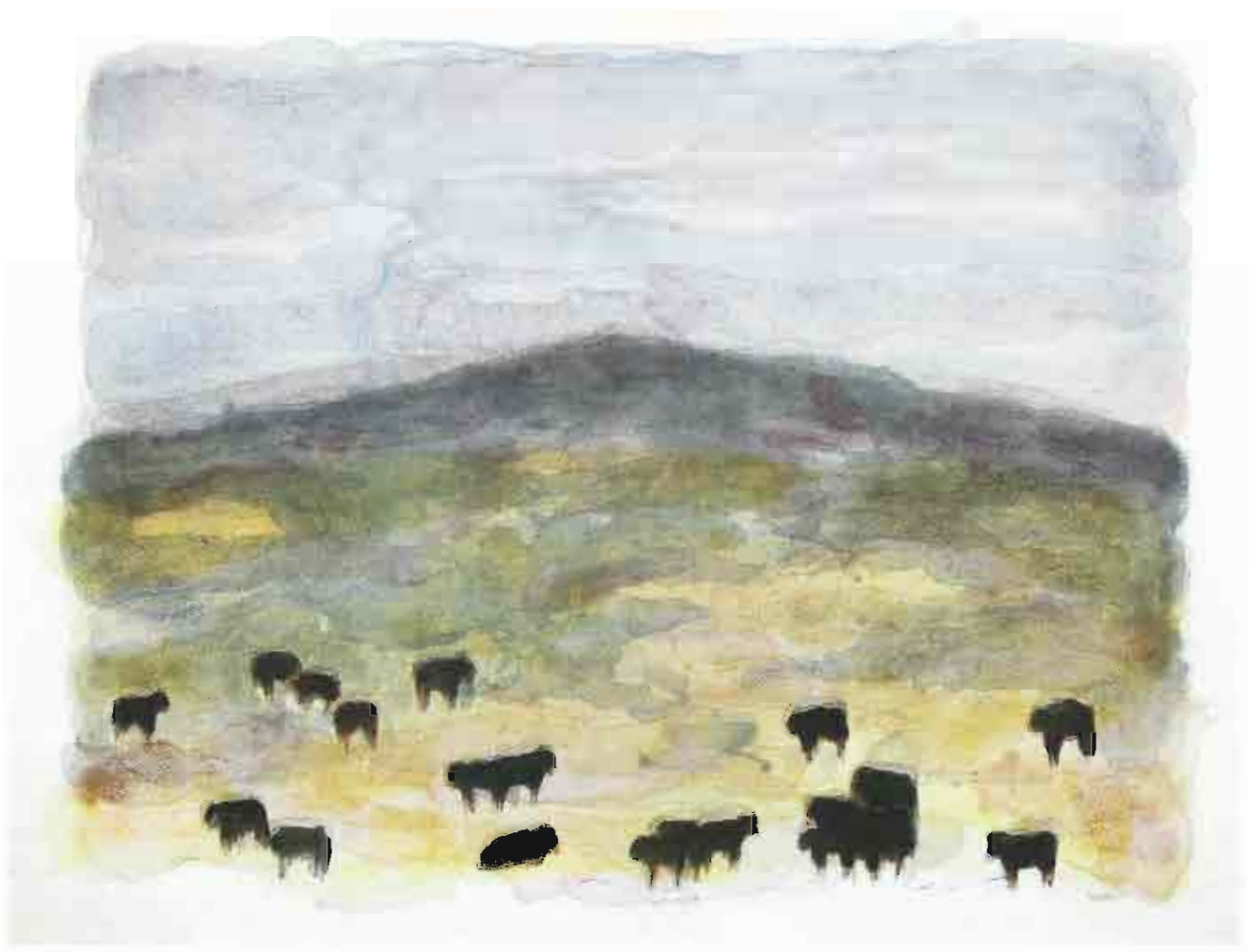
Each artist in his own way records a view and lifestyle prevalent in the region in his own time. The buffalo in Russell's paintings vanished along with native traditions, and the domestic livestock that took their place have become equally iconic and quixotic in Waddell's work. Where Russell painted in the European tradition of pictorial realism (as influenced to a degree by impressionism), Waddell's work flourishes with a combination of an art form born in America—action painting—infused with post-impressionism. Bodmer's depictions of the white cliffs on the upper Missouri River remain as fluid, expressive and captivating as the works by Waddell that now reside in The Square's collection. And each artist in his own way recorded actual places on the upper Missouri that continue to go mostly unseen by the general public. In that respect, Theodore Waddell's work can be appreciated both for its artfulness and as artifacts depicting and archiving the mountains, plains and livestock in Montana during the 20th and 21st centuries.

Like Russell, who remained a lifelong devotee of Montana and the region, Theodore Waddell continues to work from his homes in Sheridan, Montana, and Hailey, Idaho, sharing his life with his wife, photographer and writer Lynn Campion. Ted's lifelong journey to represent a vision of the West may not have been as perilous an undertaking as the journey taken by Karl Bodmer and his peers, but it continues to be a dedicated and strenuous venture into the unknown frontier of imagination and memory. His work spans more than five decades, representing a sincere devotion to a firsthand knowledge of the Rocky Mountain region, the northern plains, art historic precedent and an incomparable personal mission to succeed as a unique artistic voice. His artistic influence is undeniable and indelible, contributing to the cultural weight of memory.



CHARLES MARION RUSSELL
Buffalo Hunt
 Circa 1895, oil on mirror, 27" in diameter
 C.M. Russell Museum, Great Falls, Montana
 Image courtesy of the C.M. Russell Museum

KARL BODMER
Landscape with Herd of Buffalo on the Upper Missouri
 1883, watercolor on paper, 9⁵/₈ x 12³/₈"
 Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska
 Image courtesy of the Joslyn Art Museum



THEODORE WADDELL

Gallatin Angus II

2010, hand-colored lithograph, edition #59/60, 34 x 45"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of an anonymous donor

¹William H. Goetzmann's essay "The Man Who Stopped to Paint America" included in *Karl Bodmer's America* (Joslyn Art Museum & University of Nebraska Press, 1984) p. 4.

²Montana was recognized as a territory in 1864 and later as a state in 1889. When Russell arrived, Montana was still considered part of the Louisiana Purchase.

³Ben Mitchell's essay in *Theodore Waddell: Into the Horizon, Painting and Sculpture, 1960 - 2000*, (Yellowstone Art Museum in association with the University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2001) p. 45.

⁴Theodore Waddell's artist statement in *Seasons of Change*, (Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1992) p. 51.

⁵*The Most Difficult Journey: The Poindexter Collections of American Modernist Painting* (Yellowstone Art Museum in association with the University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2002) p. 18.

⁶From a phone conversation with the artist, October, 2010.

⁷William H. Goetzmann's essay "The Man Who Stopped to Paint America" included in *Karl Bodmer's America* (Joslyn Art Museum & University of Nebraska Press, 1984) p. 4.



THEODORE WADDELL

Ennis Horses I

2010, hand-colored lithograph, edition #42/45, 34 x 45"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of an anonymous donor

Theodore Waddell has had over ninety solo exhibitions, including major survey exhibitions at the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana, and the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, Montana. His work is included in significant private and public collections such as: Frederick R. Weisman Company and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California; Bank of America, San Francisco, California; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, California; Apple Computer, Saratoga, California; Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana; Federal Reserve Bank, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Helena, Montana; Hallmark Art Collection, Kansas City, Missouri; Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana; Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, Great Falls, Montana; Holter Museum of Art, Helena, Montana; Missoula Museum of the Arts, Missoula, Montana; Sheldon Memorial Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska; North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, North Dakota; Michener Collection, Austin, Texas; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas; Nordstrom, Seattle, Washington; Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, Washington; and the Buffalo Bill Historical Museum, Cody, Wyoming.



Exhibition Checklist

Cloud Landscape Drawing #7

1984, oil on paper, 20 x 26"

Gift of an anonymous donor

Cloud Landscape Drawing #39

1985, oil and graphite on paper, 20 x 26"

Gift of an anonymous donor

Cloud Landscape #5

1985-86, oil on canvas, 90 x 66"

intended future gift of John W. and Carol L. H. Green, Billings, Montana

Missouri River Drawing #7

1992, oil, encaustic and graphite on paper, 30 x 40"

Gift of the artist

Missouri River Drawing #12

1993, oil, encaustic and graphite on paper, 30 x 40"

Gift of the artist

Greycliff Angus I

2002, woodcut, edition #40/50, 29½ x 37¾"

Gift of the artist

Greycliff Angus II

2002, woodcut, edition #40/50, 29½ x 37¾"

Gift of the artist

Greycliff Angus III

2003, woodcut, edition #50/50, 29½ x 37¾"

Gift of the artist

Greycliff Angus IV

2003, woodcut, edition #42/50, 29½ x 37¾"

Gift of the artist



Ennis Horses I

2010, hand-colored lithograph, edition #42/45, 34 x 45"

Gift of an anonymous donor

Ennis Horses II

2010, hand-colored lithograph, edition #43/45, 34 x 45"

Gift of an anonymous donor

Gallatin Angus I

2010, hand-colored lithograph, edition #58/60, 34 x 45"

Gift of an anonymous donor

Gallatin Angus II

2010, hand-colored lithograph, edition #59/60, 34 x 45"

Gift of an anonymous donor



Cloud Landscape #5

Detail, installation view



THEODORE WADDELL

Cloud Landscape Drawing #39

1985, oil and graphite on paper, 20 x 26"

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

Gift of an anonymous donor