

TED WADDELL

A history of modernist marks

Modernist master Ted Waddell is a home-state kind of painter. "I feel like I'm a part of a wonderful glorious tradition, not only in terms of painting, but painting in Montana. To me continuity is important. Everything that I do refers to a place in which I've observed it. My cultural antecedents are people like Charlie Russell and Isabelle Johnson, Montana's first modernist painter, whose family homesteaded there."

Waddell credits Johnson with determining his career path. "Within two weeks of knowing her I knew I wanted to be a painter for the rest of my life. I was seventeen at the time." Waddell studied with Johnson, for two years and then, in order to learn more about his craft, Waddell went to New York to study at the Brooklyn Museum Art School.

"I was in New York at the time of the abstract expressionists, and I was really profoundly influenced by them, because they made me aware that the canvas has presence. And also the business of using paint is a part of that, too. If you think about Robert Motherwell and Willem de Kooning, there's that whole notion that this is a canvas and you're aware that it's a canvas. I turned twenty-one in New York."

It is easy to see the influence of the abstract expressionists and Johnson in Waddell's sophisticated modernist

paintings. A former rancher, Waddell tends to focus on cattle and horses, placing them on modernist landscapes. "I can't tell you anything about cattle that you can't discover for yourself, but I can tell you how much I love them, and how much I love this landscape. That's what I'm really about. People take photographs. That isn't what I'm interested in. I'm interested in the light and the landscape, and the animals. The animals are the most important thing. They provide a focus. There's an intensity that they bring to the landscape that without them is not there. Most of my life has been around cattle and horses and so those are the things that really resonate with me."

Familiar locations are also something that resonate with Waddell. "If I do a painting called *Monida Angus*, it occurred in Monida, Montana. Everything is site-specific. I need to observe the things that I paint. It's not enough to photograph them and go away. It's the constant revisiting of these sites and these animals that inspires me to do what I do. I've been by Monida probably two hundred times. It's this constant reinforcing of these specific places. There's a familiarity to these places, and so you have that as a background. Montana is that for me."

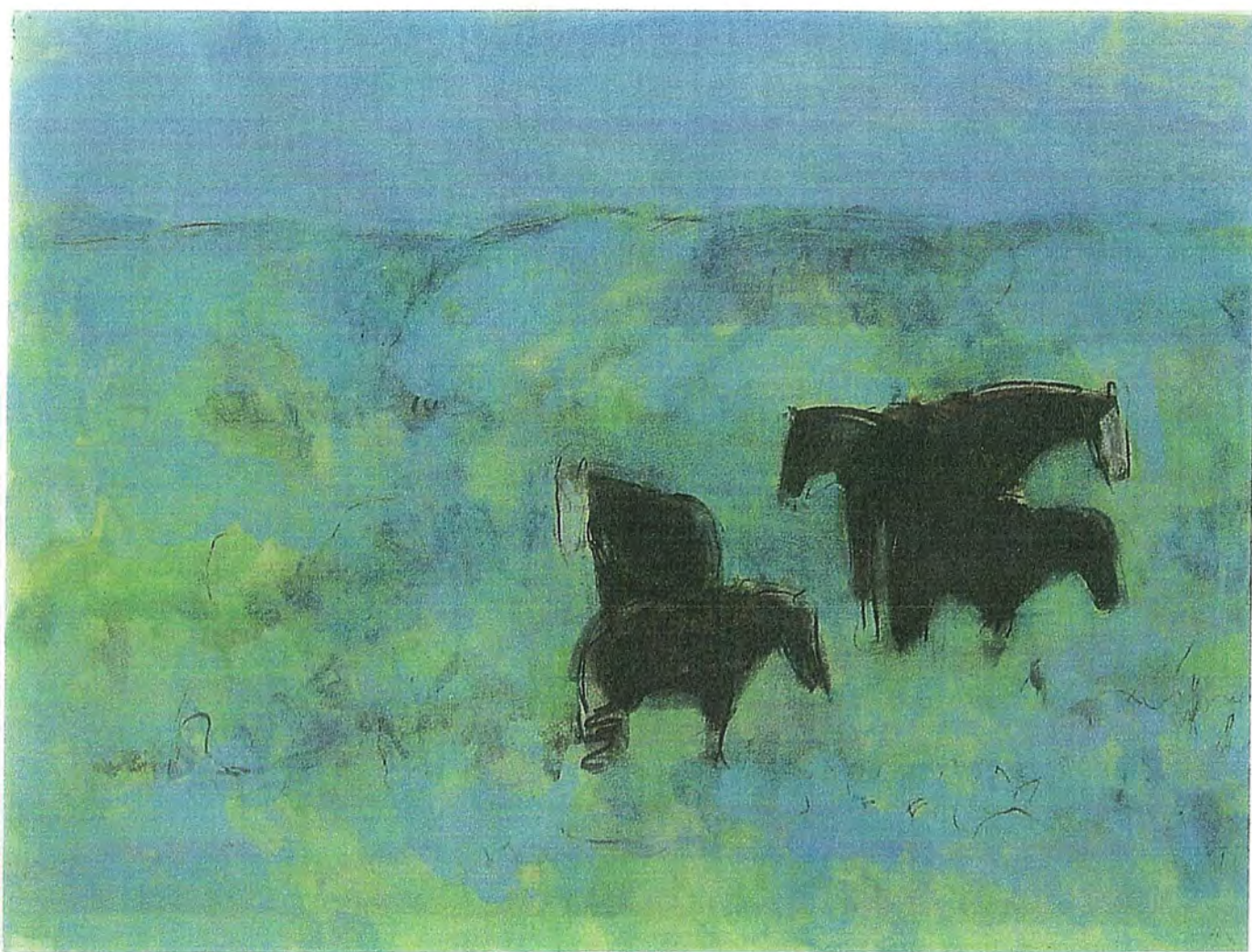
Within that deep sense of familiarity, Waddell finds variation. "As the light changes, as the season changes, it's against a backdrop of familiarity that you see

change. Right now we're going through a weather change. Moisture is being added to the air, so the quality of what you see is different than a month ago. An example of that would be the amount of moisture that goes into the wheat stubble in the grasses. In August they're the most brilliant yellow that you see, because there's no moisture in them. So it's like a Van Gogh yellow that you see. As the ground cools and the nights get colder, we end up with dew on the cellulose in these plants and it makes them seem darker. So you get a transition from that yellow to a raw sienna. At the same time, because you have that transition between warm light and cool ground, you get fog which translates into a bluish haze. It's a constant kind of change and I love it."

Waddell's style has evolved over the years, but he says the most dramatic change was brought about as a matter of circumstance, and not by design. "I went to Africa in 1988. At that time I had been painting very, very thick canvases. I ordered fifty-five gallons of paint to get over there and they held them in San Francisco. So I didn't get the paint until nine months after I got home. So I had to try to achieve the same results without all of the thick paint. It was a real change for me, and a good one. Since that time I have used a combination of washes and thick paint."

Waddell has also discovered another

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Sage Brush Horses Drawing #1, oil, encaustic, graphite on paper 22 x 30"

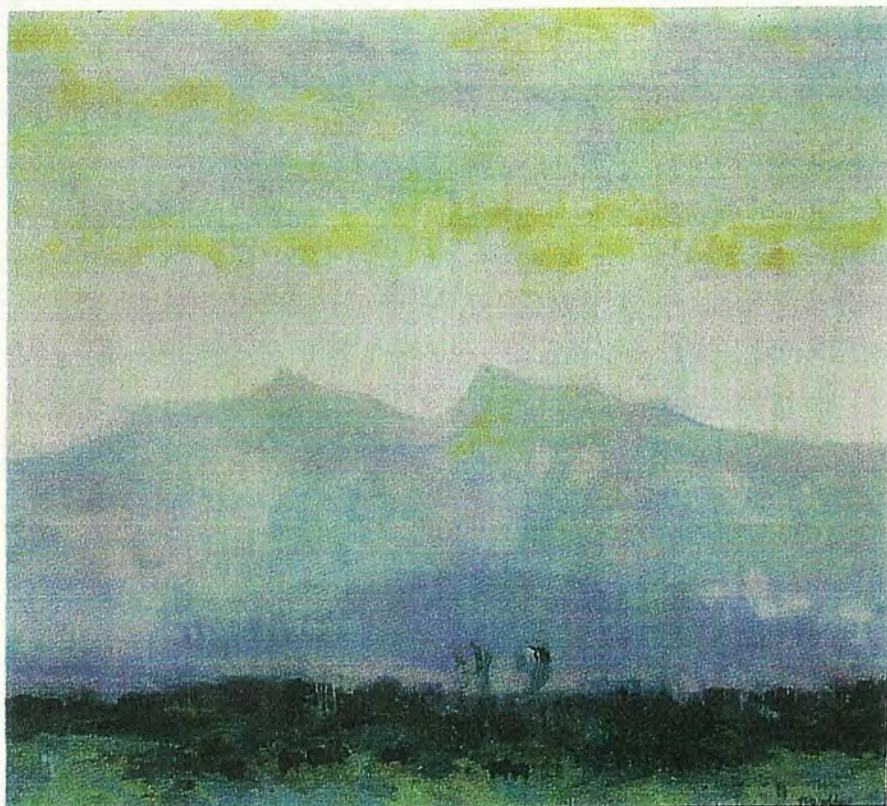
"You can make a mark and you can see underneath it the mark that preceded it. It becomes an accumulation of marks that you can see in succession. It's like our history, which is one of accumulation. I like that the marks accumulate to be the painting."

technique of which he's become quite fond. "In the last twenty years I've been using a material called Dorland's Wax Medium. Many would call it a cold wax medium. I mix that with varnish and pigment and it allows me to do overlays. You can make a mark and you can see underneath it the mark that preceded it. It becomes an accumulation of marks that you can see in succession. It's like our history, which is one of accumulation. I like that the marks accumulate to be the painting. If you look out at a field of brown grass it is an accumulation of a lot of other things that accumulate to be that."

Waddell is not an artist who likes to take time off. "I work in a continuum. I work all the time. I don't work for specific shows. I just keep painting. I just do what pleases me. If it doesn't please me, I don't do it. I want to be a better painter. I want to do this more than anything. I want to be good. I have a chance to be good. I've spent forty-eight years at this and I feel like



Arco Drawing #6, oil, encaustic, graphite on paper, 22 x 30"



Ross Peak Angus, oil, encaustic, graphite on paper, 72 x 84"

right now I have an opportunity to do that. I have few distractions," says Waddell. "I would hope collectors would see the changes and the growth and that the work is getting better. People have been really generous to me in collecting my work. I want to make sure they didn't make a mistake in collecting my work in the first place. I want them to see and know that through the course of time hopefully they made a good decision."



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Price Range Indicator

Our at-a-glance Price Range Indicator shows what you can expect to pay for this artist's work.

	Small	Medium	Large
1996	\$1,600	\$6,000	\$17,000
2001	\$2,200	\$8,000	\$25,000
2007	\$2,800	\$12,000	\$38,000