

Previews of Works for Sale at Upcoming Shows

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WESTERN ART

C O L L E C T O R

“Of the West: G. Russell Case”

by Michael Clawson

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(This cover page by Wood River Fine Arts)



Early Fall, oil on linen, 40" x 54"

OF THE WEST

Landscape painter G. Russell Case channels the desert and monumental vistas for his new show at Wood River Fine Arts in Idaho. By Michael Clawson



Above: *Canyon Rim*, oil on panel, 24 x 30";
Opposite page:
G. Russell Case in
his Utah studio.

The figures in G. Russell Case's epic landscapes are so tiny—mere pixels in an ocean of paint—they are nearly lost in the artist's timeless vistas. Any smaller and they would evaporate into the dust and desert sun.

These human subjects—in rowboats, hunched over campfires, on horseback—exist for balance, to show the immensity of Case's nature scenes, with clouds and cliffs towering over mankind like gods stepping over the horizon. "I find a little bit of a human [element]

in there allows us something to relate to in these large landscapes. Sometimes it's just a building or a tree, or maybe one or two people, but they are there to show us scale," Case says from his Utah studio. "I'm drawn to the vastness of the West, and the bigness of the desert. Nothing compares to it."

These immense Western landscapes will be featured in *New Works: From the Canyon Lands to the Rockies*, Case's first solo show at Wood River Fine Arts in Ketchum, Idaho. The pieces in the exhibition represent a travelogue



of the artist's painting journeys, from his home in Brigham City, Utah, to Glacier Lake, the Vermillion Cliffs and the Sawtooth Range in Idaho. The new works offer stunning diversity in tone and scenery: the paintings of mountain lakes and snow-capped peaks are composed in gorgeous layers of blues and greens, the canyon scenes are warmer with purplish shadows and dramatic highlights, and the desert vistas are topped with clouds stacked high into the inviting sky.

"As an artist, my philosophy would be to get outside, get in reality and nature. Seeing it in person is always best. Then get to the museums to see what's come before, and never forget the basics of compositions. And never stop reading," he says of his material gathering. "I'm always trying to think of different ways to approach my paint and subjects. One thing that helps is being with other artists, and listening to them talk and watching them paint."

Case often paints with other artists,

including prominent landscape artists Len Chmiel, Matt Smith, Christopher Blossom, and James Morgan. He will typically time a plein air trip with a group around the *Maynard Dixon Country* festival in August in southern Utah. Choosing painting locations with a number of other artists can be interesting, he adds.

"Sometimes you're just driving down the road and you see a great place—it just hits you—but the problem when you get three or four guys with you is it doesn't always happen to everyone. Painting with other artists is a learning experience, but well worth it. Iron sharpens iron, right? I'm not sure I'm iron, but I'm getting sharpened just being around these other artists," he says. "Sometimes I'll go out alone and I'll zero in on a location and I will see it a lot clearer, especially after I've visited it for several days. I'll take snapshots as I go. You don't have time to overthink a lot of stuff. Just get in, go from instinct, work quick, and then you get out and get back in the studio. I really like this fresher spontaneous work. Sometimes artists are our own worst enemy, which is why it's best to let your method take over."

Chmiel says that Case has a firm grasp and insight on the desert. "He's of the West, and a fantastic painter of the West as well," Chmiel says. "Russell uses his obvious skill and his harmonies of color to great advantage, and he is able to translate that onto his paintings because he is so talented. He knows what he wants and he gets it. He's also a great personality in addition to being a great painter. He's very



Left: *Glacier Lake*, oil on panel, 18 x 24"



New Mexico Light, oil, 16 x 20"



Camp At Big Creek, oil on panel, 34 x 40"



Evening Farewell, oil on linen, 16 x 20"

appreciative of others and their work."

Case's painting trips also inspired Thomas Bassett, owner of Wood River Fine Arts, who came to admire the artist's process after joining him on the road. "We were treated to a tremendous light show of summer thunderstorms and magnificent cloud formations that are a unique feature to the canyon lands. Driving through the ever-changing weather was like having every Maynard Dixon painting we had ever seen presenting itself to us," Bassett says. "I realized at that moment the inspiration that has moved Russell Case to create the very personal expressions that have crossed

his easel over the years. Case captures the clouds and canyons with every stroke of his brush in a palette that pleases the eye and offers the viewer a fresh look each time they visit one of his works."

Some of Case's interest in the West as a subject can be traced back to his father, who was an artist and illustrator, and he also worked for Bureau of Indian Affairs, which allowed him to take his son to places he would not have otherwise seen.

"Those images are burnt into my memory. When I saw them I kept thinking about Maynard Dixon and Edgar Payne, how they had been there and seen what I was seeing.

They had painted my backyard," Case says. "I fell in love with the desert. And ever since I've been just painting what I love."

New Works: From the Canyon Lands to the Rockies

When: March 13-31, 2015

Where: Wood River Fine Arts, 360 East Avenue, Ketchum, ID 83340

Information: (208) 928-7728, www.woodriverfinearts.com