

The Russell

Various locations, March 17-19



Carol Hagan, *Blue Eagle's War Pony*, oil, 36 x 48.



Jenness Cortez, *Charlie's Horses*, acrylic, 24 x 30.

THE RUSSELL Exhibition and Sale is a centerpiece of Western Art Week in Great Falls, MT, a collection of art events that take place across Charles M. Russell's hometown each spring. The Russell draws collectors and artists from across the country, some of the best western art, and the opportunity to support the C.M. Russell Museum, which hosts and benefits from the sale. "For patrons, coming to The Russell has become something of a pilgrimage," says the museum's Executive Director Michael Duchemin. "It's not high tourism season, but they get to take part in a community-wide art event with the auction at the center."

The live auction, held on Saturday, March 19 (coincidentally Russell's birthday), funds the museum's education programming and operations. Last year, it set a sales record of \$7.8 million. This year's event begins with a dinner at 4:30 p.m. and bidding on the anticipated 125 lots at 6 p.m. Both contemporary and historic works are on the block. Six significant historic paintings have been consigned to the auction this year: one by Thomas Moran [1837-1926] of the Green River in Wyoming, and five Russell originals, including two watercolors.

Also among the auction items are works from members of the Russell Skull Society of Artists—a 22-member society of living American western artists whose work celebrates the tradition and themes of Russell's work. Josh Elliott, C. Michael Dudash, and Jim Carson are new society inductees this year. Each society artist presents a small group of works viewable throughout the weekend; these collections or "suites" allow the artists to display the breadth of their current work.

Society member W. Steve Seltzer has two historical paintings in the auction, but the Montana artist also is showing landscapes and contemporary subject



▲ Kathy Tate, *Ruby's*, oil, 16 x 20.

◀ W. Steve Seltzer, *In His Prime*, oil, 24 x 20.



Nelson Boren, *Footwork*, watercolor, 16 x 48.

matter that represent a new, more stylized technique for him. "It's how I'm handling the edges. I'm emphasizing the edges more than losing them. It's opened up some new possibilities for me and what I can do with my work," he says.

Carol Hagan, another society member from Montana, debuts new techniques and a new medium in her suite. This year she brings oil and coal-black paintings on glass panes that are displayed on metal stands. "I love color and form, but I also have been drawn to incorporating light into my work, and glass seemed like the perfect medium.

As the light evolves throughout the day, [the pieces] cast beautiful shadows and prisms of light," she says.

The weekend's activities include a preview party on Thursday evening at the C.M. Russell Museum; the First Strike Friday Night Auction, aimed at first-time collectors and emerging artists; and the Art-in-Action Quick Finish on Friday at the Meadow Lark Country Club, during which artists complete a piece while art lovers observe their artistic processes. On Saturday, Russell scholars host an educational symposium, free and open to the public. Of the many collecting

opportunities that take place during the weekend, Russell Skull Society member Andy Thomas observes, "It's a very personable event—and it's become a mecca for western art." —Ashley M. Biggers

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www.cmrussell.org

See more work at www.southwestart.com/events/the-russell-feb2016.