

ONES TO WATCH

Spotlighting the works of artists Chris Morel, Terry Karson and Jeff Pugh, mosaic artist Rahnee Gladwin and landscape architect Stacey Robinson of Land Design, Inc.

WRITTEN BY Michele Corriel



Landscape painter **Chris Morel** paints what he loves: willows in winter with snow-patched pines, the slow detritus of pueblos returning to the land and a mist of light netted on a pre-dawn stream.

“This is what inspires me,” Morel says, having moved from Texas to the mountains outside of Taos, New Mexico, 21 years ago. “I’m here primarily for the landscape, and there’s a legacy of landscape painters in New Mexico. My biggest challenge is if I want to go out on location somewhere, do I take a left or right out of my driveway?”

Morel, after more than two decades of landscape painting, still finds places that are fresh and new to him. Places where the light plays just right, and the patterns feel unique. “What I’m looking for ... that’s the hard part,” he says. “It

has to do with the time of day and the direction of the sun. It’s really about what strikes me as I ride around.”

He often finds himself returning to familiar places again and again, challenging himself to find new compositions within the same setting and grow as an artist from the experience. “Little things change, birds build nests, snow falls on them, parts fall down, everything changes and I just want to see it and check it out, like an old friend,” he says. “I go back to the same places because it’s comfortable for me. With nature and old structures — nobody wants to paint a brand new house, but we love the broken down adobes.”

Morel paints on site, “chasing the light,” but he also brings field studies and photographs to his studio where a study might turn into a bigger piece. “A typical scenario is to get out early, early ... before the light and do some camera



Riverbend Willows
Oil on Linen | 12 x 16 inches



Truchaseco

Oil on Linen | 20 x 30 inches

work, because that absolute first light is going to change dramatically in no time.” He spends about an hour taking pictures and then will “throw the canvas up” and start drawing with his brush — shape, line, design — catching whatever it was that made him want to paint that place.

“Sometimes I’ll work for an hour and wipe the whole thing off and go to breakfast,” Morel said. “That’s the exciting part of the process. You can turn out a beautiful piece on location, but you can also do some real dogs out there.”

This June, Nedra Matteucci Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, will present *Natural Wonders*, a two-person show exhibiting plein air and studio works by Morel and sculptures by Dan Ostermiller. “Chris will be showing vistas of Northern New Mexico with his unique ability to capture the softness and subtle light of his surroundings,” says Dustin Belyeu, gallery director. “Dan will be featuring a larger-than-life chicken as well as African animals and his ever popular bears. It is exciting to have these artists highlight their different views of the natural world.”

Owner of the gallery, Nedra Matteucci, says Morel brings

maturity to his impressions of Northern

New Mexico, but she also appreciates how eager he is to grow as an artist. “For Chris, a backroad in the familiar foothills near Taos becomes a unique vista; he dynamically captures our brilliant New Mexico light with a palette that sets a mood with each painting,” she says. “His enthusiasm is contagious and his natural landscape paintings are a strong but perfect balance to the spirited animals in bronze by Dan Ostermiller. We anticipate a wonderful chemistry between the paintings and sculpture in our July show.”

Morel’s work is collected publicly and privately, including by New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez, who has two of his paintings in her office at the state capital. His work has appeared in the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; at the Albuquerque Museum of Art in New Mexico; the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and the Thunderbird Foundation for the Arts’ Maynard Dixon Show in Mount Carmel, Utah. Morel’s work is represented by the Nedra Matteucci Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Mission Gallery of Fine Art in St. George, Utah.

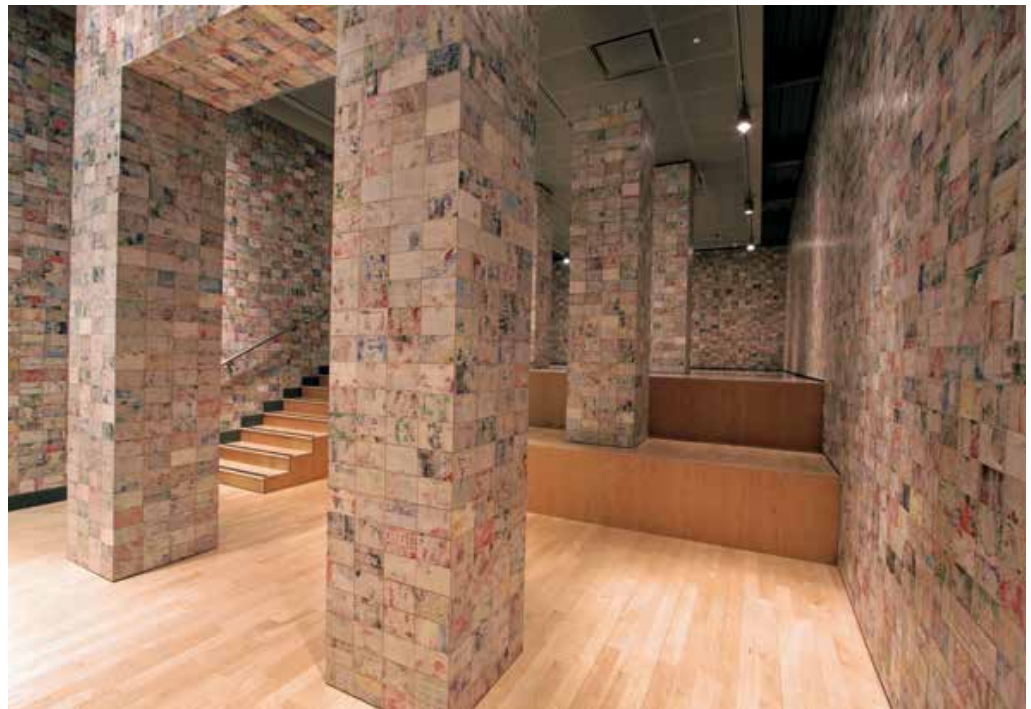
*Specimens XXXIII*

Cardboard Products, Pins and Black Linen | 30 x 60 inches



Terry Karson's assemblages draw us through the trash by the reins of beauty. His work seduces us with its aesthetic, while widening our awareness of the world around us, forcing us to grasp what we throw away. Only through the beautiful do we see the denigration.

Working with recycled materials such as cardboard, plastic packaging, bottle tops and other commercial packaging, Karson transforms garbage into treasure. "It's kind of like alchemy," Karson says, referring to the pseudoscience that transforms matter. "I take stuff that is thrown away and turn it into art. The beauty of the pieces belies their intent, as in much art. You can make ugly art that people will never look at, even though it has a great message."

*Commons*

Reclaimed Consumer Products | 4-x-6-inch tiles

In his series *Specimens*, Karson cut life-size cardboard shapes of butterflies from various brands of consumer products such as Cheerios and Kotex. Then he mounted them in a “collector’s box” to give the impression of nature and the way it’s viewed. The line between irony and critical commentary blurs with Karson’s precise dedication to the truth.

“In America, we love to package everything,” he says. “It’s a huge problem for the landfills. It’s completely absurd. The *Specimens* series is about the species that we’re losing through our rampant consumerism. I think of them as existing in the future, where they are the only butterflies we have left.”

Karson’s solo exhibit, *Commons*, at the Missoula Art Museum, combined both his concern with thrown out materials and his love of architecture. He transformed the entire interior of the gallery with 13,000 “tiles” made from 4-by-6-inch pieces of cardboard. Each piece was hand-cut from commercial boxes, sanded, vacuumed and sealed before covering the gallery walls and standing as 10-foot-tall columns.

“When I travel anywhere I’m just as happy to look at buildings as I am to look at art,” he says. “With this

exhibition, I was very influenced by my travels in Italy and Turkey. When I got home from traveling, I had accumulated quite a bit of cardboard packaging. I had all this material and this idea of these tiles. It seemed like a natural way to go with them.”

The nine columns in *Commons* took Karson two years to complete and the show took four months to set up. Each tile was mounted on foam core and placed on panels to exactly fit the gallery space. As a result, Karson was approached by a patron and commissioned to construct an entire wall of tiles.

His work appears in many public and corporate collections. Karson’s museum shows include exhibitions at the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, Montana; the Holter Museum of Art in Helena, Montana; the Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls, Montana; and the Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas. His work is represented by Visions West Gallery in Bozeman and Livingston, Montana, and Denver, Colorado; Gallatin River Gallery in Big Sky, Montana; Collage Gallery in Bigfork, Montana; and Flanders Contemporary Art in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Celebrating 30 Years

ELDORADO
HOTEL & SPA

**Anniversary
Specials**

- 30% Off 3 or More Nights Stay
- Wedding & Anniversary Packages
- \$30 Off Nidah Spa Signature Spun Gold Massage
- Old House Restaurant Steak Specials
- Meetings & Events Packages & Special Offers

EldoradoHotel.com/30Years

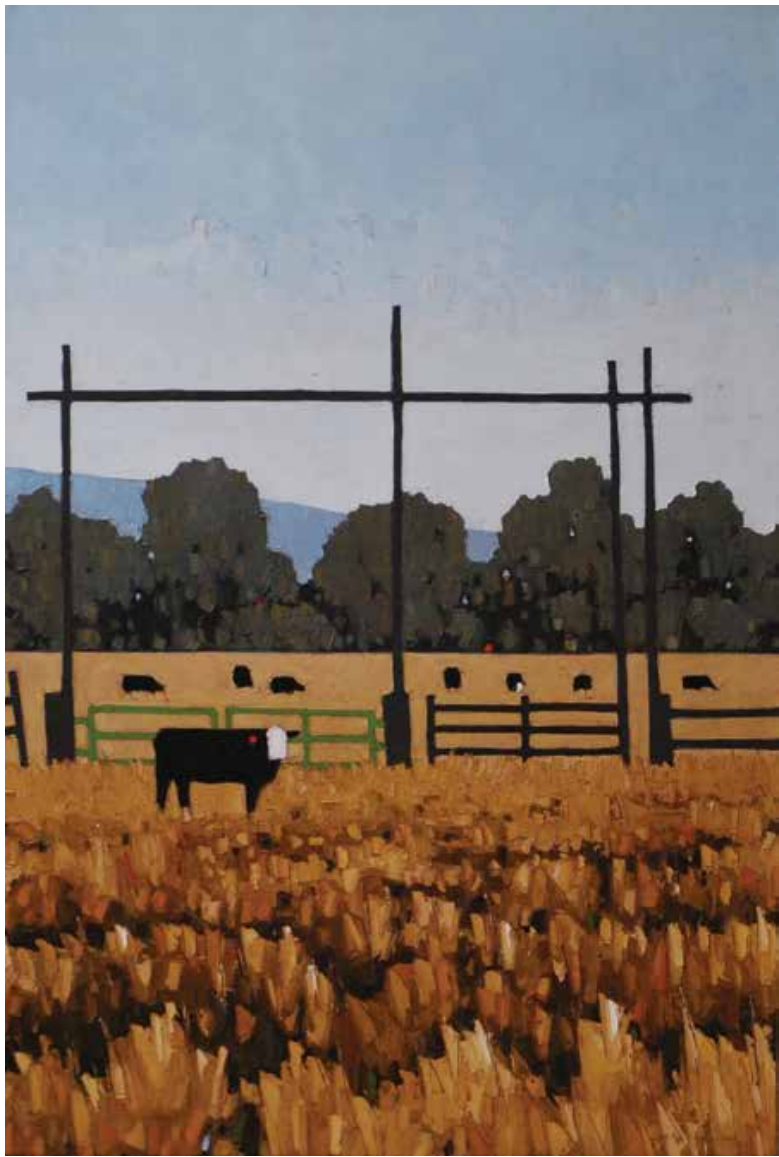
Oil painter **Jeff Pugh** plays with perception by using a palette knife instead of a paintbrush. He creates

a unified image that coalesces and disassembles depending on the viewer's distance from the work. Step back, and the flat planes and clean edges assemble into the pastoral; come

close, and color as well as texture takes precedence over the eye.

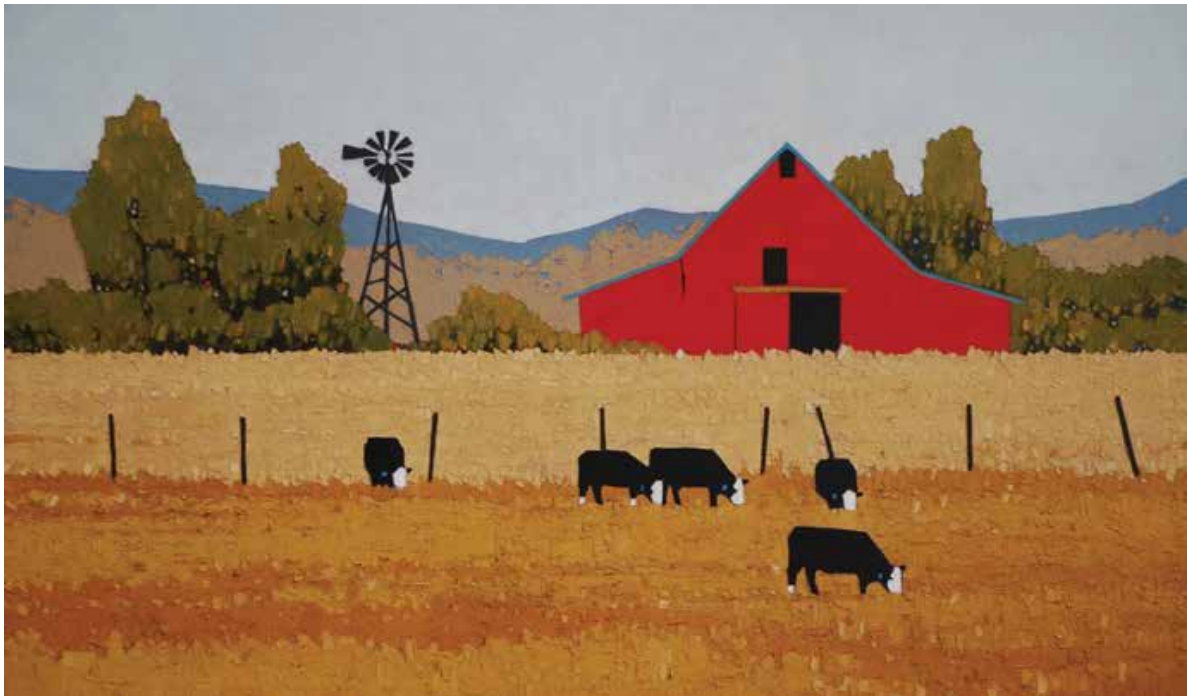
"I was always unhappy with my own mark-making," Pugh says. "I could just not get the right brushwork, and my work became more about the surface. I didn't realize when I started, but I'm so graphic-oriented that I started to feel like my paintings were old posters, [similar to] the promotional posters for the forests and parks."

He found the gradation he wanted came easier with his knife than with a brush. It was then he began to explore the notion of pixilation, the way a digi-



Wrong Side of the Fence

Oil | 36 x 24 inches



Homestead | Oil | 36 x 60 inches

tal image might fall apart upon closer inspection. Everything became more about broken color.

“I feel I’m working a 21st-century version of the 19th-century Impressionists,” Pugh says. “Van Gogh is so over-used, but his directional mark-making has a heavy influence on what I do.”

When approaching the work, it’s hard to know that Pugh is not using a paintbrush until standing directly in front of it. It’s part of the work’s allure — standing on shifting sand while preconceptions slip away. It draws the viewer into the experience of the painting, and in the end keeps the viewer coming back.

“Initially, I wasn’t that interested in the subject matter,” Pugh says. “I was more interested in the textures. As I’ve painted and developed, the subject matter has become much more important and symbolic. What’s happening in my life is expressed in my work. A number of my new pieces have barns and groups of cows; for me that was a symbol of hunkering down with my family and making sure we’re all together.”

Pugh will concentrate on different subjects as metaphors for what’s happening in his life. For example, if there’s a storm in his life, he’ll do a series of cloud paintings. If he’s strugg-

ling, he’ll do a number of winter paintings.

“When I first decided to paint full time, my wife and I had gone to a funeral,” Pugh says. “As we were coming back, driving through a blizzard, I took a lot of photos. It was so beautiful. At the time we had one child. It was 2008, the market crashed, and I did a painting of two cows in the middle of a blizzard. I still have it, to remind myself how difficult it was to get to where I am today and that there will always be storms like that.”

Eight years and two kids later, Pugh says the challenges are still there. “They’re just a little different because the importance of what I do has changed. It’s evolved. I feel much more responsible and you can see it in my paintings. Before I felt carefree; now I take what I do very seriously, because it’s our livelihood.”

Pugh’s work is privately and publicly collected, including the Utah State Capitol Building, the Springville Museum of Art in Utah and the University of Utah. He is represented by Mountain Trails in Jackson, Wyoming; the Meyer Gallery in Park City, Utah; David Ericson Fine Art in Salt Lake City, Utah; Authentique Gallery in St. George, Utah; and FourSquare Art in Mesa, Arizona.



“Electric Warrior” Oil on Linen 40” x 50”

COLT THE NEW FACE OF THE OLD WEST IDOL

coltridol45@gmail.com | www.coltidolart.com

Rahnee Gladwin's mosaics bring together experienced craftsmanship and artistic vision. Her detailed work places tightly packed pieces of stone and glass into designs where the grout joints are so minuscule it appears seamless, yet the work is still understood as a mosaic.

“Since most of my mosaics are client driven, the initial concept or where they want to go comes from the client,” she says. “Generally once we get through the first discussion they let me go for it. The other part is driven by the size of the area we’re working with and those restrictions.”

For example, Gladwin’s commissioned tropical reef mosaic reflected the client’s childhood in Tahiti. Once her



client decided on this motif, Gladwin looked for reference materials. “I have snorkeled, but I needed other types of images,” she says. “I went out and got a lot of books on tropical reefs and photography books for images of tropical fish.”

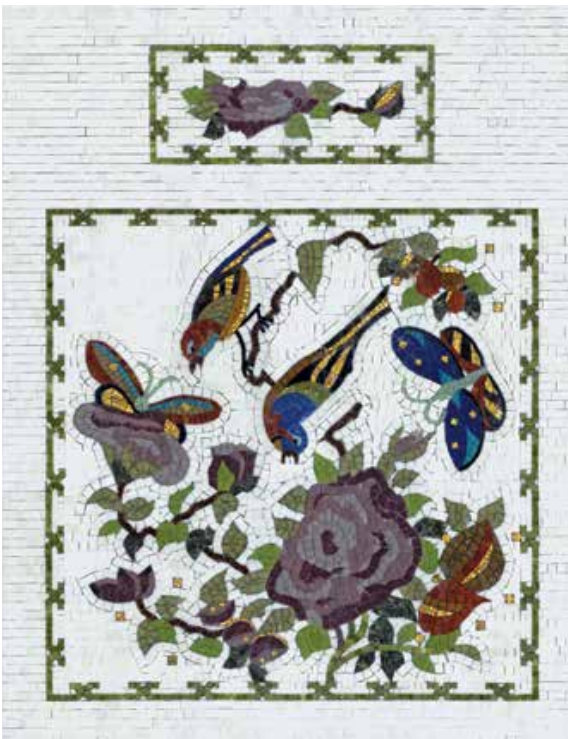
The majority of the mosaic spans 8 by 9 feet, but she felt the space offered even more possibility. “My work didn’t just stop at the mural wall but carried over onto the adjoining walls. The idea was to make the reef and the fish pop, so the background is quiet, composed of limestone — both matte and polished — which gave the effect of the light shimmering through the water.”

The next step in the process was reviewing different



Indigenous Shore Bird

Commissioned by a client in Galveston, Texas, this piece is composed of hand-cut and hand-assembled stone mosaic tessera in matte and polished finishes. Photos: Dror Baldinger



This piece was made with hand-cut and hand-assembled glass and stone tessera with matte and polished finishes for a collector in China.

ratios of fish and their surroundings with her client until they agreed to a scale that would fit the space. She then showed the client drawings of different types of coral and fish. Together they chose colors, with hues taken from actual photographs.

“The mosaics were a combination of stone and glass,” Gladwin says. “The glass was both translucent and opaque. The translucent pieces gave motion, depth and life to the material. The glass catches the light and draws the eye in. In that mural, I used well over a hundred different colors and textures of matte, polished, opaque and iridescent glass and a variety of matted polished stones. I just had bags and bags of materials — and of course all the pieces were hand cut.”

Gladwin lays out every drawing, scaled perfectly, sized exactly, so she knows precisely where every piece of tile is going to be placed. “That’s the art of it,” she says. “To make sure my assistants understand my intention down to the last piece. And I oversee all the assembly. In essence, once I research and develop the client’s idea, I select the images, place the images and derive an artistic statement.”

Gladwin’s projects include the president’s home at Trinity University and the Witte Museum in San Antonio, Texas; and the historic lighthouse in Port Aransas, Texas.



MODERN WEST
FINE ART

JOHN BERRY



Fracture, oil on canvas, 24" x 12"

JULY 15 - AUGUST 17 2016

TUES - SATURDAY 11 AM - 6 PM
177 E. 200 S. SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84111
801.355.3383

www.modernwestfineart.com



One defining difference between a landscape architect and a structural architect is that a landscape architect needs to be trusted, says **Stacey Robinson** of Land Design, Inc. in Billings, Montana. The principal in the firm points out that a landscape plan is basically circles on paper, whereas a house plan is a bit clearer to the client.

“The day you walk in the door, a finished building is what it is,” Robinson says. “With landscapes it takes years to get to that point, and that’s a very difficult and educational process you have to go through with a client. The landscape takes time to mature into the vision we had

Clockwise, from top: This home in Montana’s Yellowstone Club features a stone wall, patio and fire pit. The native plants surrounding the home tie the building to the landscape. | This newly built club house for Sunrise Ridge residents includes custom rock-retaining walls and an infinity-edge pool. | Boulders were brought in to mimic nature and help grade the site around the home. Photos: Cabel Noteboom

and to adapt to the natural surroundings.”

For example, Robinson says he had a client who wanted a specific type of aspen tree at the building site. But those aspens were bent and gnarled after dozens of harsh winters. “You can’t find those kinds of trees anywhere,” he says. “We were going to lose a lot of the aspens we planted to the elements and wildlife — but the ones that survive will

end up looking like the older aspens [the client wanted].”

And things like that take time.

“We’re trying to create something that takes hundreds of years to grow, in a single season,” Robinson says. “The challenge in the high mountain climates — besides having a short growing season — is that we have to forecast how the landscape will look and allow some level of completeness that looks good when we walk off the job.”

Philosophically, Robinson sees his work as trying to put sites back together after construction, which can be invasive to the land. “We often see projects where there’s been cutting into slopes which disturbs the native vegetation. So the question is, how can we accommodate homes in the landscape after that? How can we make it sustainable? How can we make it grow?”

Mountain landscapes need more site rehabilitation. For Robinson, it’s a balance. “We’re trying to tie a site back naturally to what it was, but we’re also trying to enhance the outdoor living,” he says, using the example of a water feature that isn’t necessarily natural to the landscape, but will enhance the setting and draw people outside.

Robinson approaches landscape design in two ways: reclaim the site and create landscaping that is architectural. “When you make a statement with an outdoor kitchen space, patio or a water feature, let it be what it is,” he says. “I dislike faux anything. If you want stone, use stone. If you want concrete, use concrete. The selection of the materials is important and we need to let them be what they are.”

To assure the best quality of materials, Land Design, Inc. stopped outsourcing, and Robinson expanded the company to include nurseries and stone quarries. “We’re not purists,” he says. “We’re not out gathering seeds and trying to recreate the environment. We’re bringing in naturalized plant material — plants that will do well in the environment but may not have been there before.”

One of the company’s first jobs was on a ranch in Ennis, Montana. They planted a significant aspen grove and at night an elk herd trampled it to the ground. “The biggest thing we learned from that was when we talk to a client we don’t oversell the project,” Robinson says. “There are things that are out of our control. It’s always a challenge and that’s what makes it fun.” ■



Rio Chama Riverbank, October 36x48 inches



Mug Shots - Fast Eddie & Big Red 20x20 inches



Free Flight 24x24 inches



236 DELGADO ST : SANTA FE : NM 505.992.0400 WWW.MEIKLEFINEART.COM