

Calendar of Events:

Curator's Note:

**"Cowgirls: Contemporary Portraits of the American West"**  
On view thru May 20, 2010

**"Arthur Short Bull: Places and Narratives"**  
On view thru May 30  
Closing Reception- May 30, 1- 4pm

**"Nancy Bass: Abstractions of the Virginia Farm"**  
May 26- August 22, 2010

**Nancy Bass Reception**  
May 28, 2010, 5-8pm  
Artist talk - 4pm

**Coffee with the Curators**  
June 16, 10 am

Museum Hours:  
Wed- Sat 10am-4pm, Sunday 1pm-4pm  
Appointments and tours available  
Free Admission, Open to the Public

575 E Street, David City, Nebraska 68632  
402.367.4488, www.bonecreek.org



Dale Nichols, *When Day is Done*, 1951, Gold Seal Puzzle, Private Collection Loan.

Spring on the land, where dry creeks swell and creative juices flow. Do I plant? – Or do I paint? The farmer's impulse to farm is akin to the artist's impulse to create. So says the book that I'm now reading, *The Mother of All Arts; Agrarianism and the Creative Impulse*, by Gene Logsdon. This book makes the case that both Agrarianism and Agrarian Art contribute to good stewardship of the land.



This notion is apparent in our spring-summer guest artist exhibitions. The paintings of **Arthur Shortbull** (ending May 30<sup>th</sup>) stem from his caring for the land of his Oglala Lakota people. The paintings of **Nancy Bass** (starting May 26<sup>th</sup>) stem from 30 years of living on her historic family farm in Virginia, now facing encroachment from 'hobby farms'. Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art is privileged to provide a national venue for these artists to each say something different about the same thing, - caring for the land that sustains us all.

The great Agrarian Artist **Robert Sudlow** died on March 25th. In tribute, his painting, "Holly Hill from the West", is now on special exhibition.

Our Collection Gallery now features an incredible flagship painting, "Sodbuster", by **Harvey Dunn** (1886-1952), on loan from A. R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art, Trinidad, Colorado. In exchange, our painting, "My Home in Colorado", by **Robert Wesley Amick** (1879-1969), is on loan to the Mitchell Museum. Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art is for 'sodbusters', what the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum is for 'cowboys'. Now, when we explain this to visitors, we point to "Sodbuster", one of only a very few paintings of sod busting by any major American artist.

Not only is "Sodbuster" symbolic of Bone Creek's mission; it's a hallmark of American Agrarian Art. The Rural Romantic and Impressionist painters in Europe and Russia idealized rural workers and landscapes at the onset of the Industrial Revolution. **Winslow Homer** (1836-1910) painted a less sentimental Agrarian Art here in the United States. Harvey Dunn went further, making a uniquely American Agrarian Art. In "Sodbuster", Dunn painted the truth of his own hard working homestead experience growing up in South Dakota before it became a state. "Sodbuster" stems from the Jeffersonian Ideal, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Homestead Act, - not from any European paintings of an idyllic rural existence. John Steuart Curry was one of Dunn's students. N. C. Wyeth was best man at Dunn's wedding. Andrew Wyeth was influenced by Dunn and Homer. Most Agrarian artists were influenced by Homer and Dunn, arguably the fathers of American Agrarian art.

It's a great milestone to now present artwork by both of these artists in our Collection Gallery. Check this out on our newly redesigned web site and at the museum.

-Mark L. Moseman, Curator

Board of Directors:

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Our Mission is to be the National Center for Preserving, Viewing, and Learning about Exceptional Agrarian Art.

Agrarian— pertaining to lands, fields, or their tenure

As a non-profit museum, achieving the mission is possible due to generous donors listed at [www.bonecreek.org](http://www.bonecreek.org). Thank You from the Board.

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**BONE CREEK**  
MUSEUM OF AGRARIAN ART



## NANCY BASS

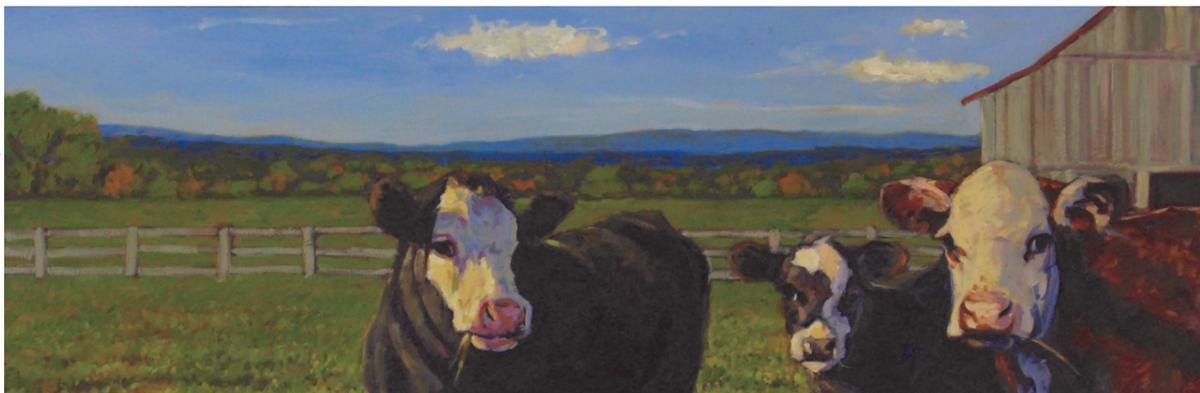
### Abstractions of the Virginia Farm

May 26– August 22

*Abstractions of the Virginia Farm* approaches farm animals with fresh eyes and a colorful palette. Nancy Bass abstracts the traditional landscape, literally or figuratively, to emphasize the personalities of her loyal farm animals. Bass says that her artworks, whether “bold bands of color or idyllic visions of the Virginia landscape reflect our agrarian past yet disrupt traditional animal painting and seventeenth-century landscape conventions.”

Nancy Bass lives on historic Anchorage Farm in Southern Albemarle County, Virginia, where she and her husband have raised cows for 30 years. Known by their first names in the paintings, these beloved animals are the center of the artist’s works. Happy cows inhabit their Virginia farm.

Over the years, Nancy and her husband have seen the landscape change as large sections of land have been divided and developed. Currently, Virginia supports a competitive market of organic farms



and niche products. In some ways, these business arenas obscure the reality that many Midwestern farmers face; turning a profit. Bass reflects on these changes and the misconceptions of farm life that many hobby farmers come to experience, as farming traditions erode and give way to a fragmented landscape.

Yet, her paintings do not reflect harsh realities that struggling farmers face. Their herd is more than their livelihood as Bass finds the animals to also be a source of life, evoking heartwelling emotion and feeling. The heart of the farmer or rancher beats for the animals. “Riding out and prowling amongst the cattle, breeding ‘em, roping ‘em, tending ‘em, and chasing ‘em, stirs pride in doing for one’s self,” says Grandfather Bannon in the 1963 film “Hud”. This love for the land and the animals stirs an enduring sense of worth that Bass captures in her paintings.

Bass turns to her animals as subjects of inspiration. She paints her stock in their best light, taking advantage of the range of expression that comes from working with these

animals on a daily basis. While the abstracted background in *Black and White* may theoretically serve to illustrate a vanishing farm, it serves also as a mirror to reflect the character of the animals in a whimsical manner.

Works like *On the Farm* are less abstract. A barn to the right and a fence bounding the cattle in the yard are clearly defined. However, she exhibits these more representational pieces in groups with the void between canvases serving as the abstraction to reinforce the discontinuity of herself and her animals to their natural surroundings. Her subjects often make direct contact with one another and/or the viewer. They demand your attention, your consideration. As the agrarian lifestyle for many farmers and ranchers continues to evolve, *Abstractions from the Virginia Farm* juxtaposes the striking character of these animals against a vanishing landscape.

By A. Mobley, Associate Curator

Images:

Above: *On the Farm*, oil, 8x 24”, Collection of the artist.

Below: *Black and White*, oil, 12x24”, On Loan from Private Collection.

## NEWS from the field

**Fundraising Campaign** has been a success as we are very close to reaching our goal for exhibition and book, *Dale Nichols: Transcending Regionalism*. Opening 2011. Thank you to all of the generous supporters.

**Great Concerts** have recently helped the museum celebrate a new exhibition and our second anniversary with local musicians Carol Fuxa, Mistyn Kozisek, (pictured below) and Todd Green of Nevada. More concerts are to come this summer.

**New face on the Worldwide Web** We are pleased to announce that we have a new website to better serve our guests and patrons. Updates will continue to build and refine the new site



to reflect the great exhibitions and programming featured here. To learn more go to [www.bonecreek.org](http://www.bonecreek.org).



## COLLECTION

Recently the museum was gifted a landscape of *Blackbird Hill* by Oakland, Nebraska artist Lawrence C. Faudel. John and Kathy Dewhirst, who we affectionately refer as our Directors of Western Acquisitions, have recently contributed a large number of fruit crate labels from across the country.

These colorful and graphic labels represent a heritage of commercial art used to sell agricultural products. On

long term loan from the A.R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art in Trinidad, Colorado, Harvey Dunn’s *Sodbuster* (image left) is a heroic example of the work we seek to show and educate people about our agrarian mission. From South Dakota, Dunn personally experienced and depicted

the unique period in American history, when the largest region of the country, the Great Plains, was transformed by breaking the thick sod; then tilled, cultivated, and planted with trees and crops.

## DALE NICHOLS CORNER



Dale Nichols created many of his Nebraska scenes from memory. He lived in Nebraska until he was twenty. From those early years, he could recall details of barns, farm houses, and local towns. One such local street scene of David City was painted much later in life from memory. The buildings are accurately depicted and the store names are recognizable.

In such American Scene images, Nichols portrays a small Midwestern town as both a lonely strip of buildings as well as a bustling vibrant community. Both themes reveal the fragility of the rural American economy as residents rely on good weather for crops and a healthy market. Another common theme in these images is the raising of the American flag. Nichols was a patriotic man and loyal to his hometown roots. He was sympathetic to the ways of the farmer and saw himself as one of their own.

## Emerging Artist Gallery in the Legion Building

### Arthur Short Bull Places and Narratives April 7—May 30, 2010

The Gallery in the museum annex at 551 E Street is open this spring for a watercolor exhibition. Arthur Short Bull subtly portrays the spiritual heritage and tradition of the Lakota Tribe. He carries on a family custom of visually recording their culture. Short Bull was raised on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This enabled him to uniquely experience and express the peoples’ connection to nature through an ethereal minimalist technique. He beautifully handles the medium as colors pool and blend on the paper. A Closing Reception will be held Sunday, May 30, from 1-4pm. Right: *Journey’s End*, watercolor, 2009.

