Calendar of Events:

“Cowgirls: Contemporary Portraits of the American West”
On view thru May 20, 2010
Closing Reception—May 30, 1-4pm

“Arthur Shortbull: Places and Narratives”
On view thru May 30

“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

Curator’s Note:

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 30th) stem from his caring for the land of his Oglala Lakota people. The paintings of *Nancy Bass* (starting May 26th) 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 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.

As a non-profit museum, achieving the mission is possible due to generous donors listed at www.bonecreek.org. Thank You from the Board.
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 artwork, whether “bold bands of color or idyllic visions of the Virginia landscape reflect our agrarian past yet disrupt traditional animal portraits in a whimsical manner.”

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 be also a source of life, evoking heart-welling 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 Gardner Bannon in the 1963 film “Hud”. This love for the animals and the land 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 landscape of 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, 8x24”, Collection of the artist.
Below: Black and White, oil, 12x24", On Loan from Private Collection.

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.

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.