By coincidence each of the three artists in "Landmark Barns" resides in Utah. Across the West, barns dot the landscape, marking people and place. Gary Ernest Smith, Jared Sanders, and Simon Winegar have made the American barn one of the subjects to which they constantly return, but each in his own style.

Gary Ernest Smith was born in Oregon in 1942 is the veteran of this group with nearly five decades of practice as an artist. In the 1990s one of his exhibitions “Journeys in Search of Lost Images” traveled to twenty-one museums in the United States. He has a renowned reputation in Western Art circles and is considered a contemporary Regionalist. Smith has always worked with the agrarian subject, formed from a childhood ranching with his parents. Early decades of his art were heavily figurative with an emphasis on the cowboy and working man. More recently he has focused more on the landscape, but still depicts people and buildings of the Western landscape. For Smith, depicting the agricultural process is one where farmers work in concert with the natural environment. He makes an effort to confront the dual narratives of natural and human worlds.

Jared Sanders was born in 1970 in Utah and studied art at Utah State University. Like Smith, he has always painted the agrarian subject as a professional artist. Sanders has specifically received professional accolades with his paintings of barns. For instance, a painting called “Landmark” (2013) from which this exhibition’s title was inspired was purchased by the Whitney Western Art Museum in Wyoming as an exemplary example of contemporary Western art. “To me, barns are simply a great visual gift that someone built and left on the landscape for me to use in my work,” Sanders says. Sanders uses artistic license to flatten and modernize this iconic landmark, emphasizing their aesthetic appeal over their functional nature.

Simon Winegar is the youngest of these three artists, born in 1979. He grew up drawing as a child with the encouragement of his mother and partnership of an older brother.

I think barns represent something that we are losing as Americans. It’s not a single thing, but an ideal made up of various things: the hard work and integrity embodied by these structures and the people who built them, the connection to wholesome ideals, honor and integrity, and the idea of hard work, improvement and honest living. I think sometimes we as a culture forget the great things we’re capable of. That is what a barn represents to me: That mankind is capable of doing hard things, of doing great things!” Winegar said.

The art in this exhibition is not simply about longing for the past. “It is not so much the subject painted as the intent, sensibility, and skill manifested by the artist that elevates it out of sentimentality,” Smith was quoted saying in Holding Ground: The Art of Gary Ernest Smith. Landmark Barns is a tribute to the essence of rural life.

As a compliment to the barn theme a couple of works by local pen and ink artist Larry Guyton will also be on display.

“A. Mobley Guenther, curator

May 4 - September 4

Image:
Top: Simon Winegar, Storing Straw, oil, 16x20”
Left: Gary Ernest Smith, Guardian, oil, 30x36”
Right: Jared Sanders, St. Charles, oil, 36x30”
All images courtesy of the artists.
EVENTS

Landmark Barns Reception - May 28
Welcome to the David City Alumni at a reception on Saturday, May 28, 1-4pm. The Memorial Day weekend reception is one of the museum’s annual and best attended events. Hope to see you there.

Summer Art Day Camp - July 27-29
Bone Creek will partner again this summer with the Butler County Arts Council to host Summer Art Camps, July 27-29, with six different sessions. Two sessions will be held each day, 9am-noon and 1-4pm. Cost is $10/session.

Learn about each of the sessions and register at www.bonecreek.org.

Corn Fest - Sept. 24
Mark your calendars for Corn Fest, Sept. 24, 2016. Join us for a farm to table dinner event at District 10 in Linwood. This fundraising event will center around “Corn Matters,” the museum’s fall exhibition to celebrate all things corny and wonderful! Seriously, come for a sneak preview of the exhibition and enjoy the corn side dishes, a silent auction and take home 2 things corny and wonderful! Seriously, come for a sneak preview of the exhibition and enjoy the corn side dishes, a silent auction and take home 2 things corny and wonderful! This exhibition will feature his most agrarian scenes borrowed from the Nebraska State Historical Society collection.

T.B. Johnson: Regionalist Impressionism

Thomas Berger Johnson (1890-1964) was a Swedish Nebraska native who studied with impressionist giant Birger Sandzen (1871-1954) after he had emigrated from Sweden to Lindsborg, Kansas. Johnson painted scenes in and around Lincoln, Nebr. in the bold, heavy impasto style of Sandzen, though often with a lighter color palette than his instructor. Johnson painted the scenes of life around him, as a social realist, and himself was an art instructor at the University of Nebraska from 1930 to 1953. This exhibition will feature his most agrarian scenes borrowed from the Nebraska State Historical Society collection.

Agrarian Art Collection

Once again this summer we are prioritizing exhibiting selections from the museum’s own permanent collection. This exhibition focuses specifically on rarely-seen works of art in the museum’s collection. Museums commonly have much larger collections than they are able to display and it is customary for many pieces in the collection to be rarely shown, if ever. Bone Creek Museum is not yet 10 years old, but we have seen substantial growth in our collection, such that we also have had difficulty displaying all pieces in our collection. It’s a good problem to have and we are grateful to the many people who have gifted art to the museum. “Southeast” by printmaker Elizabeth Peak is one example of an exceptional artwork being shown for the first time at the museum, though it was gifted back in 2012.

Calling All Nebraska Artists

150 Artists, 150 Artworks, 150 Years of Nebraska in Miniature
In honor of Nebraska’s sesquicentennial, Bone Creek is planning a large scale juried exhibition and sale for the summer of 2017. Nebraska is filled with many talented visual artists. We want to celebrate them, their craft, and this great state. We are looking for artists to submit an original piece of agrarian art for exhibition and sale. Submission deadline is February 1, 2017.

Visit bonecreek.org for full application requirements.

Visit bonecreek.org to become a member or make a tax-deductible donation.

T. B. Johnson, Pause for Refreshments, oil, Nebraska History Museum Collection.