

BONE CREEK
 MUSEUM OF AGRARIAN ART
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XVIII
 VOLUME, ISSUE I

We Always Had Chickens: Lorraine Ortner-Blake

MARCH 22 - AUGUST 18, 2024

MARCH 2024

We love to tell stories at the Bone Creek Art Museum. Over the years we have been fortunate to present family stories by several talented artists including Jean Terry of upstate New York and Wendy Hall of Ashland, Nebraska. This latest exhibition tells the story in visuals and words of a post-war 1900s Wisconsin dairy farm.

Artist Lorraine Ortner-Blake pays tribute to the memories of her mother and her siblings who grew up in a big family on a small farm.

“My goal is to expand a personal story to a universal agricultural history, to emotionally connect with a more urban audience. My paintings embrace a semi-realistic and primitive manner. I distort perspective, overlap timelines, and include objects of personal symbology. The paintings are small, intimate, done in gouache, on cotton paper or wood. Gouache allows detail; its flat surface is inviting, friendly. Using gouache allows my paintings to tell stories. My aim is to represent not primarily outward appearances, but the inward significance,” writes Lorraine in her introduction.

Why is this one woman’s experience important? What is the impact? Lorraine has provided some staggering statistics about the changes that have occurred in Wisconsin farming in 80 years.

Wisconsin’s economic—and physical—landscape has changed dramatically and continues to evolve.

- 1940:** Wisconsin has about 167,000 farms of about 122 acres each.
- 2020:** There are about 11,000 farms of roughly 221 acres.
- 1940:** About 28 percent of the population in Wisconsin are farmers.
- 2020:** About 2.7 percent are farmers.
- 1940:** Average age of a Wisconsin farmer is 47.
- 2021:** The average age is about 57.

“In my own life there have been significant changes in dairy practices. My mom (whom these paintings often feature) witnessed unpredictably astounding changes in agriculture. Forecasting the future of agriculture is impossible. But I believe that each generation strives for a way of life that is built on love of family; and caring for family includes creating a healthful way of life. Most of us aren’t milking cows each morning, but we do find connection to the land, whether it’s by growing parsley on the windowsill or hiking in the park,” says Lorraine.

The folk art style and frequent aerial vantage point allows for many details. Often numerous things are happening in one composition. When you visit, you can read more about the family story as label descriptions include personal comments from her mother and siblings about special memories. I believe the impact will cause you to think about what life was like for your parents and grandparents and how it will be for your children and grandchildren. I agree with Lorraine that we all do find a connection to the land. Hopefully one way you connect is through the beautiful art at Bone Creek Museum.

– Amanda Mobley Guenther, curator

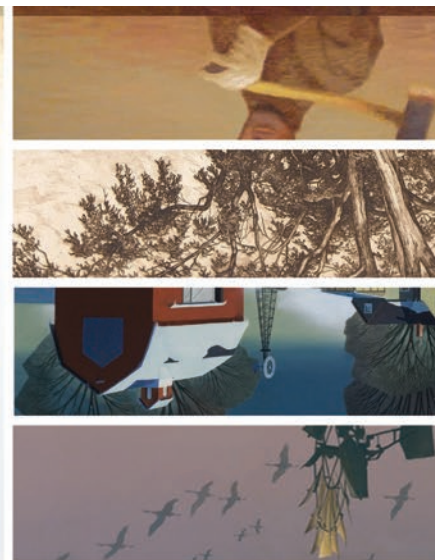
IMAGES

- Lorraine Ortner-Blake, *Picking apples*, gouache on paper, 20x20 (cover)
 - Lorraine Ortner-Blake, *Dad sent us to pick corn, the horse knew the way*, gouache on paper, 10x10 (top right)
 - Lorraine Ortner-Blake, *The first step saver*, gouache on paper, 12x12 (bottom right)
- All images courtesy of the artist.



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BONE CREEK
 MUSEUM OF AGRARIAN ART

Agriarian Art
 NEWSLETTER

2024
 MAR
 VOLUME, ISSUE I

CALENDAR -of- EVENTS

17
MAR
On the Homestead with
Judy Thompson
Thru Mar. 17, 2024

18
MAR
Closed for Installation
Mar. 18-21, 2024

22
MAR
We Always Had Chickens:
Lorraine Ortner-Blake
Mar. 22-Aug. 18, 2024

19
APR
Progress Party
Ford Building
April 19 from 10-11:30am

15
MAY
Food For Thought presentation
Hruska Memorial Public Library
May 15, 2024
RSVP to 402.367.3100

CURRENT MUSEUM HOURS

Wednesday-Saturday:
10AM-4PM

Thursday:
10AM-6PM

Sunday:
1PM-4PM

Monday, Tuesday, Major Holidays:
Closed

Appointments and tours available

FREE admission

402.367.4488
www.bonecreek.org

BONE CREEK

MUSEUM OF AGRARIAN ART

575 E St, David City, NE 68632

NEWS & EVENTS

FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The new Bone Creek building will be much more than an art museum. It will be a center for education and community events. We're almost there but still need your help.

The front of the building will be a large, open multipurpose room for events, performances, and large meetings. Since those are often better with food and drink, a "Servery" where caterers can access limited facilities for food preparation and set up for events will be adjacent to the foyer. The museum has superb working relationships with all three Butler County school systems and local youth organizations, but has lacked space to provide the kind of programs we would like to do. For more info or to donate to this project, go to <https://Campaign.BoneCreek.org>.



Interior view from the southeast corner of the Ford Building after floor leveling. Image courtesy of Jim Hanna

MAJOR GIFT OF ART

Late in 2023, the museum was gifted with 24 paintings by nationally known artist Gary Ernest Smith (1942-). The gift comes from the Overland Gallery of Minneapolis, which holds a large collection of his work. Smith's work has been exhibited at Bone Creek in previous exhibitions, and a handful of paintings from this gift are now on display in the South Gallery. Due to the scale of several of the paintings, they had to immediately go on display as we currently do not have the storage room for them. That's all to change with the completion of the museum's expansion into the Ford Building. "Because we have embarked on this new expansion, we can now accept major acquisitions like this Gary Ernest Smith portfolio and continue to collect important agrarian artworks that shape the narrative of our shared history," said Board Chair Ruth Thoendel.



Bone Creek Curator (center) pictured with Doug Johnson and Marie Grubisich of Overland Gallery in front of *Wheat Harvester* by Gary Ernest Smith

TRIBUTE BRICKS

Engraved tribute bricks are still available for purchase supporting the renovation of the Ford Building. Each brick will be engraved with two lines of text of your choosing. Bricks this year are priced at \$200 each. Forms for the bricks are also available in the museum.

ORDER bonecreek.org/join/giving/

NEWS

FROM THE FIELD

On the Homestead with Judy Thompson

There is only a short time left to see Judy Thompson's watercolors on display. The exhibition comprises two series created by this Iowa artist. The Homestead Series was created about ten years ago during an artist in residence program at the Homestead National Monument in Beatrice, which now owns the collection. In these paintings, Thompson blends her research from the national site with her artistic impulse to capture moments of what life would have been like to "prove up" the land. In her second series, Thompson created the book cover art for brand new publications about the life and writings of Laura Ingalls Wilder. During our extended hours on Thursdays all were invited to listen to a reading of *Little House on the Prairie*.



LIBRARY FOOD FOR THOUGHT PROGRAM

On May 15, employee Gabrielle Comte will present a Food for Thought program at Hruska Memorial Public Library in David City. In her presentation titled "I Don't Get It", she will discuss the groundbreaking artworks in history that are sometimes polarizing to contemporary viewers and attempt to answer the question, "Why are these overrated, scandalous and sometimes hated artworks still considered masterpieces today?"



Call the library at 402-367-3100 beginning in April to reserve your place for the program.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!
We look forward to seeing you!



DALE NICHOLS CORNER

One of the recently gifted paintings by Gary Ernest Smith makes an interesting connection to Dale Nichols. *Mother Earth* is a very large scale field painting by Smith that has a female body in the foreground, smudged in browns, as a part of the earth itself. Nichols likewise occasionally depicted the horizon line in a human form. Nichols was directly inspired by Rockwell Kent who did the same. The graphic above is similar too. Nichols has a contour drawing of a man lying as large as the landscape. Nichols' most significant artwork with this motif is a 1930s painting *Earth to Rest* for which he also had small prints made. The figure is difficult to decipher in the dark foreground, but her head is on the right and her hair appears like crop rows. The horizon line is delineated by her silhouette and the farm rests on her hip.



Dale Nichols, *Earth to Rest*, circa 1938, color print, image courtesy of the Lincoln Art Company

SHOP

We Always Had Chickens
Paintings and Memories

\$45

Written by Susan Masephol and Marilyn Ortner
with contributions from Justin Ortner, Margaret Esterson, Ellen Kline, and Paul Ortner
Illustrated by Lorraine Ortner-Blake

WE ALWAYS HAD CHICKENS CATALOG
Contact the museum for how to order online