



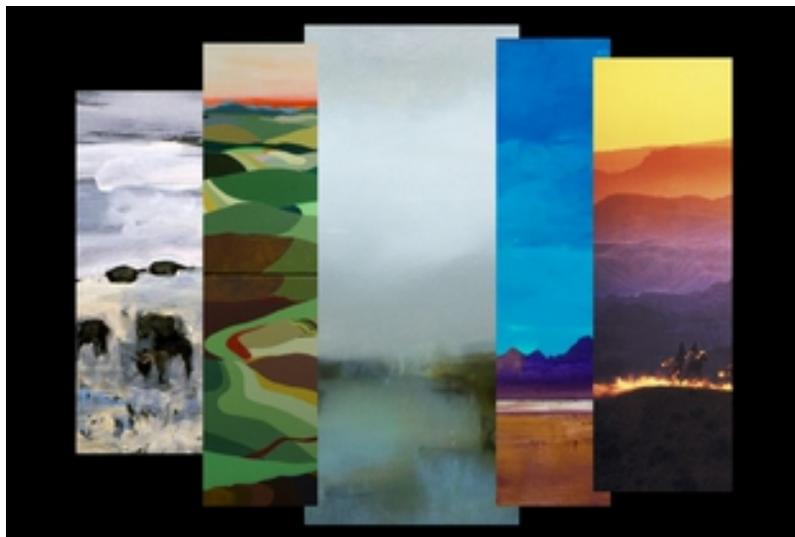
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**PRESS RELEASE**

The Island Gallery  
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**CONTINUING EVENT:**



## **Western Landscapes**

**Mark Bowles  
William Thompson  
Jen Till  
Theodore Waddell  
Irene Yesley**

**March 7 – April 27, 2014**

**Reception: First Friday, April 4th, 6-8 pm  
7:00 pm: Discussion, William Thompson: “The Art of Seeing”**



**During our April First Friday event Poulsbo photographic artist William Thompson will lead a discussion on the “art of seeing,” with particular reference to the iconic American cowboy in the western landscape.**

Presenting the works of local and regional artists depicting views of the changing seasons and moods of the Plains, the Palouse of Eastern Washington, the Pacific Northwest, and color-drenched central California. Their styles span from representational to minimalist and abstract in mediums of oil, acrylics, and fine art photography.

### **About the Artists:**

**Mark Bowles:** Mark was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area and has painted all his life. His passion for interpreting what he saw brought him to study at the California College of Arts & Crafts and then at the Instituto Allende in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. His work is shown extensively throughout the West, with two US Embassy exhibitions in Kathmandu, 2010 and Mexico City, 2009. His work is represented in numerous private collections and publically in the Denver Art Museum, Tucson Museum of Art and Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California.

Some words from Mark:

*Whether I am working with a still life, the human figure, or landscape, I am always fascinated by texture, form and color which I use in expressing how I feel about what I am seeing. I do not limit myself in what I paint or how I might interpret what I see. This freedom allows my work to move from representational to minimalist to abstraction. My work is ever changing, ever challenging and always a passionate delight. It is always my intention to address the canvas directly, honestly, and boldly. My heart is always pushing my work to find new language in expressing what I see and how I feel about it. The result therefore is not just an intellectual exercise for me, it is being involved in the “Now” .....always open for change and challenge .....always evolving.*

*Exploring color, composition, the quality and attitude of a line, as well as various materials will always fascinate and be tools for me. It is my goal to draw the viewer into my space and let them become involved in their own personal journey and discovery of the work. The ultimate reward for me is to communicate something new to the viewer even if for just a moment in time.*

*Painting is my commitment, my passion and my fulfillment.*

Commentary from Scott Shields, Ph.D., Chief Curator, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California:



*Bowles's paintings are subjective, reductively simple, and filled with blazing light and color—a harmonious balance between the landscape he knows well and his passion for abstraction and the physical act of painting... [His] landscapes are individual statements that have emerged with individuality from a rich tradition of California landscape painting... Mark Bowles is not a plein-air painter although he finds time in the field crucial to his artistic sensibility. Mark prefers the solitude of the studio to address painting infrastructure and color interplay which eventually find placement in a finished work. Whereas many practicing Northern California landscape painters find richness with riparian settings or city-scapes, Bowles primarily features the broad plains of the Central Valley as his favored subject matter. Often, distinctive landmarks are visible in a setting that is on the verge of abstraction.*

**William Thompson:** For as long as Poulsbo-based artist William Thompson can remember he has had an insatiable quest for adventure and the exploration of cultures around the world. He trained as a cultural anthropologist (ultimately earning a PhD); he then delved into fine art painting, working on an MFA, but then “magic” happened. He discovered that the camera was the direct pathway to his eyes, heart and brain... his true creative “paintbrush”.

For 12 years Thompson had the good fortune to photograph for the National Geographic on assignment around the world. With his anthropologically defined mindset he saw things in terms of the essential truth of his subject's lives — that gleam of light in the heart of darkness. His visual travels took him into many exciting and often unexplored corners of a very large world.

While with National Geographic, Thompson made the first and, to date, only complete aerial imagery of Mt. Everest. This imagery of the ‘top of the world’ was created over many months destined for the lead story in the 100 year anniversary issue of the magazine.

Other NGS adventures include trekking across Bhutan by yak train, exploring its people and geography; he defined the life of the Kathmandu Valley for the NGS in another major magazine story. Thompson traveled extensively though Africa for over a year (and Asia for another year) following the elephants of the world on their tragic path toward extinction - almost becoming extinct himself after contracting cerebral malaria in the Central African Republic.

The last 20 years of Thompson's professional career has been defined by commercial image making—directing film and still photography for premier global corporations. His iconic images are well recognized in marketing campaigns for clients including Wells Fargo, Marlboro, Boeing, United Airlines, Intel, and Holland America to name a few.

However, in recent years Thompson decided to make a critical shift in the application of his creativity. He redirected his high-level professional film and still competence towards short and long form films that contribute to the world. He notes, “My goal is simply that my imagery should enlighten, create ideas, define passions, allow discovery, and above all, make a ‘difference that makes a difference’.”



In this light, Thompson recently completed three short films. The first is a film to help get women off the streets of Seattle and transition into a more normal life; the second film is a dialog about the tragedy of stillborn children, and the third a perspective of the unique and positive relationship between Alzheimer's disease and art therapy.

In other venues, Thompson recently taught a University Course entitled Visual Anthropology for Quest University Canada in a remote region of India. Upon returning home he enjoyed a very successful gallery exhibit in Jackson Hole of his Everest aerial imagery as well as teaching two seminars on "the art of seeing". Today, Thompson's creative endeavors include two books: the first is a compilation of his Mount Everest aerals and another about the Kathmandu Valley - *Kathmandu, The Way It Was*. He is also presently invested in two film projects, one on Elephants of the World and the other, an Imax project, about the American icon – the cowboy.

**Jen Till:** Bainbridge Island artist Jen Till spent her childhood years in a seaside village, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, along the New England coast. Surrounded by the seasons during her formative years led Jen to look to nature as the basis of all her work as a painter today.

Her love of painting began at a young age. Jen's childhood experience in her New England surroundings was filled with the richness of colorful, sweeping fall, quiet, bleak winter, spring's lush bloom, and summer with its green warmth. Inspired by her many creative family members, she was fortunate to be entirely embraced in her budding love of art throughout childhood. Jen went on to the Rhode Island School of Design where she studied Painting and Textiles. After graduating, Jen moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico where she began to explore painting the vast landscape and light of the Southwest.

Eventually making her way to the West Coast, Jen now lives, paints, teaches and works as a freelance textile designer on Bainbridge Island, Washington.

*I am inspired by the many ways light casts itself on our earth. Moments in my life when I behold such beauty inspires me to create its memory in my work. Nature provides me with a foundation upon which I can build paintings to express a wide range of feeling.*

*The process I use is meditation with my brush in hand. This enables my creative energy to flow, uninterrupted and fueled by intuition. By creating layers with glazes I try to explore the inherent aspects of paint itself while keeping my mind focused on a feeling and place.*

*My painting experience grounds me and reminds me to be aware of the presence of spirit in all of life's moments.*



*I search for this essence and mystery as I dwell on a place filled with light. My hope is to engage the viewer and to share the mystery and calm I so cherish. My work reminds me that by painting the experience of the material world around me I can move toward the intangible, ethereal mystery of life.*

**Theodore Waddell:** Theodore Waddell's sophisticated modernist paintings have attracted widespread recognition. A native Montanan cattle rancher, Waddell most often paints freely-rendered range animals roaming the vast plains of Eastern Montana. In his work he draws a deliberate parallel between his subject and the elements of abstract art: cattle and horses are motifs formally arranged on the flattened and enveloping painted "ground" characteristic of modernism. Noted earlier for heavily textured surfaces, Waddell's recent paintings are more atmospheric, with translucent wax medium layers suggesting the drift of grazing animals, transitions of days, and the procession of the seasons.

Theodore Waddell was born in Billings, Montana in 1941 and raised in Laurel, Montana. He studied at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, Eastern Montana College, and Wayne State University, Detroit (MFA, 1968). Waddell taught at the University of Montana from 1968 to 1976, and has since been a full time artist and rancher. He has had over ninety one-man exhibitions, major surveys at the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, and the Denver Art Museum.

Waddell's father, Teddy, painted boxcars for the Northern Pacific railroad. When Teddy would return home at night he relaxed with a paint-by-numbers art piece while his son watched in fascination. Young Waddell's budding interest in paint paralleled a growing interest in music. He played coronet in a high school dance band, traveling on weekends to play for dances in nearby Montana towns. His interest in music would later turn to jazz, which in turn influenced his art.

An early interest in architecture was squelched when he flunked a math test at Eastern Montana College in Billings. Instead Waddell enrolled in Isabelle Johnson's (known as Montana's first modernist painter) painting class. After a few days with her, he decided painting was what he wanted to do the rest of his life. Johnson's work, steeped in the nineteenth-century European traditions of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism rather than traditional Western realism that had long dominated art in the region, clearly had impact on Waddell's style of painting. Waddell studied with Johnson for two years and received his first big break with a scholarship to study at the Brooklyn Museum Art School. Homesick after a little more than a year of study, Waddell jumped on a plane home and upon arriving in Laurel, found his draft papers waiting for him. Waddell went on to spend two years in the U.S. Army, playing trumpet and touring with a big band. Returning to Billings, he finished his degree at Eastern, and then his Master's of fine arts at Wayne State University in Detroit.

In 1968 Waddell joined the University of Montana art faculty, teaching sculpture and design. For eight years he lived in Arlee, teaching at the University and creating many minimalist-influenced, polished steel sculptures that can still be viewed in many towns and cities across the



state. "When we were living in the mountains, making sculpture made sense and it fit within the context of the narrow mountain valleys," Waddell says.

In 1976 Waddell left UM and took a job as a manager for a large ranch north of Laurel owned by relatives of his wife Betty. "On the prairie, where you can see for 150 miles in any direction, sculpture made no sense to me," he said, "I couldn't afford to make sculpture on the scale necessary for it to make sense so I went back to drawing and painting, drawing first, and then, after feeling the need for a scale change, painting our black cows." For years, Waddell ranched and painted, rarely showing any of his work.

In 1982 Waddell did exhibit a group of his paintings of cattle and landscapes in the sales arena at the Billings livestock auction yard. Soon after, a curator from the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. came to town looking for artists to include in a painting biennial, the Second Western State Exhibition. Waddell's paintings were among those chosen for the biennial and ended up being singled out in reviews by the Washington Post and The New York Times. They were also the subject of a Newsweek article; thus his career was launched. The exhibit traveled to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among other venues, and Waddell signed on with noted galleries in San Francisco and Reno, Nevada. Contracts soon followed with galleries in Chicago, Santa Fe, Seattle, and Scottsdale, Arizona.

Waddell left the ranching life in 1995, moving to the Gallatin Valley east of Bozeman. He now divides his time between homes in Sheridan, Wyoming and Hailey, Idaho, where his wife, Lynn Campion, a writer and photographer, teaches at the Sun Valley Art Center.

*The heart and hand needed to create a strong American painting is not limited to those living east of the Mississippi. It is a product of endless work, self-evaluation, and the courage to allow one's paintings to evolve. It demands the marriage of the artist's lifestyle and his work. Theodore Waddell exemplifies this definition. His enthusiasm and lifestyle are reflected in the way he works and the imagery he uses.*

*Waddell's paintings are a combination of rough marks; thick paint; transparent elegant strokes; and, on a few occasions a slow, hard line scratched into the canvas. You can feel the movement of the paint throughout the paintings but the subjects are frozen. They are not frozen as a stagnant object but captured as a solitary image. Captured, interpreted and enveloped in the landscape. They are carved out of, or laid onto the green and grey-yellow of the spring and summer, or the white canopy of winter. And sometimes there are ghosts in the paintings, the faint image of what has changed in the piece or decays in the pasture. These ghosts refer to Waddell's interest in life and death and our own mortality. They are metaphors for the struggle and change that is constant in life. In his artist's statement he says, "The understanding of death brings about a feeling of wonderfulness and appreciation of life and just how fragile and magical it all is."*



*Whether Waddell is studying the changing seasons, animals as individuals, or the later figures, one can see his magic in his reverence for nature and celebration of paint. He is a painter's painter: strong hearted, sure handed and high spirited.*

*Therefore, if I must categorize Waddell, he will live in the ranks of American painters and not be limited to the confines of the western artist.*

~ Jennifer Complo McNutt Curator of Contemporary Art, Eiteljorg Museum

**Irene Yesley:** Artist Irene Yesley of Bainbridge Island describes herself as a geometric abstract minimalist, designing flat, hard-edge patterns against a relatively flat background. Physical textures, such as brush strokes, play a minimal role to the interplay of positive and negative shapes, and the emotional impact of color.

Irene describes her journey:

*I earned an MFA in printmaking from Arizona State University. After graduation, I bought two floor looms and started making rugs and tapestries. Eventually I grew frustrated with the restraints of weaving, the warp and the weft and sold my looms. Freed from fiber, I have explored pencil, pastel and oil stick on paper, done reverse painting on Plexiglas, acrylics on wooden panels, gesso board and canvas.*

*The outdoors is the biggest influence on my work. The first landscape I knew was Spokane, Washington, where I grew up. That was followed by the cactus of Arizona for 5 years, the urbanscapes of Boston and Washington, DC, the chaparral of Topanga Canyon, and 22 years in the desert of Santa Fe, New Mexico. For six years until 2004, we had a condo in Kas, Turkey, on the Turquoise Coast of the Mediterranean, where I spent six months a year.*

*Now I live on an island across the sound from Seattle in a temperate rainforest. Without even being aware of what was happening, each new location has changed the shapes and colors in my work.*

**Location:** 400 Winslow Way E., #120, Bainbridge Island, Washington



*the Island Gallery*

**For More Information Contact: The Island Gallery, 206.780.9500 or  
ssn@theislandgallery.net**