

INSIDE Jackson Hole Art Auction • Wildlife Art • Quest for the West • Glenn Dean

Previews of Works For Sale at Upcoming Shows

SEPTEMBER 2016

109

WESTERN ART

C O L L E C T O R





Defiance, oil, 30 x 30"

Nature's Call

Inspired by his own adventures in the wild, painter Luke Frazier turns his attention back to sporting art.

By Michael Clawson

Nature is often defined by the bigger pictures—the sweeping, all-encompassing panoramas that melt earth and sky into one massive vista—and yet our perception of nature is assembled together from the smaller details. The smell of the bark and leaves in the cool wind. The crunch of the grass under each footstep. The inviting warmth of a popping campfire. From these flashes of memory we form a mosaic of images that becomes a bigger picture.

Utah-based painter Luke Frazier, long known for his exceptionally rendered wildlife work, is returning to his roots in the sporting art genre, but with a powerful emphasis on

those smaller details that come from being outdoors and enjoying nature. "It's those little intimate moments that really tie it all together. Like choosing the fly from your fly box and then using it to catch a fish or stalk a pool," he says. "Hunting and fishing, these are things that have always had a place in my heart. These little things, the fishing creels and birchbark canoes, really make me appreciate the nostalgic view I have of nature."

A new one-man show of Frazier's work will open September 9 at the Legacy Gallery in Jackson, Wyoming. The show will largely focus on his new sporting images, including scenes of fishing, hunting and camping, but

will also include wildlife pieces. Frazier, like many artists from his generation, was drawn to the timelessness of Robert Redford's 1992 film adaptation of Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, which invoked a uniquely peaceful time and place that is depicted in many of Frazier's works. This early inspiration led to illustrations for *Field & Stream* and other sporting magazines. "I found that people wanted what I was painting, which was a nostalgic and rustic feel to the outdoors," he says. "When I decided to return to my roots with more sporting art images, I knew I would be returning to something that I love, something that has always been part of my life."



Hot Coffee and a Warm Fire, oil, 24 x 36"

In Frazier's newest works, he not only exemplifies the sporting art genre—with scenes of magnificent hunting dogs, fly fishermen wading in knee-high streams and campers relaxing beside crackling campfires—but he intones the spirit of the outdoor lifestyle within his careful compositions. In *Hot Action*, he paints a hunting dog as the key figure in a scene

that also features two hunters and several birds trying to escape what is sure to be a deadly fate. The dog's brilliant white coat stands out from the tall, yellow grass and dried vegetation, and his pointed frame leads the eye into the action, where the fluttering birds rise up and out of the canvas. Frazier only puts detail where he needs it, and he allows his brushstrokes to breathe

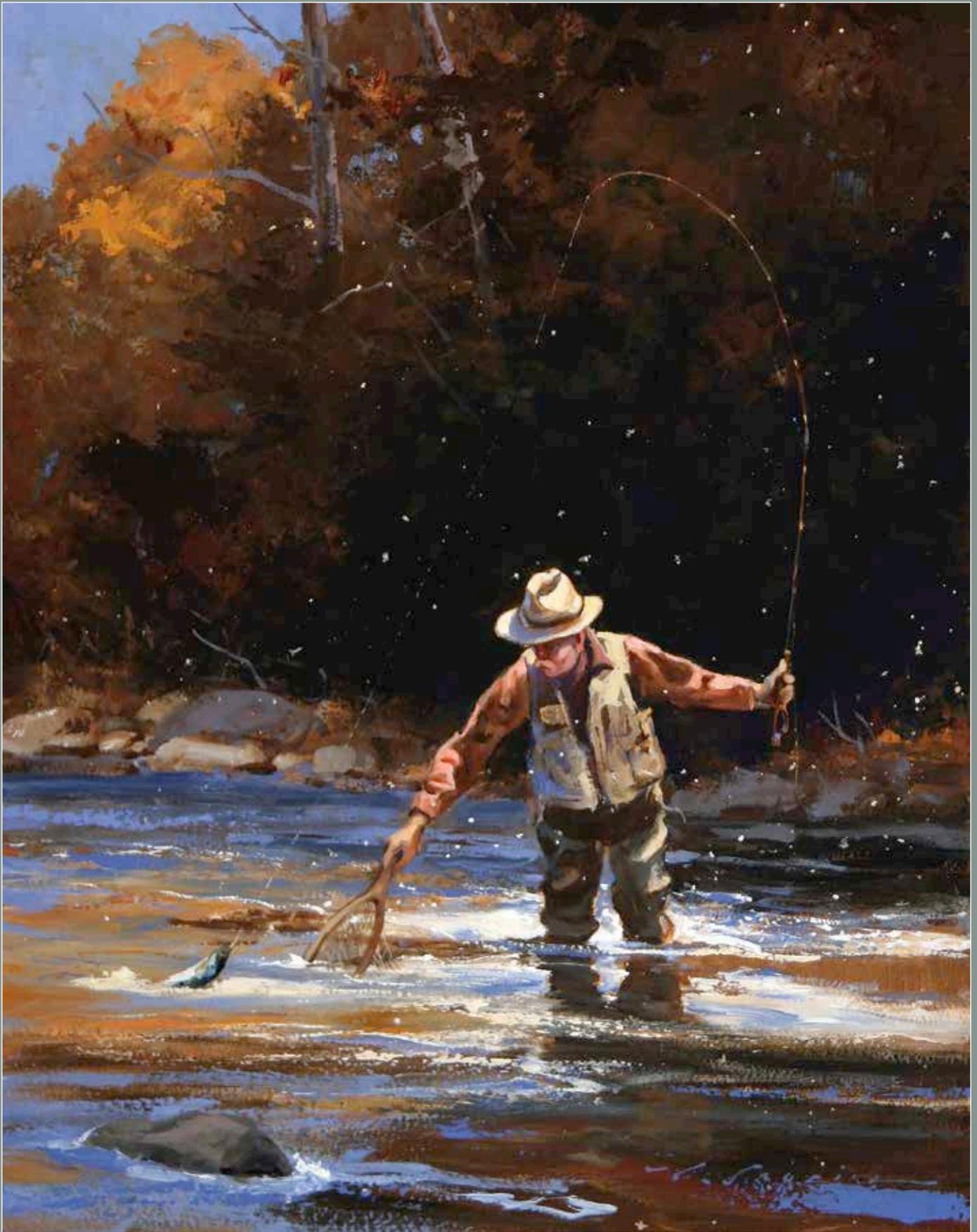
without requiring unnecessary detail.

"I had a teacher at Utah State who was watching me paint a cottontail rabbit. He told me, 'Stop painting right now, you're done. Leave and start another project.' So what did I do? I kept painting, and I ruined it," the artist says. "I learned a valuable lesson. I learned that when I was painting tight detail the more I added the less interesting the piece became. That's when I discovered Robert Abbott. It blew me away how much thick luscious paint was there, and then there were places for your eyes to rest. Then I found Bob Kuhn and Carl Rungius, and their work was done so masterfully. Bob Kuhn especially, he knew the shape of his strokes, the right color, the right tone, and when he got it the way he wanted he left it. He knew when to stop and he had enough conviction to know everything was in the right place and he didn't fuss with it. That was so powerful to me. That's a master's touch."

Those early lessons—and the works of Kuhn, Rungius, and Abbott—heavily influenced Frazier and his early development. "I try to be accurate, but not to a fault. I want to capture the essence," Frazier says adding that he is also heavily influenced by Golden Age Illustrators



Mallard Drake, oil, 8 x 14"



Midday Hatch, oil, 18 x 14"



Hot Action, oil, 18 x 24"

such as Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth, and Dean Cornwell, as well as W.H.D. Koerner, Ogden Pleissner, John Clymer, Tom Lovell, and Howard Terpning. "I wish I could climb in their heads to see what they were thinking. Rather than portraying a photograph verbatim, they really just painted only what they needed to describe the scene and put you there."

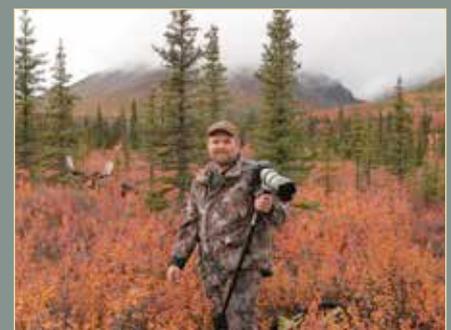
Other works in the Legacy Gallery show include *Midday Hatch*, which frames a fisherman inside a dark shadow in the far background. The shadow allows the viewer to see the man's form and appreciate his pose in the water. On the edges of the painting are golden leaves and cool reflections in the water, creating a warm/cool interplay with the colors. In *Hot Coffee and a Warm Fire*, a figure is slumped against a rock as he admires the view out over a lake. A strong diagonal line plays freely with the false horizon created by the canoe. With his mouth open and his hand on his hat, the figure seems surprised at the beauty of what is before him. This man could be any one of us, or even Frazier himself. An

everyman, a nameless surrogate there to witness the grandeur of nature.

Painter Matt Smith, a friend and colleague of the artist, calls Frazier a talented force, one who continuously impresses him with his work. "There are very few artists who can part from the photograph and define their subject with that kind of detail. Often times in his work he will forego detail for a more painterly brushstroke, and that's what I admire," Smith says, adding that Frazier is also an authentic painter who lives a sporting lifestyle and doesn't just paint it. "He's an outdoorsman and in a big way. He's also a great dad and family man, which I've always admired him for."

Frazier, a father of four, says that an outdoor life has always been important to him, his family and his art. He compares it to Charles M. Russell, who lived the life of a cowboy, and Frederic Remington, a studio painter who simply painted the life of cowboys. "With Russell, there was an authenticity to it. He painted the West. But he also knew it—and

he lived it," he says. "Look at a Russell work and you'll see the beauty of his little mistakes in his scribbles, in his Indian figures and in the backgrounds of dust. It's those little things that you appreciate." 🍂



Luke Frazier – One Man Show

When: September 9-18, 2016

Where: The Legacy Gallery, 75 N. Cache, Jackson, WY 83001

Information: (307) 733-2353, www.legacygallery.com