

# Bill Gallen

**Sage Creek Gallery, October 16-30**

SAGE CREEK Gallery spotlights the inherent beauty and charm of the western landscape this month with an exhibition of new paintings by Santa Fe artist Bill Gallen. For his third solo show at the gallery, Gallen channels the intense color and inimitable light that permeate the rugged, mountainous terrain and broad expanses of sky across New Mexico and the surrounding area. “Being in nature is a tonic,” says the veteran landscape painter, whose dynamic, painterly canvases reflect his longtime passion for the outdoors.

The show, titled *Paintings From the American West*, opens with a reception for the artist on Friday, October 16, from

5 to 7 p.m. It includes nearly two dozen oils, ranging in size from 6 by 8 inches to 30 by 40 inches. “We always look forward to Bill’s shows,” says gallery owner Gary Sievert. “His love of painting comes through in his adept handling of light, beautiful color harmony, and the overall sensuality present throughout his work.” Gallen’s compositions engage the senses with loosely defined, organic shapes in variably abstracted planes that at once compress and expand the space. For Gallen, translating his observations with “the language of paint” is paramount. “I hope to communicate my sense of wonder and love—both of the subject and of the act of painting,” he says.

Gallen has felt forever drawn to nature, and his calling was nurtured during his childhood with regular trips into the wilds of his native Wisconsin and the nearby region. His love for mountain terrain blossomed when, as an adult, he moved to Colorado, and it continued when he subsequently settled in Santa Fe. “The mountains are a spiritual home for me,” says the artist. This intense affection for his subjects fuels his *oeuvre* on various levels. “Painting feels like the fulfillment of a psychological, spiritual, and emotional need to express the joy and mystery of being alive,” he explains.

Gallen paints both on location and



Flux, oil, 12 x 21.



**High Road Winter, oil, 7 x 12.**



**Evening Light on the Divide, oil, 9 x 12.**



**End of the Valley, oil, 16 x 20.**

in his studio but invariably lays the foundation for each piece working in the field. “I like to get the strength and bones of the painting down as early as possible,” he says of his plein-air explorations. This process also allows the artist to retain a level of spontaneity in his work, which materializes in his lush, gestural brushwork and overt mark-making across the canvas.

Throughout his career, Gallen has been notably influenced by teachers

and mentors including Dave Ballew, Mike Lynch, and Ned Jacob. “We have a saying in the lineage: A good teacher manifests what’s possible for the student,” he says. Of the many things his instructors taught him, Gallen cites “the courage to try again in the face of falling short” as chief among them. For Gallen, who leads several workshops annually, teaching serves as a constant reminder to “walk the talk” and focus on the process of painting, not just

the finished product. “It’s a challenge to be a painter,” Gallen remarks, “but it’s rewarding in those invisible ways of the spirit.” —Elizabeth L. Delaney

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