

THE ARTIST AS SCOUT

*Bill Gallen scopes the beautiful wilderness
and reports back to the rest of us.*

By Gussie Fauntleroy



"Summer Tree Line," oil, 12" × 16"

Not everyone is free to spend time in desert or high mountain wilderness terrain. And even if they could, not everyone has the patience, the practiced eye, or the sense of wonder required to notice exquisite beauty in often small and unassuming spots.

That's why landscape painter Bill Gallen sometimes thinks of himself—with an appreciative smile—as “the scout who gets to go out and then comes back to the main group and tells them what it's like.” The genial artist's grin grows even broader as

he affects the wide-eyed scout's report: “There's some prickly stuff out there—but it's beautiful!” Then, more quietly, he adds that in some ways he knows people count on him as an artist to venture out, have a visionary experience, and relay it to them on canvas.

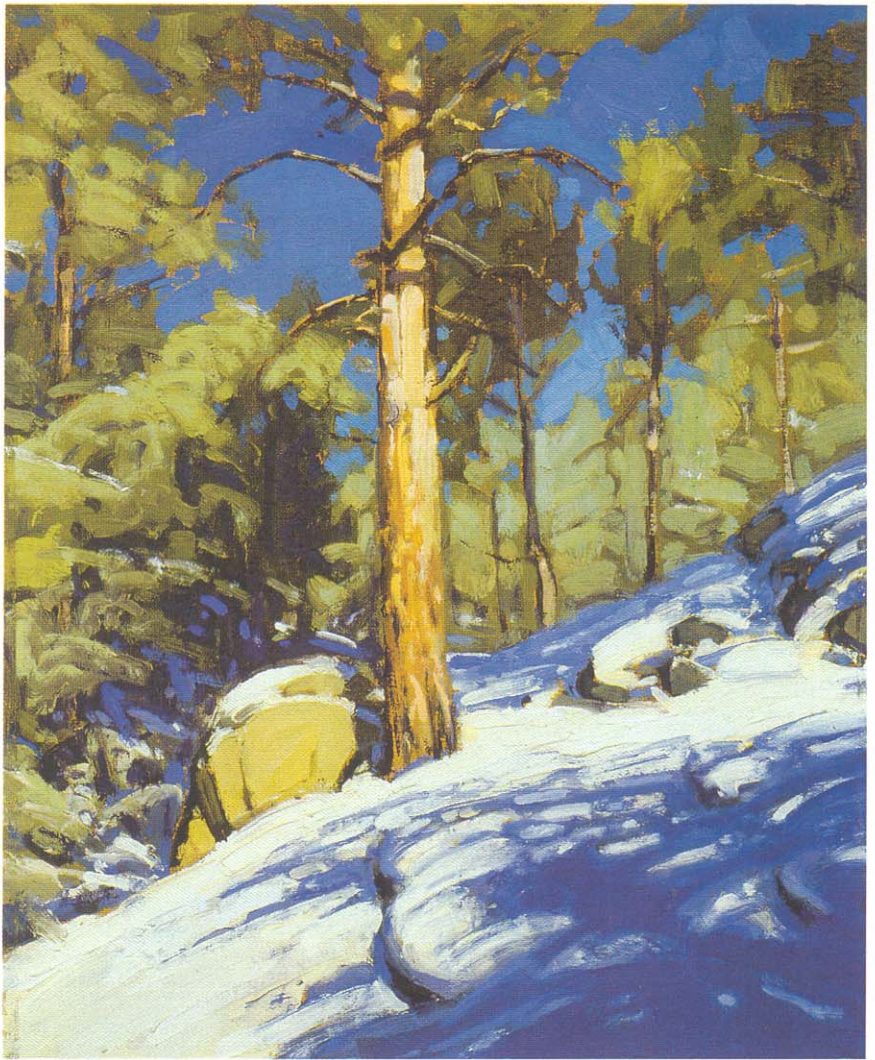
What Gallen relays, through authenticity of color, form, and masterful conveyance of light, is the sense of expansiveness and quiet he feels in unpeopled places, especially in the southwest. The experience of painting in

such places, he reflects, is “like throwing down a prayer rug and praying. The din of civilization rapidly drops away. There's a sense of mystery you get, traveling through this landscape, that feels like what you felt as a child.”

Gallen has been painting the southwest landscape since moving to Santa Fe from his home state of Wisconsin in 1996. While he continues to appreciate the atmospheric moodiness of the hills and lakes in the upper midwest, he is vitalized by the clear air,

dramatic light, and “geometry of rocks” in the region he now calls home. Traveling in New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, he takes photographs, paints plein air, and collects memories and powerful impressions.

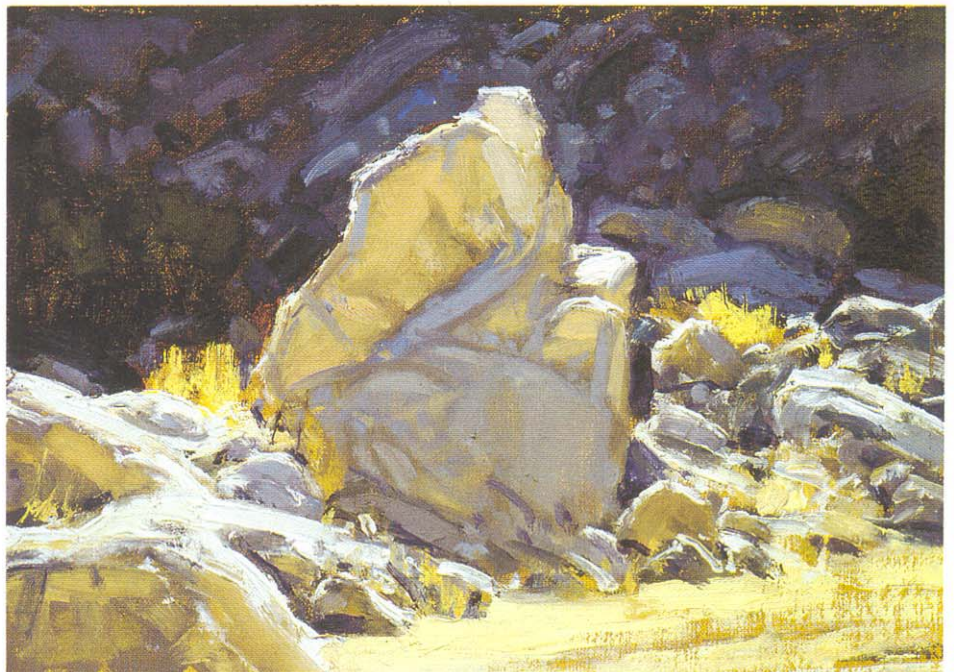
As much as the resulting art, it is the experience of painting that feels like a gift, Gallen explains, especially when he’s out in the wilderness of unspoiled terrain. “It’s the place where we go for meeting the muse,



“Morning in the Wintry Wood,” oil, 20” × 16”

the place to wake up the soul and see what’s out there,” he observes. Then, for the rest of us, he brings this beauty back.

The paintings of Bill Gallen are represented by Joe Wade Fine Art, 102 East Water Street, in the El Centro Mall. Hours: 9:30-5:30 Monday through Saturday, 10:00-4:00 Sunday. (505) 988-2727. www.joewadefineart.com.



“Canyon Sentinel,” oil, 9” × 12”