

WEEKLY PLANET

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TELLURIDE WEEKLY PLANET

Gallen and O'Gara at Telluride Gallery of Fine Art

Opening Friday

By Susan Viebrock

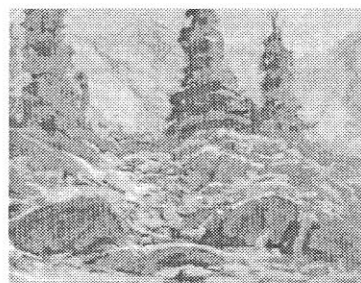
At the opening on Friday at the Telluride Gallery of Fine Art, artists Bill Gallen and Gary O'Gara's landscapes reveal a world without confetti, noisemakers, angst, euphoria and glitz. Nature holds all the possibilities of a calendar quirk, but as peaceful and secure. Gallen and O'Gara create an untroubled present that refers to the past and conjures the future in a stroke of a brush. These artists, however, are not scribes. They do not record. They evoke. Images definitely suggest the topography of a site, the location of trees, roads and streams, but more accurately describe emotions certain special places stirred.



"Where the Light Comes In"
9 x 12 Oil on Linen

Personal responses to natural setting is the primary content of these pictures. They are reflections of private feelings

and sensations, synthesizing observation, memories, fantasies and dreams.



"Up onto the High Ridge"
14 x 18 Oil on Linen

Says Gallen, "When I study other people's paintings, I look for the presence of love — love of subject, of materials, of handling the tools. I try to find the ecstatic interchange between artist and subject."

Gallen grew up in Wisconsin. He attended a Jesuit high school, then the University of Wisconsin, where he was a German major. He considered becoming a teacher or a lawyer. Instead he, moved to Frisco, Colo., where he "did a Jack Kerouac" thing, writing and playing piano.

Gallen moved back to Milwaukee full time in 1985 and started a house-painting business. By 1993, he had over 20 employees. Following what he describes as an "existential crisis," Gallen decided to become a fine artist. "I had taken some adult education courses at the local art school and the Mil-

waukee Art Museum. I was invited into the museum's galleries to copy the masters. The exercise taught me a lot about color and drawing. I never fancied myself a professional, but Katie Gingrass appeared at one of my open houses and invited me to show in her gallery.

Asked to describe his work, Gallen quotes Harlin Hubbard, a "modern-day Thoreau." "Hubbard would say that he considered himself afoot in paradise and that he was painting heaven. I think I do that. I am paid to wander out in the desert, get drunk on the beauty of it all and report back. I do not describe exactly what I see. I am representing an emotional state, which connects me to the idea of the unity of all things."



"Pacific Coast"
9 x 12 Oil on Linen

A pivotal experience in Gallen's life was the death of his younger brother John, who was only 22, in 1996. "I was a bone marrow donor for John. I was in awe as I watched the

graceful way he loosened his grip on this realm. He taught me that awareness is in a constant state of change and deathless. His mantra was peace, beauty and love.



"Sunny Slope in the High Country"
9 x 12 Oil on Linen

Gallen is an *alla prima* painter, which means he works spontaneously. His oils happen in one or two sessions. "I look for fugitive lighting effects. In the Southwest, colors are saturated. There's more vapor in the air in Wisconsin. I use the basic colors: viridian (cool green), sap green, several yellows, ochre and ultramarine blue. I think less is more in terms of color. I paint small, so I can paint fast. Outside, light changes quickly. I draw masses with a brush, not with lines. Underneath all the shapes, is an abstract, yet organic harmony that ties the pieces together."

Gallen's work can be found across the country with galleries in Wisconsin, North Carolina, New Mexico, Colorado and California.