



AMERICAN

art

COLLECTOR



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BILL GALLEN

Light and shadow

In Bill Gallen's landscape *Morning Patterns* a cluster of trees stand in a valley of receding shadows fleeing the sun's brilliance. "I look for patterns—the pattern of light and dark. Georgia O'Keeffe talked about painting a beautiful division of two-dimensional space. The painting has to hold an abstract effect," Gallen says of his method. "I'm very into the design effect, of two-dimensional design...My paintings won't necessarily be postcard vistas, but more about painting the landscape as an artistic medium."

Although Gallen paints a variety of different scenes—from snow-swept peaks to rocky desert ridges to Mediterranean seascapes—he allows that constant back and forth of light and dark to guide his brush. The New Mexico painter, who found the Southwest by way of Wisconsin and then Colorado, will have new oil landscapes up during an exhibition beginning October 17 at Sage Creek Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The show will feature 20 new works, including *Morning Patterns*, which is the

result of studies and other work in and around Crested Butte, Colorado. "I love that painting because it doesn't have the sky in it. I enjoy those paintings because you have to read the painting without the benefit of the sky," the artist says. "The light on the trees, and the contrast in the shadows, creates this interesting effect. It came very quickly to me up in Crested Butte. It reminds me of the emotional quality of being in that exciting light as the sun is cresting the ridge."

Gallen says he will use plein air studies





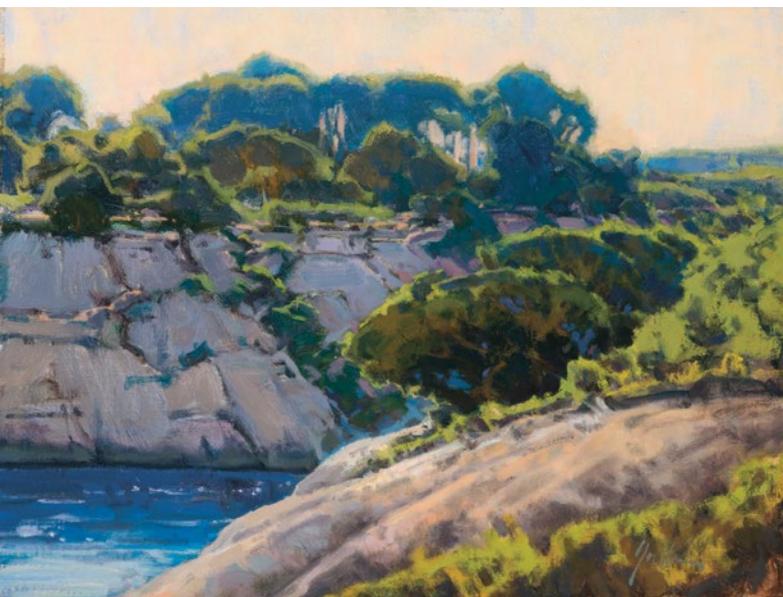
1
Late Summer's Eve,
oil, 30 x 40"

2
Mountain Forms,
oil, 12 x 16"

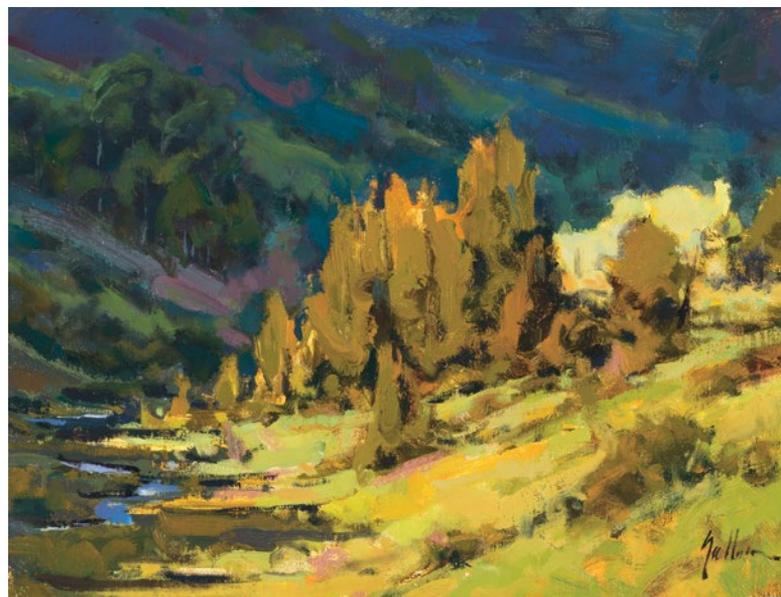
3
Sun and Sea,
oil, 18 x 24"

4
Morning Patterns,
oil, 12 x 16"

2



3



4

and photographic references, but he'll largely paint from memory using only color notes he created while studying his subject. In *Mountain Forms*, he paints a rocky outcropping jutting high into the Colorado sky. "This is a piece from up in the high country in Colorado. I just love the way light works above 10,000 feet—it's very bright and the contrast is strong,"

he says. "The undulation of the mountain and the swoop of the cloud behind it produce movement in the painting. Paintings are static things, but the ones that excite me have a feeling of aliveness in them. I look for that in other people's work as well."

Even as Gallen paints his current works, ideas for new paintings stack up in his

head. He likens the process of painting to that of a kettle on a burner. "The creative process is that kettle boiling, with the screaming moments and the boiling over representative of my shows," he says. "But even without boiling, there's always something percolating there ready to go."

Gallen adds, "I paint one ridge to the next." ●