

Bill Gallen

Pursuing his dreams

WHEN BILL Gallen graduated from college, he was expected to go on to law school and into a professional career. But the Wisconsin native, feeling pulled toward something different, moved to Colorado instead and started a commercial painting business with his brother. When his brother fell ill and passed away, Gallen says, "I realized that life was fleeting and you couldn't put off your dreams." So, following his own, he enrolled in art classes. "About five years after that, I had my first show," he says, and then he moved to Santa Fe.

In New Mexico, Gallen found inspiration and instruction in a lineage of artists tracing back to Bettina Steinke, one of the founding members of the National Academy of Western Art. "I had met Dave Ballew, a great friend and teacher," he says. "He led me to other great teachers, including Michael J. Lynch and Ned Jacob. I am so lucky to have known all of them." Today, in turn, Gallen is passing on what he has learned to others. "When you have been given a gift, you have to give something back," he says of his teaching. "This feels like a natural part of the process."

Gallen's gestural, impressionistic landscapes, capturing the diverse environments of his adopted New Mexico home and scenes from his travels, arise from a lifelong love of nature and a deep-seated need to express the joy and wonder he finds in it. "Nature is my favorite subject," he says. "As a kid, I was always wandering around in nature." Now, as an adult, he's deeply grateful to get paid to "wander around and paint it," he says.

—Laura Rintala

Gallen's work can be found at Sage Creek Gallery, Santa Fe, NM; Medicine Man Gallery, Tucson, AZ; and www.billgallen.com.

ROW 1: *Truchas Winter*, oil, 20 x 30. ROW 2: *Not Alone*, oil, 12 x 24. *Aspen*, oil, 8 x 6. ROW 3: *Fire on the Mountain*, oil, 24 x 20. *Summer in the Sangre de Cristos*, oil, 24 x 36.

