



# PICKING UP THE CHARGE

»» Inspiring New Generations at the National Museum of Wildlife Art ««

By Kirsten Rue

To the chorus of voices rhapsodizing on the wilderness or cautioning us to protect it, let us now add Ava B.

A response board stands in the National Museum of Wildlife Art's Conservation Gallery, hung with pieces of paper and sketches scrawled by young Museum goers in response to this prompt: Imagine a work of art that could benefit wildlife conservation efforts today.

"I love bison. Do not ever hunt or kill them," Ava B. wrote to accompany her bison sketch. Valentina responded to the animal kingdom depicted in *Endashian*, a painting in the Museum's permanent collection by Tom Uttech: "It would be so sad if any of them got killed or extinct. They are all important. Kids can make a difference."

"Accessibility and engagement are our keywords," says Jane Lavino, Sugden Family Curator of Education and Exhibits. At any time of the year, youth artwork hangs in the Children's Gallery, a school group is visiting for the afternoon, and children's voices can be heard in interpretive films and other educational elements that accompany the Museum's exhibits.

"Our educational programs and prompts are designed to

get visitors looking more closely at works of art," Lavino says. "We always want our visitors to tap into their own creativity and access a rich variety of voices that they will get excited about."

## »» In Their Own Voices

Access and interaction happen in manifold ways. For example, through the Open Studio program, the Education and Exhibits team devises art-making for all ages and encourages patrons to explore new materials and ideas, all while truly engaging with the art on the walls.

During this year's summer exhibits, visitors can imitate the work of a plein air painter as they react to a time-lapse film of the view outside while painting with water on Sumi-e paper boards—an ephemeral medium that seems in sync with the mercurial landscape beyond. From noon – 2 p.m. on weekdays, screen-printing activities are on the docket. There will also be stations to craft postcards from scratch, adding a much more personal "I was here" take for visitors to Jackson Hole. These Open Studio activities connect to all of the Museum's programming aligned with the National Park

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Sugden Family Curator of Education and Exhibits  
Jane Lavino

Fables, Feathers & Fur is FREE for children ages 3-6 every Wednesday.

Service Centennial, focusing on the artists who find the parks inspiring, and on our desire to return from the wilderness with something personal that hallows our memories.

The goals of Open Studio go beyond providing all ages activities in the Museum, however. Through asking patrons to respond to prompts—about conserving wildlife, for example—or through creating their own work, visitors young and old claim a voice; they begin to understand that their ideas and thoughts for the future are valued. Thus, Lavino points out, the staff cater to "a variety of audiences in the Museum—it's not just a place for adults."

Assistant Curator of Youth & Adult Education Grace Davis mentions a program in tandem with the Teton Mentor Project that proved particularly successful. During the program, 11 student and mentor pairs toured the galleries for free, encouraged to sketch and discuss what they liked and didn't like about art they observed. The visit also included the opportunity to create sculptures on wooden bases with sculptural wire and wax-based clay. Through the process of wandering the galleries together and crafting their artwork,

the structure of the evening's activities provided "a nice, compatible way for the pairs to share ideas." When asked to give feedback about what they loved the most, many students replied, "Everything!" Better yet, each child received a ticket voucher as a parting gift from the Museum, which Davis hopes will infuse other avenues of their lives with enthusiasm for art.

Inclusion is also the goal for a recent program geared towards Spanish language speakers, a vibrant minority group in the Jackson Hole community whom the Museum wants to welcome. Along with the Teton Literacy Center, Education & Exhibits staff hosted an evening tackling the subject of how parents can discuss artwork with their kids, encouraging them to engage and create art of their own.

For Assistant Curator of Education & Exhibits Carrie Schwartz, new interpretive strategies and tools could hold the key to boosting engagement across all facets of the Museum's programming. "We're thinking about how to encourage people to approach and use exhibition space in non-traditional ways," she says. Through soliciting feedback from Museum visitors



*“The program allows [the students] to delve deeper into artistic practice with more rigor. They are treated like they are artists.”*

Assistant Curator of Youth & Adult Education  
Grace Davis

ABOVE: Artist and instructor Neal Zeren demonstrates a skill to Thibaud Sanchez, a student in the Museum’s Studio Project program.  
BELOW: Students from Jackson Hole Community School paint outside.

of all ages and collecting their observations, she and the rest of the team want to continue pushing the envelope to create “interpretive tools that are exciting, engaging, and encourage contribution from the public. We’re always thinking about how we can encourage visitors to feel ownership over the collection, and how to create new points of access to the art and to our mission.”

## »» A New Generation of Conservation Stewards

“What it gets down to is relevance. If the younger generations don’t find relevancy in the arts and in national parks, then they are not going to be sustainable. That’s less people that are going to go into your world of museum management. Less people that are going to find value in creating these masterpieces. That’s why it’s so important that we look at this capacity building to make sure that they understand the importance of their role in what we do; that we are relevant in their lives, because the moment that we’re not, it’s a totally different conversation,” says Grand Teton National Park Superintendent David Vela. For the national parks, too, the investment of their youngest visitors is crucial.

Alongside the ceaseless drive to fashion a new generation of museum patrons and land stewards, the Fables, Feathers, and Fur program is a stalwart staple of the Museum’s programming. Each week, preschool-age kids flock to the storytelling session. Upcoming programs will highlight the

National Museum of Wildlife Art’s National Park Service themed exhibits by bringing children into the galleries and sharing stories related to those landscapes and the landscape of their own backyards. After all, this is where every burgeoning dream of conservation must begin.

Outside on the Museum’s Sculpture Trail, staff plan to lead flora and fauna discovery programs—getting up close and personal with invasive and non-invasive species, as well as discussing the sculptures on the trail and how the real-life wildlife they represent feed and forage in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Talks led by Ranger Doug in June will help contextualize the Works Progress Administration (WPA) posters on display in honor of the National Park Service Centennial.



Teton Literacy Center students observing *American Black Bear*, a painting by Carl Rungius, while working on a collaborative project with Jackson Hole Children’s Museum and the National Museum of Wildlife Art. Photograph by Elyse Kennedy.

## »» School Partnerships

Lavino remembers a time early on in her 25-year tenure at the Museum when it was the first place to offer programming for local schoolchildren during school breaks. This programming has continued to blossom. 2016 marks the inception of The Studio Project, a new program where 11 students from 3 local high schools get a real taste of a life in the arts. During the program, the students learned from working artists and designers, studying printmaking and glass work. On May 16, 2016, the capstone collaborative sculpture the team crafted together was unveiled to the public at the Art Association Gallery.

Davis views the National Museum of Wildlife Art as a valuable resource for local artists. Programs like the Studio Project help bridge the gap between community and the Museum, opening up another venue for conversations about art and culture to occur. “The program allows [the students] to delve deeper into artistic practice with more rigor. They are treated like they are artists.” In turn, these high school students can face back towards their communities as ambassadors of the arts.

It often seems like the most beautiful accomplishments of the world are in need of the most protection—wildlife, nature, and the arts are no exception. The National Museum of Wildlife Art heeds this charge by creating meaning for those who will, in turn, become the future voices for a centuries-old conservation movement. •

# INTRODUCING THE 2016 BULL-BRANSOM WINNER



## FINDING SPRING

by Carin Berger

Greenwillow Books  
an Imprint of Harper Collins  
publishers

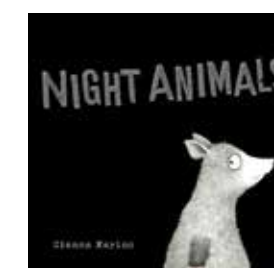
## 2016 Finalists



## FINDING WINNIE, the True Story of the World’s Most Famous Bear

by Lindsay Mattick

Illustrated by Sophie Blackall  
Little Brown and Company



## NIGHT ANIMALS

by Gianna Marino

Viking



## THE BEAR REPORT

by Thyra Hede

Abrams Books for Young Readers



## BEASTLY VERSE

by Joahee Yoon

Enchanted Lion Books

*The Bull-Bransom Award is given annually to recognize excellence in the field of children’s book illustration with a focus on nature and wildlife. The award is named after Charles Livingston Bull and Paul Bransom, two renowned American artist-illustrators specializing in wildlife subjects. Winners receive a \$5,000 cash award, custom bronze medal, and a five-year dual/family level membership that provides complimentary access to 12 museums across the United States.*

## THOUGHTS ON THE BULL-BRANSOM AWARD

courtesy of Julie Danielson, judge and blogger at “Seven Impossible Things Before Breakfast,” a literary salon of sorts for illustrated books and the people who love them. Danielson has a degree in children’s librarianship, writes about picture books for Kirkus and Bookpage, and is the author of *Wild Things! Acts of Mischief in Children’s Literature*.



**WHAT DO YOU THINK IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE BULL-BRANSOM AWARD AND THE CHILDREN’S BOOK ILLUSTRATORS/TITLES THAT IT RECOGNIZES?** It’s the only award that shines a particular spotlight on contemporary picture book illustration and the themes of nature and wildlife. The folks behind the award...believe strongly in getting high-quality picture books about the natural world into the hands of child readers.

**WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN TO ENGAGE WITH IMAGERY THAT INVOKES WILDNESS AND WILD CREATURES?**

I think it’s important, because our world today is increasingly media-driven, seemingly always-online, and hyper-plugged in. What I love, in particular, about the committee’s choices thus far is that each and every book, whether fiction or nonfiction, really taps into that spirit of wildness, which is such an inherent

fascination for children and such a part of their DNA. These kinds of stories really speak to children, not to mention that we live in a world growing in population and burdened by over-consumption, and we need to be reminded to take care of the wilder parts of it.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN JUDGING THE BULL-BRANSOM AWARD, AND WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF IT PERSONALLY?** I started in early 2013, and I feel like the lucky part of the equation here. I write about picture books professionally, and I’m fascinated by them. To help choose winners annually is a lot of fun for me—I am consistently impressed by Bronwyn, her team, and their excellent taste in picture books—especially because I think the award is so unique. Last year, I had the pleasure of visiting the Museum, and it’s one of the most beautiful places in the country! •

# A GRAND *finale*



On their Tauck tour through Yellowstone National Park, guests enjoy a stop-over in Jackson Hole that includes getting up-close-and-personal with a wintering elk herd at the National Elk Refuge near the Museum, as well as a private evening dining and tour experience at the Museum itself. Photos used by permission of Tauck.

*By Kirsten Rue*

Since 1925 when its first motor coach chugged along the back roads of New England, Tauck tours have inspired generations of loyal—and quite intrepid—travelers with their brand of inquisitive, life-enriching voyages to all corners of the globe.

The company’s Culturious tour brand focuses on more active and off-piste adventures for small groups of no more than 24 guests. Only one winter expedition is offered through this brand, focusing on Yellowstone National Park. At the end of the tour, Tauck holds its celebratory final dinner during a private evening event at the National Museum of Wildlife Art.

“When I was considering a venue for an elegant farewell, I immediately thought of the Museum,” says Brian Stacey, Director of New Product Development. “What better way to do it than with a glass of champagne in your hand?” During these festive send-offs, the Museum is only open to Tauck guests. They enjoy private docent-led tours, full access to all of the galleries, a hosted bar, and an exquisite three-course dinner plated by the culinary wizards at the Rising Sage Café.

The National Museum of Wildlife



Art’s exceptional service, setting, and high-caliber collection provide the perfect complement to a 9-day itinerary that includes custom-produced film vignettes by none other than filmmaker Ken Burns and his collaborator Dayton Duncan (see our interview with both on page 20). Their coverage of the park’s formation and history, combined with a presentation by Bob Landis—an award-winning Yellowstone wildlife cinematographer—bring home the context of conservation, which has always been an important focus for Tauck.

Stacey praises the Museum’s staff and the intimate, personalized experience they arrange for adding the perfect final

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Brian Stacey, Photo courtesy of Tauck.

note to a tour of Yellowstone’s wintertime wonders, from its roaming wolf packs to the artists who educate the guests and public with their knowledge. “The comments are always stellar,” he says. “The guests love getting dressed up for their farewell night. Not really knowing what to expect, they’re flabbergasted by the world-class nature of the beautiful setting, and its privacy. Dusk is falling, and they get to see a little bit of it. They spend a lot of time in the galleries; they get lost.”

Then, they must sit down to absorb what they’ve seen—just as dinner is served. •



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