

GILCREASE

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GILLIE
LIBRARY

*The Thomas Gilcrease Museum will
feature an exhibition of over 70
paintings and sculptures of North
American big game animals from the
Wildlife of the American West Art
Museum in Jackson, Wyoming, October
7 through December 31, 1989.*





Bob Kuhn (1920 –), Silent as the Snow, 24 by 36 inches, acrylic on board, JKM Collection.

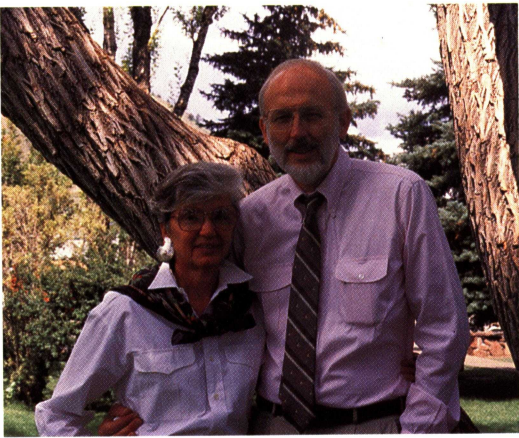
Heart of the Wilderness

BY PAULA HALL

A mountain lion crouches atop an ice-covered rocky terrain, one paw extended, almost touching the undisturbed blanket of snow stretching in front of the animal. The stealthy posture implies danger for a subject not seen in the painting. “Artists see differently than we do. They have some special acuity that enables them to see things, that until they put it down in a painting, escape most of us. That’s the gift they give to us,” explains Bill Kerr. “In his painting of the mountain lion for example, Bob Kuhn shares his genius for capturing the essence of the



Michael Coleman (1946 –), *In the Shadows - Yellowstone*, 28 by 24 inches, oil on board, JKM Collection.



Bill and Joffa Kerr



George Catlin (1796 – 1872), *A Stag and a Doe*, 19¼ by 26¾ inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.

animal in a very intimate, close way. He paints the animal in motion — believable motion, providing a view of the lion many may never see other than in his painting.”

There is a sense of excitement and deep respect in Kerr’s voice as he talks about the artists and their work encompassed in the Wildlife of the American West Art Museum collection. The museum is the home of Bill and Joffa Kerr’s JKM Collection and includes over 300 paintings, original prints and sculptures of North American wildlife subjects. (JKM is the designation given the Kerr family collection and is taken from their three daughters names: Joffa, Kavar and Mara.)

The Kerrs, who divide their time between Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and a small community outside Jackson, Wyoming, have spent over 25 years collecting wildlife art, primarily mammals. In 1987 the Kerrs were instrumental in opening the Wildlife of the American West Art Museum in Jackson which now houses their private collection.

“The museum is here because a dedicated group of Jackson Hole residents joined with wildlife art lovers from across the country to provide the leadership and resources needed to launch this museum,” says Kerr.

Artists represented in the collection begin with early eighteenth-century painter George Catlin and continue through to contemporary artists such as Bob Kuhn and Ken Bunn. This unique, tightly focused representation

provides an historical perspective of wildlife art development as related to North American mammals.

“By focusing on one category of wildlife art we are able to provide a view of some of the very best,” Kerr explains. “We believe that wildlife art has something to tell about the past, environmentally, as well as artistically. Seeing these subjects represented throughout history is an education on how American society has viewed the animals and their environments. Although it is not our primary goal, we hope the collection serves as an inspiration for the preservation of the various species and their environments.”

One of the earliest works in the collection, *Virginia Deer Reclining* by Antoine-Louis Barye, provides an insight to early wildlife sculpture. Barye (1796-1875) was a teacher of zoological drawing of his time.

“He was the father of modern animal sculpture and although it may seem primitive by today’s standards, he represented a move towards realism in wildlife art,” Kerr says. “As with George Catlin (a contemporary of Barye), the animal subjects appear simple and not in proper proportion at times. But we have to understand these artists did not have the advantages provided by a 35mm camera. Catlin wasn’t painting for an audience that read *National Geographic* and knew how deer in the wild looked.”

Progressing through the years of development, Kerr





Sherry Sander (1941 –), *Cougar*, 13 by 7 by 20 inches, bronze, JKM Collection.



Belmore Browne (1880 – 1954), *White River Moonlight*, 22 by 30 inches, oil on board, JKM Collection.

describes four major groups of artists represented in the collection — explorer artists, romanticists, illustrators and modernists.

“Catlin was an explorer artist, one of the ones who did it the hard way. (Hermann) Herzog and (Albert) Bierstadt were romanticists. There’s a world of difference between the primitive naivete of the explorer artist and the romanticized dramatic vision of the American west that Bierstadt and Herzog conveyed to their public,” Kerr says.

Kerr points to the combined work of William L. Sonntag and Arthur F. Tait in *Early Morning in the Adirondacks* as “an interesting coupling of two romanticists, each having different artistic strengths.” Sonntag was a Hudson River School landscape painter. (Hudson River School is a term applied to a style of

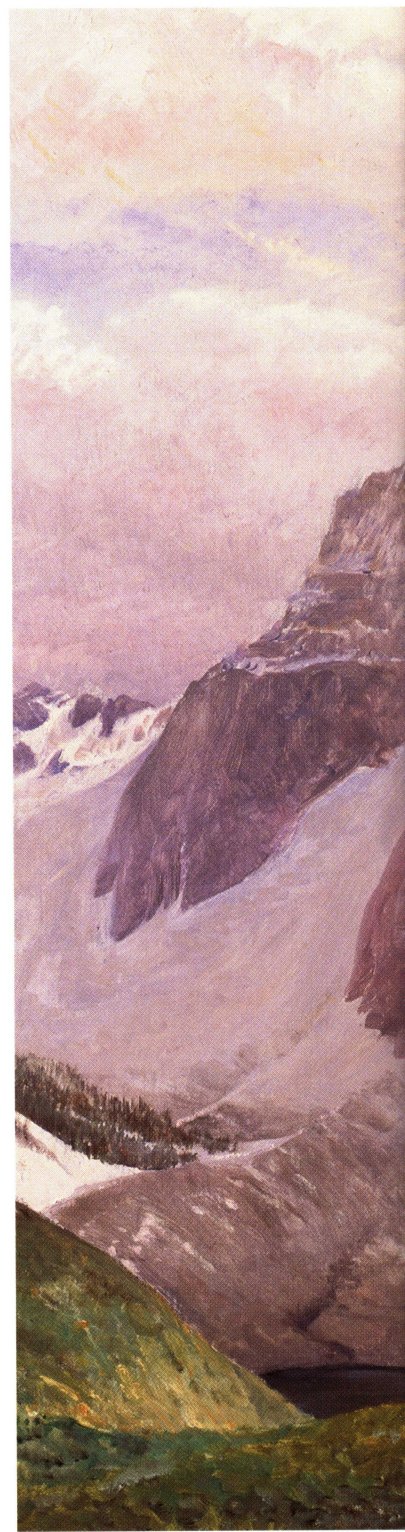
William L. Sonntag (1822 – 1900) and Arthur F. Tait (1819 – 1905), *Early Morning in the Adirondacks*, 40 by 56 inches, JKM Collection.



Conrad Schwiering (1916 – 1986), Patriarch of Yo Ho, 30 by 40 inches; oil on board, JKM Collection.

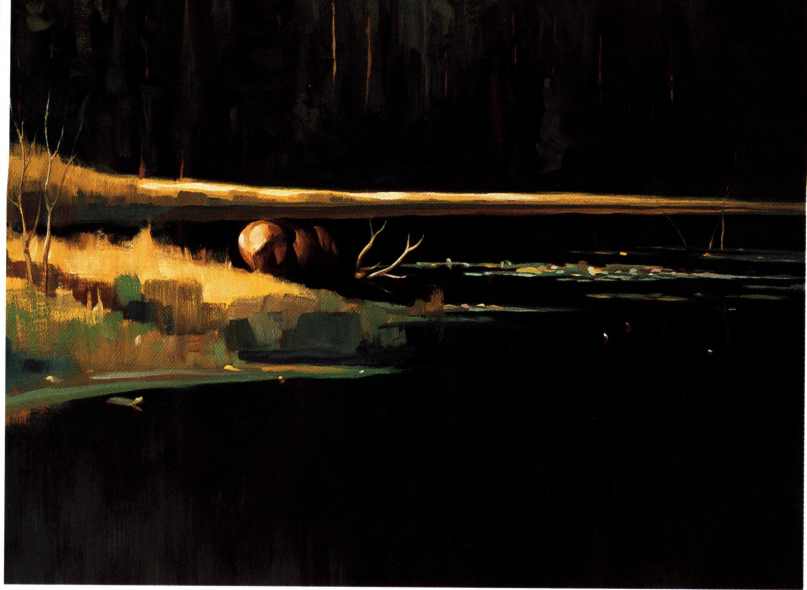


Arthur F. Tait (1819 - 1905), September Morning, 26 by 22 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.





John Clymer (1907 –), Time Worn Trail, 30 by 40 inches oil on canvas, JKM Collection.



Gerard C. Delano (1890 – 1968), Forest Primeval, 24 by 28 inches, oil on board, JKM Collection.





American landscape painters of the nineteenth century.) Tait was principally a wildlife painter of the Adirondack region and one of the finest Currier & Ives artists.

"Tait really crosses over from romanticist into illustrator. They (Sonntag and Tait) collaborated on five paintings in the 1880s. Although they proved to be very good together, they each stood on their own, as seen in Tait's *The Challenge*," Kerr says.

The "dreamy effect" associated with the romantic paintings depicts a dramatic contrast to the highly-keyed color typical of illustration art of wildlife. For reproduction reasons, editors required illustrator artists to provide bolder colors with high contrast for printing.

Artists such as William H. Dunton and Phillip R. Goodwin exemplify illustration painters represented in the Wildlife Museum collection. However, the core of the collection is the outstanding selection of oil paintings, sculptures, drypoints and watercolors by North American master illustrator and painter of big game animals, Carl Rungius. Rungius served as the inspiration for Joffa and Bill Kerr to begin collecting wildlife art 25 years ago and their devotion has led to developing the largest collection of his work in the United States.

The Kerrs were not new to the art world when they married and began purchasing sporting art by American illustrators "as a hobby." Joffa studied art and Bill had been exposed to fine art most of his life. His father, Robert S. Kerr, a former Oklahoma governor and U.S. Senator purchased many western theme paintings, including one by Oklahoma artist Emil Lenders, *In the Face of the Blizzard*, now a part of the JKM Collection.

"When I graduated from law school, Joffa gave me a painting and that was really the beginning of it all," Kerr recalls. "We were involved with the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City in the 1960s and began meeting artists. The interface with the artists themselves is what triggered the dramatic interest in both of us."

Two of the principal artists who helped to nurture the Kerrs interest and education in wildlife art were also founders of the National Academy of Western Art — Robert Lougheed and Conrad Schwiering both represented in the museum collection.



Edward Kemeys (1843 – 1907), Gray Spirit, 26 by 10 by 27 inches, bronze, JKM Collection.





"They were true admirers of Rungius and along with other artists we met, they introduced us to the importance of his work. Rungius is the standard that most other wildlife painters aspire to, or are judged by," Kerr says.

In 1964, the Kerrs purchased their first Rungius painting, *Wanderers Above the Timberline*, featuring three bighorn sheep on Mount Athabasca in Canada. With the initial purchase, the Kerrs began buying Rungius paintings, oil field-sketches and drypoints. Today the 40 paintings and over 80 oil sketches and drypoints represents one of the most prestigious Rungius collections anywhere.

"The hobby became sort of a quest. Not just a quest for collecting, but for learning. Just being around artists such as Lougheed, Schwiering, (John) Clymer, (Ken) Carlson and others, has been an inspiration. I have been lucky to be turned on by the world around me," Kerr explains.

Fascinated as much with the landscape as the animal imagery, the Kerrs began searching for Rungius field sketches. "Everywhere he went, Rungius stopped to appreciate and to record what he saw. His sketches in the field are priceless, but difficult to find now. We have 30 of them and it's taken us 25 years to find them."

Kerr tells a humorous story about field sketches, Rungius and Kerr's artist friend Conrad Schwiering.

"Schwiering as a young artist took some sketches to Rungius' New York studio, wanting the master to critique his work. Rungius was apparently pretty abrupt with him and was seated in front of a bookcase that had a thousand or more of his field sketches stacked up, which were his reference material. He looked at Connie's sketches and said, 'You do two or three thousand of those and then you begin.'" Kerr laughingly recalls.

Kerr's love of wildlife art has led him to study and learn as much about the artists as the art itself and Rungius has been at the top of his study list for many years. He recently took a pack trip to the Wyoming area of Wind River Mountains, about 70 miles south of Jackson, where Rungius was known to have camped and sketched. The grandson of one of Rungius's early guides led Kerr into the area.

Bob Kuhn (1920 –), *Pas de Deux*, 20 by 36 inches, acrylic on board, JKM Collection.

Bob Kuhn (1920 –), *Message on the Wind*, 30 by 48 inches,

Sherry Sander (1941 –). Great Northern, 26 by 12 by 30 inches, bronze, JKM Collection.

"I had a photograph of a Rungius field study that we knew was from that area and I showed it to the guide. He said he knew where it was and took us right to the place," Kerr explains. "It was really an eerie feeling because we recognized some of the landmarks. A dead tree lying in the water that was in the field sketch was in the same place. The trip renewed my spirit for conservation and preservation."

Although the number of Rungius artworks and the knowledge the Kerrs have acquired about the artist points to their devotion, the Kerr's interest and love of wildlife art has expanded to include many contemporary artists as well.

"At this point, the goal of the collection is to be comprehensive in terms of North American mammal species. That means as far back as a George Catlin and even further, or as far forward as you can come to a Bob Kuhn. Quality and artistic merit is our guideline," Kerr explains. "The art is selected on artistic quality and historical relevance and if they have a message in addition to those first two criteria, that is a plus."

Using fine art as a medium for understanding the animals and their environment is one of the pluses at the Wildlife of the American West Art Museum. The collection provides a research avenue for not only artists and art historians, but for biologists, environmentalists, conservationists and more.

Deciding to locate the museum in Jackson, Wyoming, was not accidental. Flanked by the majestic Tetons, with its elk, moose, bighorn sheep, coyote, deer, bear and infinite number of water fowl, the area serves as a perfect setting. Just down the road from the museum is



Ken Carlson (1940 –). Snow Shining Mountains, 24 by 48 inches, oil on board, JKM Collection.



W. R. Leigh (1866 – 1955), *Female of the Species*, 28 by 22 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.



Carl Rungius (1869 – 1959), In His Prime, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.



Ken Bunn (1935-), Running Doe, 18 x 5 x 15 inches, bronze, JKM Collection.

the National Elk Refuge where some 7,000 elk winter before returning to the mountains in the spring.

“The thread of the museum occurred on an unplanned basis. We were collecting wildlife art and visited Jackson with artist friends in the mid-70s. We were enchanted with the area from the very first visit, much like our interest in Rungius,” Kerr says. “We bought a cabin just outside Jackson and spent a few months out of the year here. The environment just heightened our interest in wildlife. When you can look out your window and actually see the animals in their natural habitat, it’s intoxicating.”

Before long, friends and artists visiting the Kerrs recognized the importance and breadth of their collection and suggested sharing their spectacular selections with the public.

As Joffa Kerr explains, “At first we were amazed and a little embarrassed, because we never intended to have a collection. It just happened. We bought things that we liked and felt were important to preserve in some way. We didn’t really recognize the significance until the idea of the museum came about just five years ago.”

With a unique group of Jackson citizens serving as a steering committee and a great deal of community support, the museum opened in 1987 and today operates as a nonprofit organization. The museum staff continues the educational direction and the successful coupling of the museum and the community.

“Our purposes are intertwined and providing educational opportunities for the general public is an

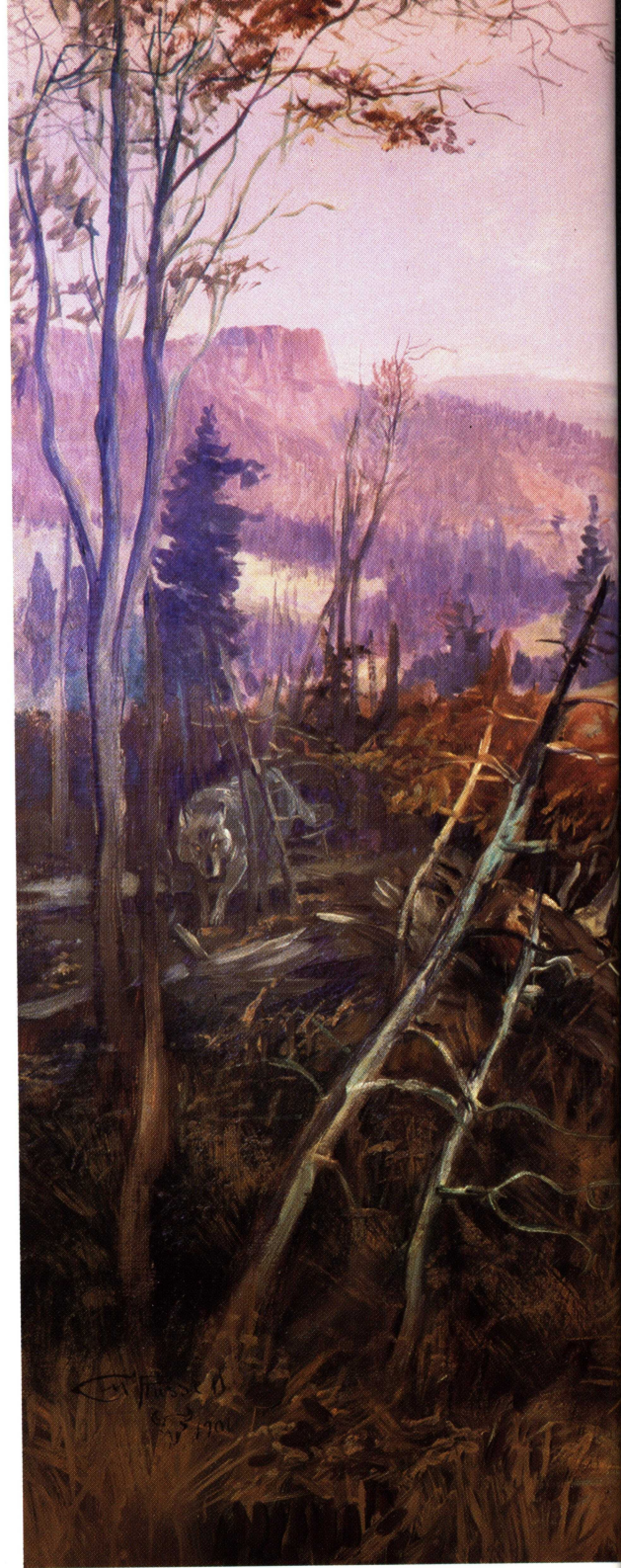
important aspect of our total program," explains Dan Provo, museum director. "We serve as a research and study tool, not only on the art history level, but also from the environmental and ecological aspect. The habitats in the paintings are as important as the animals."

The Kerrs echo these feelings of purpose which extend beyond the preservation of fine art.

Joffa, who has returned to her art after their three daughters have "gone to school or are off on their own now," also feels the landscapes are as important as the animals "because so much of it is disappearing during our lifetime. I heard a statistic just recently that made me really stop and think. An environmentalist said there is more paved land in the United States, than national forest. I know my appreciation for wildlife art has increased by seeing the landscape and the natural settings and believe it is important to preserve it for future generations."

The multi-faceted purposes of the museum are important, however, Kerr emphasizes that "art" is the most important aspect and the true purpose of the museum.

"This collection is oriented to representational work, not photo realism. We believe that is the province of naturalists and photographers, as distinguished from artists who interpret the setting, and compose that setting with the animals in to a personal statement about their reaction to the locale and the animals," Kerr says. "Artists will rearrange things for composition purposes and impact. A photographer might wait ten years to capture a scene like Coleman's goats precariously perched on mountain ledges."



Alexander Phimister Proctor (1862 – 1950), *Prairie Monarch*, 36 by 27 by 56 inches, bronze, JKM Collection.



C.M. Russell (1864 – 1926), To the Victor Belongs the Spoils, 31½ by 44½ inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.



Albert Bierstadt (1830 – 1902), Winter Dawn, 13½ by 19¼ inches, oil on paper, JKM Collection.

*Melvin Johansen (1915 –),
Bull Elk, 24 by 7 by 17 inches,
bronze, JKM Collection.*



Kerr remembers artist Bob Kuhn's delineation of wildlife artists. "Not a direct quote, but in essence he says that a wildlife artist ceases to function as a naturalist when they have the temerity to start rearranging the landscape and the animals in such a way that is pleasing to them as an artist and convey what they want to say to the viewer about that location and the animals."

As Kerr emerges from the Rungius room relating stories about remote camp sites and hardships endured by the early wildlife master painter, one is reminded once again of his devotion to the artist.

When asked if he has a favorite painting, Kerr points to a couple of paintings in the collection. "I sometimes think these are my favorites. But then we will hang a painting that hasn't been up for a long time and I'll find myself remembering how much I like that particular painting," Kerr says.

The Kerr's interest in the history of the painting and the artist is not limited to the Rungius portion of the collection. Joffa and Bill can relate stories about many.

"(Charles M.) Russell's painting *To the Victor Belong the Spoils* has an interesting story behind it," Kerr begins. "It was in the same family for three generations after it was purchased from the Montana Club in New York City in

the early 1900s. The man who bought it took it back to the West where it remained until we acquired it. The grandson that sold it to us told us it was his job as a young boy to put this painting in the back of an open touring car and to drive with it to the family's summer lake cottage. His grandfather loved it so much, he wanted it with him at the summer cottage, as well as in his home during the winter. He remembers rumbling along with this painting in the back of that car every summer.

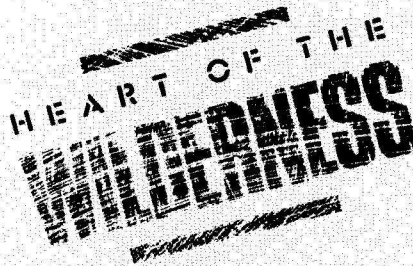
"The grandson still comes to the museum to see the painting occasionally. I guess he is like we are about paintings in our collection. It's difficult to part with them in your everyday living, but you know that it is being appreciated by a great many more people in this environment."

Traditionally wildlife painting has been set apart from the mainstream of art. With the extraordinary growth of interest everywhere in wildlife and concern today for vanishing species and natural habitat, it is the goal of the Kerrs and the staff of Wildlife of the American West Art Museum that more consideration be given wildlife art.

"We hope our efforts will help people recognize that wildlife art is a part of a larger field of art that addresses all of American life." ◡



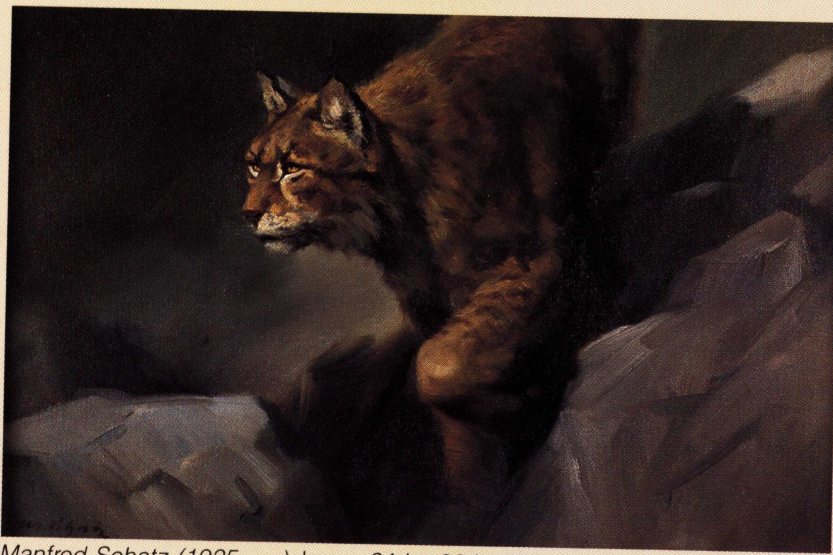
Arthur F. Tait (1819 – 1905), *The Challenge*, 20 by 30 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.



EXHIBITION LIST

*From the Wildlife
of the American West
Art Museum Collection*

- John W. Audubon, *American Grizzly Bear*, 22 by 28 inches, oil on canvas
Antoine-Louis Barye, *Virginia Deer Reclining*, 9 by 6¾ by 16 inches, bronze
Albert Bierstadt, *Winter Dawn*, 13½ by 19¼ inches, oil on paper
Albert Bierstadt, *In The Forest*, 26½ by 27 inches, oil on canvas
Karl Bodmer, *Une Famille d'Acrobats*, 20 by 13 inches, graphite on paper
Clark Bronson, *Upstream Adventure*, 14 by 15 by 22 inches, bronze
Belmore Browne, *White River Moonlight*, 22 by 30 inches, oil on board
George Browne, *Quiet Canyon*, 20 by 30 inches, oil on canvas
Ken Bunn, *Running Doe*, 18 by 5 by 15 inches, bronze
Ken Bunn, *Striding Grizzlies*, 31 by 26 by 62 inches, bronze
Ken Carlson, *Winter Canyon*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on board
Ken Carlson, *Spring Antelope*, 26 by 36 inches, oil on board
Ken Carlson, *Wolf*, 23 by 35 inches, oil on board
Ken Carlson, *Snow Shining Mountain*, 24 by 48 inches, oil on board
Ken Carlson, *On the Edge*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on board
George Catlin, *Group of Deer*, 16 by 19 inches, oil on canvas
George Catlin, *A Stag and a Doe*, 19¼ by 26¾ inches, oil on canvas
James L. Clark, *Seal*, 13 by 9 by 13 inches, bronze
John Clymer, *Time Worn Trail*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
John Clymer, *On the Prowl*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
Michael Coleman, *Rocky Mountain Goats - B.C.*, 30 by 46 inches, oil on board
Michael Coleman, *In the Shadows - Yellowstone*, 28 by 24 inches, oil on board
Gerard C. Delano, *Forest Primeval*, 24 by 28 inches, oil on board
William Dunton, *Monarch of All He Surveys*, 29 by 19 inches, oil on board
John Fery, *Jackson Lake, Wyoming*, 10 by 16 inches, oil on board
John Fery, *A Family of Elk in the Teton Mountains*, 10 by 16 inches, oil on board
Louis Agassiz Fuertes, *Twelve Point Deer*, 13 by 19 inches, watercolor on paper
Phillip R. Goodwin, *Deer In Stream*, 28¾ by 22¼ inches, oil on canvas
William Jacob Hays, *Prairie Dog Town*, 25½ by 47½ inches, oil on canvas
Martin E. Hennings, *Deer Among the Aspens*, 12 by 24 inches, oil on canvas
Hermann Herzog, *Caribou by a Mountain Lake*, 29 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
Frank Hoffman, *Trophy Mule Deer*, 24 by 30 inches, oil on canvas
John Dare Howland, *Monarch of the Plains*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
Melvin Johansen, *Bull Elk*, 24 by 7 by 17 inches, bronze
Melvin Johansen, *Hasty Exit*, 21 by 12 by 20 inches, bronze
Edward Kemeys, *Gray Spirit*, 26 by 10 by 27 inches, bronze
Bob Kuhn, *Silent as the Snow*, 24 by 36 inches, acrylic on board
Bob Kuhn, *Clown of the Woods*, 24 by 32 inches, acrylic on board
Bob Kuhn, *King of the Road*, 18 by 36 inches, acrylic on board



Manfred Schatz (1925 –), *Lynx*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.

- Bob Kuhn, *Wetback*, 24 by 42 inches, acrylic on board
- Bob Kuhn, *Message on the Wind*, 30 by 48 inches, acrylic on board
- Bob Kuhn, *Pas de Deux*, 20 by 36 inches, acrylic on board
- William R. Leigh, *Female of the Species*, 28 by 22 inches, oil on canvas
- Emil Lenders, *In the Face of the Blizzard*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on canvas.
- Robert Lougheed, *Feeding Slopes of Mount Norquay*, 26 by 32 inches, oil on board
- Robert Lougheed, *On the Banks of Vermilion Lakes*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on board
- Phimister A. Proctor, *Prairie Monarch*, 36 by 27 by 56 inches, bronze
- Carl Rungius, *Morning Mist*, 47 by 79³/₁₆ inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *Ram Sheep*, 17 by 7 by 17 inches, bronze
- Carl Rungius, *Three Old Gentlemen*, 47 by 32 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *A Knight Errant*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *Lord of the Canyon*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *Fall Storm*, 24 by 32 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *In His Prime*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *Wyoming Sage*, 26 by 46 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *Wanderers Above Timberline*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
- Carl Rungius, *Out of the Shadows*, 16 by 20 inches, oil on canvas
- Charles M. Russell, *The Bluffers*, 8 by 8¹/₂ by 17¹/₂ inches, bronze
- Charles M. Russell, *To the Victor Belongs the Spoils*, 31¹/₂ by 44¹/₂ inches, oil on canvas
- Sherry Sander, *Cougar*, 13 by 7 by 20 inches, bronze
- Sherry Sander, *Great Northern*, 26 by 12 by 30 inches, bronze
- Manfred Schatz, *Lynx*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on canvas
- Conrad Schwiering, *Sweeping the Prairie*, 24 by 36 inches, oil on board
- Conrad Schwiering, *Patriarch of Yo Ho*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on board
- Olaf Carl Seltzer, *When the Land Belonged to God*, 20 by 30 inches, oil on canvas
- Henry M. Shrady, *Buffalo*, 13 by 8 by 15¹/₄ inches, bronze
- Tucker Smith, *The Way Things Were*, 20 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
- W. Sonntag and Arthur F. Tait, *Early Morning in the Adirondacks*, 40 by 56 inches, oil on canvas
- Arthur F. Tait, *The Challenge*, 20 by 30 inches, oil on canvas
- Newbold H. Trotter, *Domain Invaded*, 28 by 40 inches, oil on canvas
- Frederick Verner, *Bison At Rest*, 37 by 55 inches, oil on canvas

Carl Rungius: Artist of the Wilderness Spirit

BY MARTHA HILL

IT WAS WINTER and the year was 1913. Carl Rungius was alone in his studio on West 42nd Street in New York, standing in front of his easel, at work on a painting of a bull moose in the forest. There was a knock at the door. Rungius was not expecting company. He put down his brushes and went to open the door. To his surprise, there stood Teddy Roosevelt. Rungius invited him in, and Roosevelt, curious to see the canvas in progress, immediately strode over to the easel.

Roosevelt had spent the fall campaigning to regain the presidency. When a reporter had questioned his health, Roosevelt declared himself "as fit as a bull moose." The moniker stuck, and Roosevelt's party became known as the "Bull Moose Party." For his birthday, in October, a friend had given him a Rungius painting of, most appropriately, a bull moose, which he could exchange for one of his own choosing.

It was clear that Roosevelt was smitten with the painting on the easel. Rungius agreed to the exchange, and to bring the finished work personally out by train to Long Island. On his way out the door, Roosevelt spotted Rungius' only bronze of a moose (he did one other bronze sculpture, a bighorn sheep, and each were small

Martha Hill is picture editor of AUDUBON Magazine, a position she has held since 1978. She is the author of Bruno Liljefors: The Peerless Eye, a biography of the Swedish wildlife artist published by The Allen Publishing Company, Hull, England, and in Swedish by P. Norstedt & Sons, Stockholm in 1987. She has authored numerous articles on other wildlife artists, lectured, acted as judge and juror for wildlife art exhibitions, including the Federal Duck Stamp competition. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, Hill holds a B.A. in art and anthropology. A bird- and mammal-watcher and fisherman, she has traveled to remote areas in search of wildlife.



Carl Rungius, A Knight Errant, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.

"Just how Carl Rungius came to be the most admired portraitist of big game is a saga of opportunity, talent, determination and luck."

"Rungius' ability to record rapidly what he saw, first with a pencil and later with a brush, became the cornerstone of this stylistic development later in his career."

editions of six). Today, both moose painting and sculpture still reside in Roosevelt's library at Sagamore Hill.

What had brought Roosevelt to Rungius' studio that day was not just his appreciation of the artist's talent for painting a subject which both men deeply admired. Nor was it the fact that Rungius captured the correct anatomy and appropriate habitat. What Roosevelt saw in this moose painting was a lone bull striding forward, head lowered to meet his challenger — an image charged with all the power and charisma for which the male of this species is famous. "Why, that's the most spirited moose painting I've ever seen!" he exclaimed.

Just how Carl Rungius came to be the most admired portraitist of big game is a saga of opportunity, talent, determination and luck; ironically, some of the crucial events which launched Rungius' long and productive career hinged on his favorite animal, the bull moose. If Rungius were to have chosen a good-luck talisman, it would most certainly have been the moose.

As a young boy in Germany, Rungius dreamed of painting the furious battle of two bull moose during the rut. But moose had been hunted to extinction in much of Europe by the mid-1800s. What few remained were on the great private estates of the nobility, and were therefore inaccessible to a boy from a middle-class family.

Rungius' father, a Lutheran minister, wanted his oldest son to have a proper career, the church and the military being the most desirable choices. The career of an artist was of "doubtful prospect." He was permitted to study at the Berlin Academy of Art, but had to agree to apprentice as a house painter when he finished to appease his father.

Enter the moose talisman in the form of an invitation, in the summer of 1894, from his uncle in New York. Dr. Clemens Fulda, a physician who had emigrated from Germany as a young man, was a keen hunter who wanted to try hunting moose in Maine. He knew of his nephew's enthusiasm, and appreciated the limited opportunity he had in Germany. With the invitation, he enclosed funds for his nephew's passage, making it hard for Carl's father to refuse. The first of a series of pivotal events had



Carl Rungius, *Wyoming Sage*, 26 by 46 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.

begun. Rungius sailed for the United States.

The September moose hunt was a disaster. The hired guides turned out to be fishermen, not hunters, but Rungius seemed pleased at least to shoot his first white-tailed deer. His uncle, however, was disappointed, and invited Carl to stay for another try the following fall. Rungius happily set up his studio on the top floor of the Fulda brownstone in Brooklyn. He had the companionship of his three younger cousins, who made him feel at home.

The decision to stay in New York proved to be the most crucial in Rungius' life, for during that winter he made two acquaintances that were to change the course of events. The first was Ira Dodge, a guide from Wyoming, whom Rungius met at the first Sportsmen's Show held at Madison Square Garden. Dodge dressed like Buffalo Bill Cody. Rungius later described him as "the first buckskin man I had ever seen and a thoroughly Remingtonian figure. The upshot of this was that, early in the summer, I was on my way to Wyoming with little money and a little short of English."

The second important character to affect Rungius' career was William Temple Hornaday, the director of the recently founded New York Zoological Society in the Bronx. Here again, a moose figured in the event. Letting his artistic imagination supply what had not materialized in Maine, Rungius had painted a life-size moose head using a mount from a local taxidermist as a model. Through a friend of his uncle, he was able to exhibit the portrait at a



gallery on Fifth Avenue.

One night in February 1895, Hornaday and his wife spotted the portrait in the lighted window from across the street. Hornaday described the effect the picture had on him: "One look convinced us that it was something different. Boldly and confidently painted, it was signed by a name both new and strange — C. Rungius." Hornaday tracked the artist down, and invited him to the zoo. Eager to play impresario, Hornaday took Rungius under his wing.

Hornaday's connections proved invaluable to the young artist. George Shields, editor of *Recreation* magazine, hired Rungius to do illustrations, and also arranged free rail passage for what were to become annual trips to Dodge's ranch. Another of Hornaday's colleagues, George Bird Grinnell, the dynamic editor of *Forest & Stream* magazine, was a close friend of Roosevelt. Over dinner one night, in 1888, Roosevelt and Grinnell founded the Boone and Crockett Club, an exclusive sportsmen's fraternity dedicated to the preservation of America's big game species. (Rungius was elected a club member in 1927).

The opportunities presented by such a high-level entry into New York circles were too fortuitous for Rungius to deny. Even though he barely understood the language, and had been here only a short time, he recognized that here was an arena which would enable him to do exactly what his heart desired, to become a painter of big game.

So, in 1896, Rungius went back to his family in Germany, and after a lengthy visit, packed all his belongings and returned to the country that had opened doors that could never have been opened in his homeland.

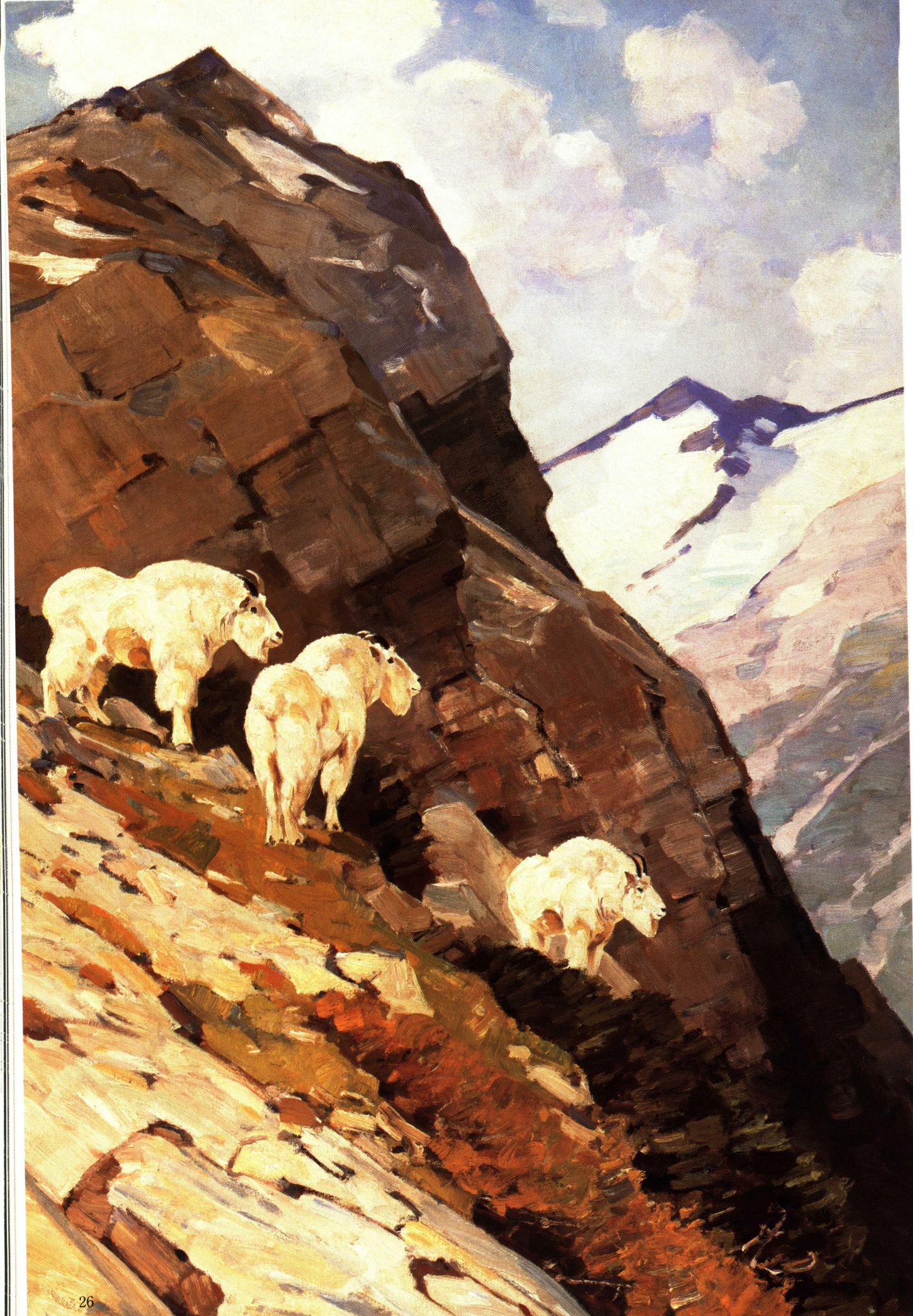
The early years of study were done during the summer and fall at Dodge's ranch in Cora, Wyoming. Rungius combed the rugged Wind River Mountains hunting elk and pronghorn, quickly becoming proficient with pack horse and saddle to guide himself for weeks at a time. He paid Dodge a dollar a day for the outfit and, in addition, brought back whatever meat he could for the ranch.

Rungius later said of those years in an interview: "I loved the solitude. I used to travel into the hills about twenty-five miles from any habitation. And I'd stay there for four to five weeks often until my work was finished or my provisions were exhausted. My pack consisted of the barest necessities, bedding, clothing and implements — as well as my painting and gunning paraphernalia. Then I had flour, bacon, tea, dried fruit and a few other staples. At first I could only make flapjacks.

"The advantage of being alone is that one man can get much closer to his quarry than if he were accompanied by others. I get more inside the life of my models when I go after them by myself."

In those early Wyoming years, Rungius established his methods of field study that remained basically unchanged all his life. The animals he killed were strung up between tripods made of branches, and posed in a manner to indicate running, walking or scratching, the actions too quick to record by sketching from life. Rungius would then make detailed pencil drawings from different angles. Later he would work these poses into finished canvases back home in New York.

Rungius considered himself largely self-taught, but his ability to draw was honed under the strict tutelage of one of his German art professors, who taught students to work from live models against the clock to develop rapid eye-hand coordination. Rungius' ability to record rapidly what he saw, first with a pencil and later with a brush, became the cornerstone of his stylistic development later



"But to succeed at what his heart desired, full-time easel painting, he had to establish his reputation as a painter first, and as an animal portraitist second."

in his career.

Rungius never taught, but occasionally gave advice to younger artists on method. One was Canadian Clarence Tillenius, who found Rungius especially helpful on the subject of form.

"To gain strength," Rungius advised, "*see* your forms in flat planes — think of an apple peeled — a sphere made up of flat planes. Think of every round or cylindrical object that way. Tree trunks, for instance, rocks, boulders — make them so a single brushstroke makes the plane. To emphasize the plane and keep it distinct, make a light patch *within* the edges of the darker plane."

On painting a landscape in strong sunlight: "It is the *edge* of shadow just within the shadow side that is of paramount importance. Often it catches such a warm reflected light from the blazing sunlight reflected into it that the shadow side is almost — *almost*, but *not quite* — as light as the area in full sunlight. To get that shadow edge correct: The vitality and power of the form depends on how you render it. Remember, too, that the local color of the shadow side has always the addition of the complementary color of the sunlit side — that's tricky to judge, but a study of the theory of color harmony always tells you what to look for. Take an orange — the complement is violet-blue — so if you add a slight tint of violet-blue to the orange you will have the shadow side, *ja?* This is what Rungius called "putting the *zing*" in a painting.

His parting advice to Tillenius: "If something bothers you in a newly finished painting, leave it a few weeks and then look at it again. If it still bothers you, change it, or it will never give you any peace. That's what art is about."

Rungius had lost his heart to the West, but he had also fallen in love with his cousin Louise Fulda. They would not marry until 1907, after she had graduated from college with a teaching degree. Rungius, keenly aware of the financial risks of his career choice, waited 11

years to ask for her hand. As he once explained to a reporter, "When I returned from selling fifteen pictures at an exhibition in Philadelphia, I proposed."

Until 1904, Rungius' field trips had been to Wyoming, and New Brunswick. Then, an opportunity came to study new species in a new terrain, thanks again to Hornaday who convinced his friend, railroad magnate Charles Sheldon, to take Rungius on an expedition to the Yukon. The trip proved arduous, but Rungius found new landscape to inspire him and new subjects to paint, among them Dall sheep and caribou.

The field conditions for working were about the worst he ever experienced: "This was in July and the mosquitoes were at their peak. Our backs were covered with them even on the highest mountain tops and you had to brush your gunsight to shoot. Making oil sketches was possible only with gloves and mosquito nets. The finished sketches looked like mince pie with the crust off, and had to be cleaned in camp with a forceps before they dried on. Pencil sketching was only possible between smudge fires and a good deal of choking, as I couldn't see through the netting sufficiently to draw. Mosquito dope was useless, and we used it for our poor horses."

Despite the hardships, Rungius found the terrain inspiring: "A sinking winter sun was painting the snow-covered summits and outcropping cliffs rose and gold until they were lost in purple haze in the distance, while the valleys, in shade, were a cold deep blue." This new interest in landscape was soon reflected in his work. Instead of the somber tones of German Realism that characterized the early paintings, Rungius began using more color: warmer yellows, oranges and bright yellow-greens.

Once an artist asked Rungius why he continued to paint his thumbnail oil sketches outdoors, when he already had thousands for reference. He replied, "If you paint outdoor scenes in the studio, your color gets too hot. Only if you paint outdoors do you see the cool, silvery tones that are the true colors of nature."

For Rungius, the most important goal was to achieve recognition as an artist and to attain recognition for his subject matter in respected circles. To earn money in the



Carl Rungius, *Lord of the Canyon*, 30 by 40 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.

early years, he did commercial illustration. But to succeed at what his heart desired, full-time easel painting, he had to establish his reputation as a painter first, and as an animal portraitist second. To achieve this, he turned to landscapes and western subjects which had more popular appeal.

He had set his sights on memberships in the proper organizations, and began in 1906 submitting paintings to the National Academy of Design. The next year, Rungius was elected to the Salmagundi Club, an important social meeting place for the prominent artists and writers of the day. Then, in 1913, he succeeded in being elected an associate of the National Academy of Design, the most prestigious organization of the time, and one that practically guaranteed financial success to artists who made the grade.

Finally, in 1920 Rungius was elected to the rank of full academician. From then on, he concentrated on gaining acceptance of his animal subjects since he could enter shows without passing the jury. Rungius won several important prizes, including the Academy's highest award, the Carnegie Prize, in 1926 for his brilliantly colored landscape of Lake McArthur.

In 1910, Rungius had received a letter from Banff guide Jimmy Simpson, who had seen a reproduction of a Dall

sheep painting Rungius had done as a result of his Yukon expedition. Simpson knew sheep well and recognized a superior talent at work. He offered to supply and guide Rungius to bighorn terrain. The two men had much in common. Both were small, wiry, self-made and resilient, with a great love for the wilderness and mutual respect for each other's abilities.

For his supplies and expertise, Simpson received a painting for each expedition, and Rungius hunted and painted with comparative ease in the mountains he later adopted into his heart and painting. In 1922, with Simpson's help, he and Louise built a summer home and studio, christened "The Paintbox," and from then on, alternated homes during the year between Banff and New York, mid-April to mid-October in the mountains, and the winter months in New York, where Rungius painted most of his finished works for his wealthy, hunting clientele.

Although Rungius had painted the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming since 1895, he found the atmosphere of the Canadian Rockies more inspiring, as he told his biographer, William Schaldach: "Wyoming is fairly arid in most places and lack of humidity — 'atmosphere' to a painter — results in sharp edges, even at a distance, which gives objects a photographic appearance. But in Alberta, with its scenic grandeur and its remarkable

"He was clearly the best in the business, because of his outstanding ability with paint, and had very little competition."

wealth of big game species, I felt that I had found at last the land which I had been seeking."

As his eye and knowledge developed, his painting style began to change, natural with any artist. In Rungius' case, his field studies in oils, done *alla prima* in an hour or two, caused him to use rapid, coarse brushstrokes, and to make color judgments based on working wet paint into wet paint. As the Impressionists had, Rungius discovered that color brilliance was enhanced by laying color components next to each other, letting the eye do the "mixing" at a distance from the canvas.

Rungius' painting, from the 1920s until his death in 1959, evolved along Impressionist lines, but he never strayed from being a realistic interpreter of his subject matter. His early work was the quality of being photographic and illustrational: He created drama and interest through story-telling action, such as a deer fleeing a hunter and showing a panicked white in the eye to increase the impact of the image. This worked well for the outdoor magazines, but when it came to easel paintings, Rungius realized that such drama was difficult to live with over a long time. He was sensitive to the desires of his clients, mostly hunters who wished for a nostalgic portrait of the living animal rather than a dramatic reminder of the animal hunt.

The New York Zoological Society's collection of Rungius paintings, inspired by Hornaday who wanted a gallery of vanishing game, was commissioned over a period of roughly twenty years. Between 1914 and 1934, Rungius painted about thirty canvases of different American mammals. Over this span, one can see Rungius' brushwork becoming looser, and his palette becoming brighter.

Rungius' clientele were mainly the wealthy hunters and sportsmen he came in contact with in his New York club affiliations, or those who came through Banff, including some clients of his friend Jimmy Simpson. In those years, there were few art galleries in which to display paintings, so the clubs provided an important social milieu for

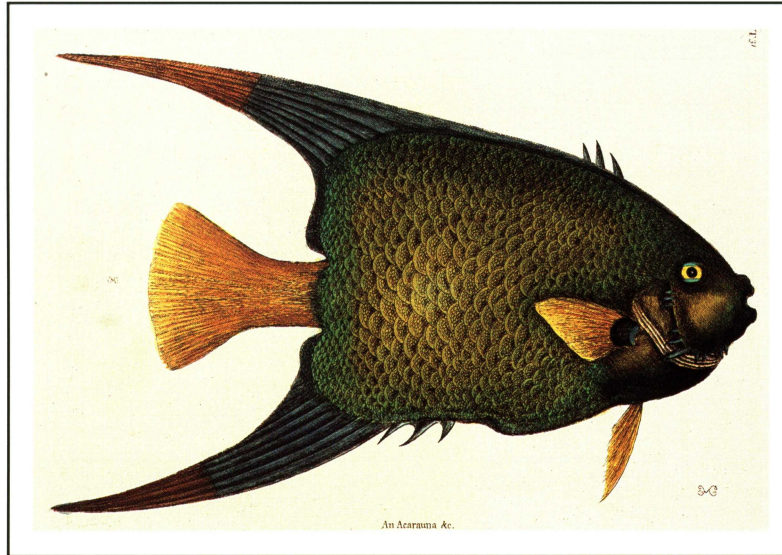
promoting his work. Rungius was adept at mentioning, in casual conversation over cocktails, that he could turn a photo of a trophy into a lovely painting to hang in the den.

After Louise's death in 1940, Rungius lived alone, and fell back into the old habits he had formed living on the trail. He slept in a sleeping bag on top of his bed, and ate his meat barely cooked. He continued his annual fall hunt into his eighties. Although he was modest about his hunting exploits, he was proud of his ability as a marksman. Until he quit hunting in the 1950s, he only used rifles with open sights, a remarkable feat considering he had been nearly blind in his right eye since boyhood. He continued to paint, when a series of small strokes began to take their toll on his health. He died of a stroke at his easel in October of 1959, at the age of 90. His ashes were scattered over his beloved Canadian Rockies.

He had been lucky. His father's fear of a starving artist's life had not come to pass. Instead, Rungius had achieved recognition and financial success doing the only thing he had ever wanted to do. In 1931, at age 62, Rungius had been honored by the Camp Fire Club, receiving the tenth Medal of Honor in the club's history, joining the ranks of its other illustrious recipients William Hornaday, Gifford Pincot, Teddy Roosevelt, Ernest Thompson Seton and Dan Beard. The citation read: "For his outstanding accomplishments in the interpretation of the spirit of the wilderness and as a painter of wild life."

This is his legacy. More than mere portraits of big game animals posed in magnificent surroundings, his paintings are romantic visions of an elemental world where life is survival, driven by the seasons, food supply, procreation and luck. Rungius conjured up his most majestic imagery to give us the spirit of wilderness — imagery inspired by the breathtaking vistas of his beloved Rockies, and the animals he had come to know intimately in sixty-five years of life on their trail. These images have the power to speak to succeeding generations. And that is the magic of art. ☹





CATESBY: PRESERVING NATURE IN ART

BY PAULA HALL

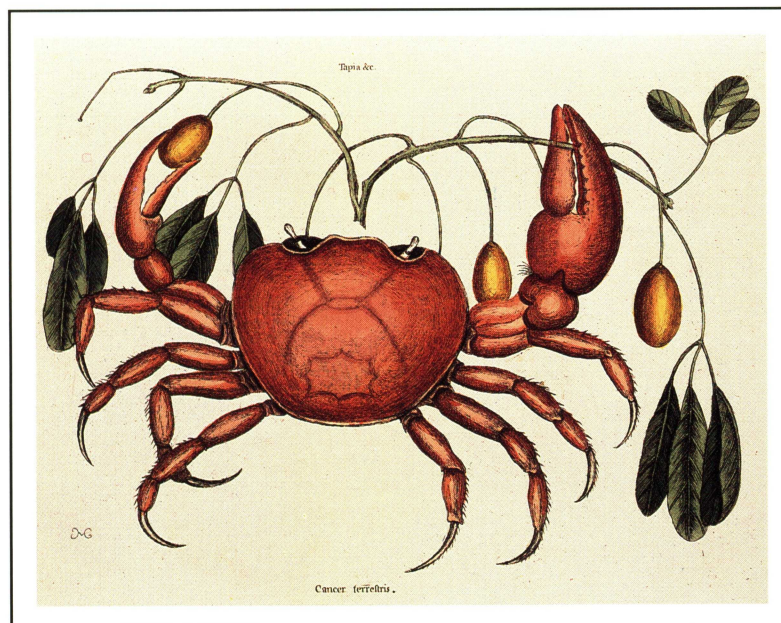
*In the vaunted works of art
The master stroke is nature's part*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Although Emerson was probably influenced by the same romantic spirit that inspired his contemporaries, the landscape painters of the nineteenth century Hudson River School, he may have been motivated in his writings by earlier eighteenth century illustrators such as Mark Catesby.

Above, Mark Catesby, Angle Fish, hand colored etching, Volume II, Plate Number 31.

Left, Mark Catesby, Summer Red Bird, hand colored etching, Volume 1, Plate Number 56.



Mark Catesby, Crab, hand colored etching, Volume II, Plate Number 32.

Catesby (1682-1749) chose to express his interest in nature in the scientific way in his *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, a remarkably illustrated record of the flora and fauna of the southeastern United States.

Born in Essex, England, in 1682, Catesby was a self-taught artist and author. With little education and a small inheritance from his father, Catesby set out for America in 1712 to study botany. He sent many seeds and plants back to Europe during his first visit, while studying the Virginia area. He returned to England in 1719.

During a second trip to America in 1722-25, he settled for a time in Charleston, South Carolina, from which he traveled throughout the southern Atlantic seaboard and the Bahama Islands making observations of the natural history of these regions. Upon his return to London in 1726, he took up the art of engraving to prepare for his planned publication.

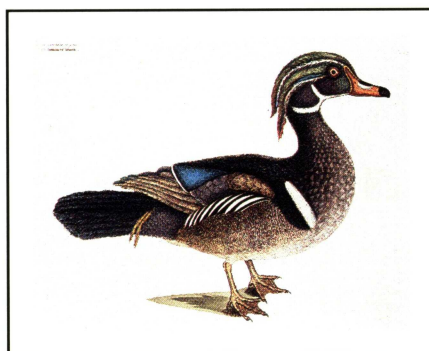
A Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands was issued by subscription in two volumes published between 1731-43. Among the earliest known publications devoted to a description of the flora

and fauna of North America, it was the first to feature color plates and contained 220 hand-colored figures of American birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, insects and plants. Catesby's two great folio volumes provided the means for Europeans to view the natural products of North America. The plates, although sometimes crude and inaccurate, the product of a self-taught artist and engraver, were considered an important contribution to scientific art and a symbolic legacy.

Catesby was the first to break the tradition of ornithological illustrations which displayed stiff subjects on a blank page. Many of his birds are drawn in flight and he was the first to pose birds against botanical backgrounds, a technique used with greater skill later by John James Audubon.

He was recognized for his contribution when he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1733, following the issue of the first volume of *Natural History*.

Catesby's original two-volume work published in 1731 and 1743 is a part of the rare book collection in the Gilcrease Library. ▽



Mark Catesby, Summer Duck, hand colored etching, Volume I, Plate Number 97.

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FRONT COVER:

Hermann Herzog (1832 - 1932), *Caribou by a Mountain Lake*, 29 by 40 inches, oil on canvas, JKM Collection.

BACK COVER:

Ken Carlson (1940 -), *Wolf*, 23 by 35 inches, oil on board, JKM Collection.

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Heart of the Wilderness

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