

Previews of Works For Sale at Upcoming Shows

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WESTERN ART

COLLECTOR



VIEW FROM THE SADDLE

Horses and riders are the stars of the John Fawcett retrospective at the Steamboat Art Museum in Colorado.

In John Fawcett's 1995 watercolor *Lizzie's Boys*, the Western painter has conceived a horse painting, a dog painting and a cowboy painting in one single work without showing more than fractions of each subject. It is with great skill and modest resolve that a painter can paint the essence of a subject while also painting so little of it.

The horse, his nose inches away from being cropped out completely, is only barely seen. The dog is seen more, but mostly in profile. Even the cowboy—in this case, Fawcett himself—has been isolated to a ruffled bit of shirt, a leather glove and a patch of sun-beaten skin that sits as a sea between them. Barely seen, yet all three subjects command a towering presence as they take in the sunlight, perhaps as a fleeting farewell to a full day, or a welcome greeting to a new one.

"That painting means an awful lot to me," says Fawcett. "The horse is long gone, so is the

dog, but I still feel a connection to them in it. The piece came to me in a dream, and I woke up and jotted it down and painted it the next day. I don't really have to say much about it, because it says it all for me."

Lizzie's Boys was an early work for Fawcett, who was still finding his footing as an artist in 1995. But even then, after it came off the easel, *Lizzie's Boys* wouldn't be sold. "My wife would occasionally see a piece and tell me, 'That one's staying here.' And that's what she said for this one."

The piece, along with 54 other works by Fawcett, are appearing in *John Fawcett: A Retrospective* beginning May 29 at the Steamboat Art Museum in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The retrospective will feature work from throughout Fawcett's long career, including works that predate his time as a full-time artist: he was originally a veterinarian, but sold his practice in 1996 to undertake an



High Country Haulin', oil, 16 x 20".
Loan: Courtesy Karen/Clark Bright.



John Fawcett in his studio.



art venture that has taken him to the upper echelon of the Western art world.

The retrospective will include pieces from his collectors around the country, works on loan from the artist himself, and a number of new oil and watercolor paintings that are for sale during the four-month exhibition in Steamboat Springs, where Fawcett now splits

his time with a home in Pennsylvania.

Retrospectives are supposed to be a way to honor an artist and their body of work, but when Fawcett found out the museum was putting together a retrospective of his work, he felt that it was a way for him to honor his subjects, both horse and cowboy, for their years of service to his career.

"I see and paint many of the local cowboys. So many of them have been so gracious with their time. I see this as a retrospective in their honor for all that they do and represent," he says. "Many of these works haven't been on display publicly for many years, so some of these guys will be seeing themselves in works for the first time in a long time. When the



Clockwise
from above:

Lizzie's Boys,
watercolor,
28 x 21".

Loan: Courtesy
of the artist.

A Warming Fire,
oil, 40 x 30".

Loan: Courtesy
of Susan/
Fred Kahn.

Shortcut Home,
oil, 20 x 24".

Loan: Courtesy
of the artist.





Four Horse Power, watercolor, 23 x 34". Loan: Courtesy of the artist.

museum first asked me to do this, I thought it meant I was dead or close to death. But now I'm realizing it's a chance to say thank you to so many people."

Fawcett paints in both watercolor and oils, a practice that still allows him to grow as an artist. Within both mediums he has crafted his own particular style that is easily recognizable. That did not come easy. "I teach a horse-painting workshop every few years, and I always tell the artists that you shouldn't worry about what your style is. Your style will develop in spite of you, whether you like it or not," he says. "I enjoy the richness of the oils, but also the fluidness and happy accidents of watercolor. I admire both Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent, who were both masters of watercolor and oil. I'm always striving to better myself in each medium."

Shirley Stocks, the curator of the show, says Fawcett's style of painting, his stunning

compositions and his love of his subjects will be seen in the museum's retrospective. "John's paintings...represent the culture and history of the Western way of life as only a true Westerner can interpret," she says. "His knowledge of horses and technical skill are evident, and his paintings depict a beauty and discovery of the West."

Works in the show include *High Country Haulin'*, featuring two cowboys, one of them Fawcett, as they ride through a yellow field. "I can still feel the crunchiness of the golden grass, and the nice clear day. Someone once said if you can't do something on the back of a horse, then it's not worth doing," he says. "And I believe that."

In *Four Horse Power*, he paints four Amish draft horses in a field in Pennsylvania. They're lined up in a row wearing a mismatched variety of bridles, bits and blinders. The title, he says, just came to him without thinking, and "it just worked perfectly." Fawcett paints the horses

with little background—something he does in many pieces, including *To the Council, Free for All* and *High Flyin'*—and it gives them a magnificent freedom within the work.

"Whether it's a historical scene or more of just a modern cowboy scene, I'm searching for an emotional story to tell with my subjects," Fawcett says. "My interest is horses, but what I'm really searching for is the emotional story of how we live and work with them, and how we are linked to them forever." 🐾

John Fawcett: A Retrospective

When: May 29-September 19, 2015

Where: Steamboat Art Museum,
801 Lincoln Avenue
Steamboat Springs, CO 80488

Information: (970) 870-1755,
www.steamboatartmuseum.org