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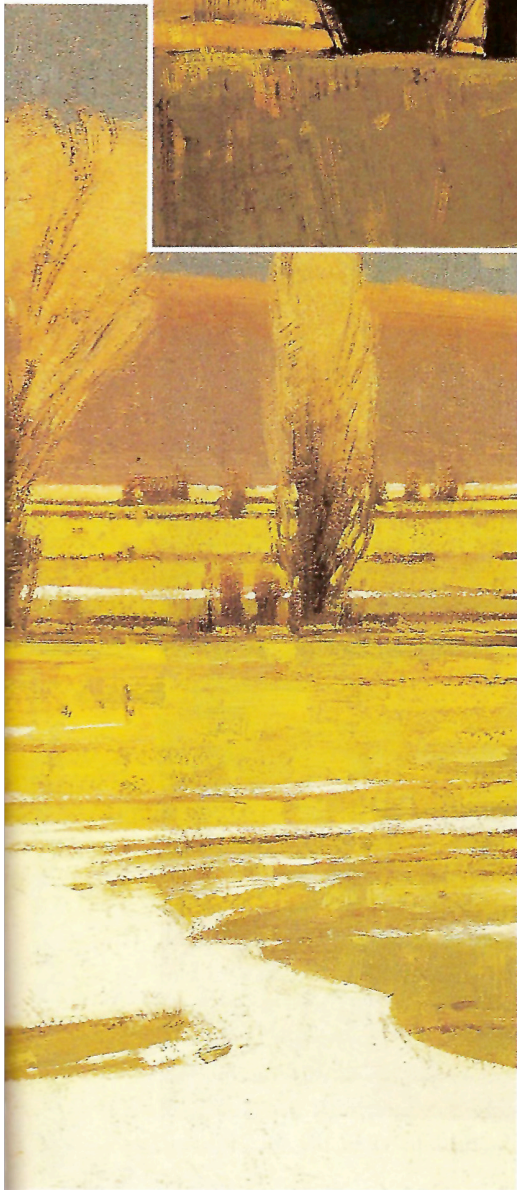
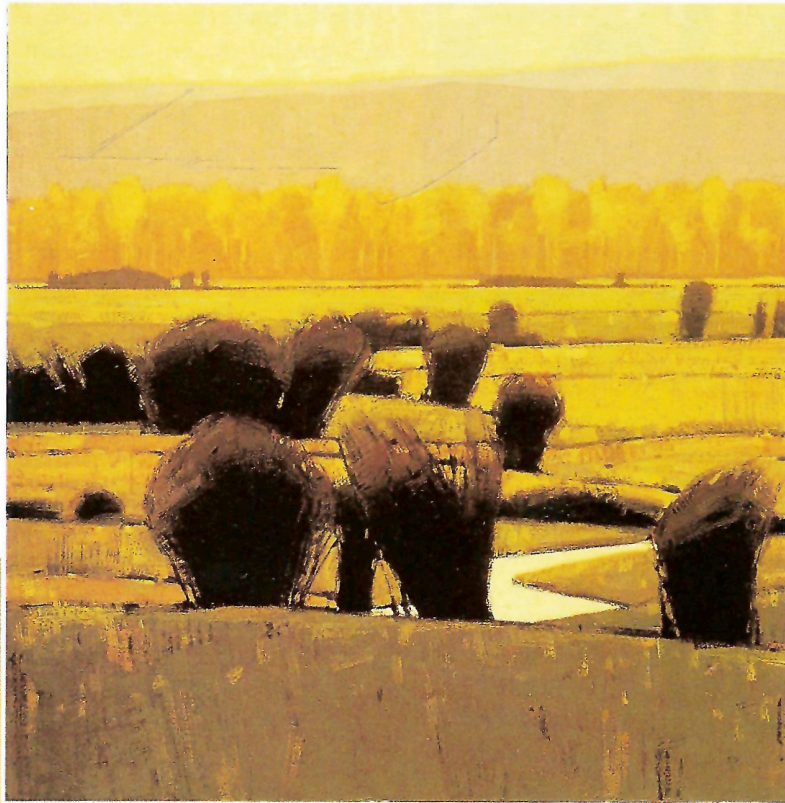


Jared Sanders

Contemplative landscapes bespeak a lifelong connection to nature | *By Norman Kolpas*

THEY CALLED IT “THE HOLLOW.” THE SMALL, WILD BASIN WAS OVERGROWN WITH trees and shrubbery. A stream, if not a river, ran through it. And so did Jared Sanders and his pals in the semirural town of Kaysville, UT, every chance they got—during vacations, on weekends, and after school. “It was just 300 yards across,” Sanders recalls of that favorite hangout in the 1970s, “but it was a huge world to us.”





His childhood idyll extended beyond The Hollow, too. There were nearby farms to explore. The foothills of the Wasatch Range beckoned just 15 minutes by car to the east. When Sanders and his friends were in their teens, their parents would drop them off up at Adams Canyon, where the boys would camp out overnight, fish for their dinner, “and just enjoy being in the mountains.” Sanders family trips were equally nature-oriented. The artist’s parents and his five siblings regularly set off to explore the West; Yellowstone National Park was a favorite destination.

Today, a mere 10 years since Sanders left home, much of what made his childhood so idyllic has been swept away by so-called progress. Kaysville’s population has more than doubled to about 30,000, becoming in the process part of a suburban sweep that

stretches from Salt Lake City to Ogden—almost 35 miles. “We used to joke that there was one stoplight in town,” says Sanders. “Now it’s all part of greater Salt Lake.” The Hollow, he adds with regret, is “full of houses.”

As an artist, however, Sanders recaptures that paradise lost at every opportunity, painting landscapes in oil that demonstrate his lifelong, intimate connection to nature. So close does he feel to his subject, so serenely contemplative is his point of view, that he eschews facile, sun-drenched, cheery scenes of woodlands blazing in autumn reds and golds or springtime meadows in full bloom. Rather, in works like *REMNANTS OF WINTER*, he quietly celebrates the enduring forms of farmlands, hills, rivers, forests, mountains, and skies. His palette is subdued: soft browns, dusky yellows, and burnt reds, as well as blues and greens muted by gray. This understated rainbow allows nature’s own compositions to express themselves all the more eloquently, Sanders believes, while he acts as the medium through which they speak.

Artistic expression has always come naturally to Sanders. “As far back as I can remember,” he says, “I wanted to be an artist.” He was always sketching with a pencil, and his dad and mom supported the talent he showed with a steady stream of teach-yourself-to-draw books. “Drawing is the backbone of all other artwork, so that was very helpful,” Sanders says.

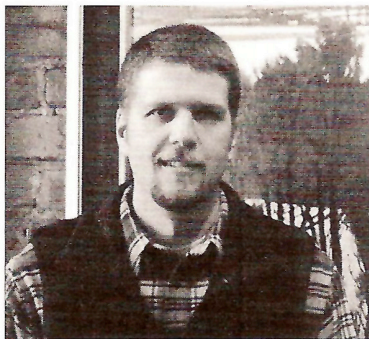
The flair he showed for art

LEFT: *REMNANTS OF WINTER*, OIL, 18 x 25.

ABOVE LEFT: *SPRING WILLOWS*, OIL, 16 x 16.

eventually won him his first public recognition. One Friday during his ninth-grade year at Kaysville Junior High, the vice-principal and the art teacher asked Sanders if he'd like to execute a special commission: two 12-by-14-inch pencil drawings of students surrounding and sitting in school buses. They offered him \$50 for the job. Sanders was ecstatic. "I remember hiking up Adams Canyon that weekend with this overwhelming feeling," he says. "Someone actually wanted to buy a piece of my art." The two framed pieces still hang in the school library.

The path ahead was clear. His immediate goals grew all the more certain when Glen Edwards and Jon Anderson, who then headed the art department at Utah State University, came to visit his art class at Davis High School. "They showed us slides of the work being done there," Sanders recalls, "and just wowed us." He signed up for the university's summer art camp, which he attended after his junior year in 1990. "They crammed almost a college quarter's worth of work into that one week," he marvels. The experience he gained was



so good that he attended again after his senior year, the summer before he officially enrolled at the university.

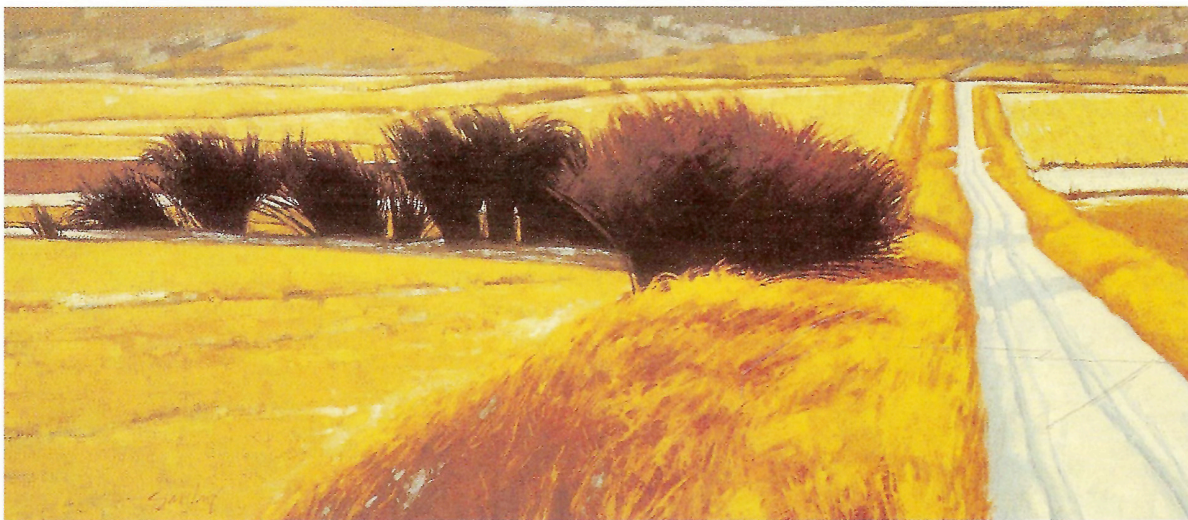
Over the next four years, Sanders received a solid, old-fashioned atelier-style education in the fundamentals of art. Under the tutelage of Glen Edwards—himself an artist of renown—Sanders worked from life every day. "I learned from Glen that there is no excuse for poor drawing," Sanders says. "He really emphasized that, if you want to be a good painter or watercolorist or illustrator, you need to learn how to draw."

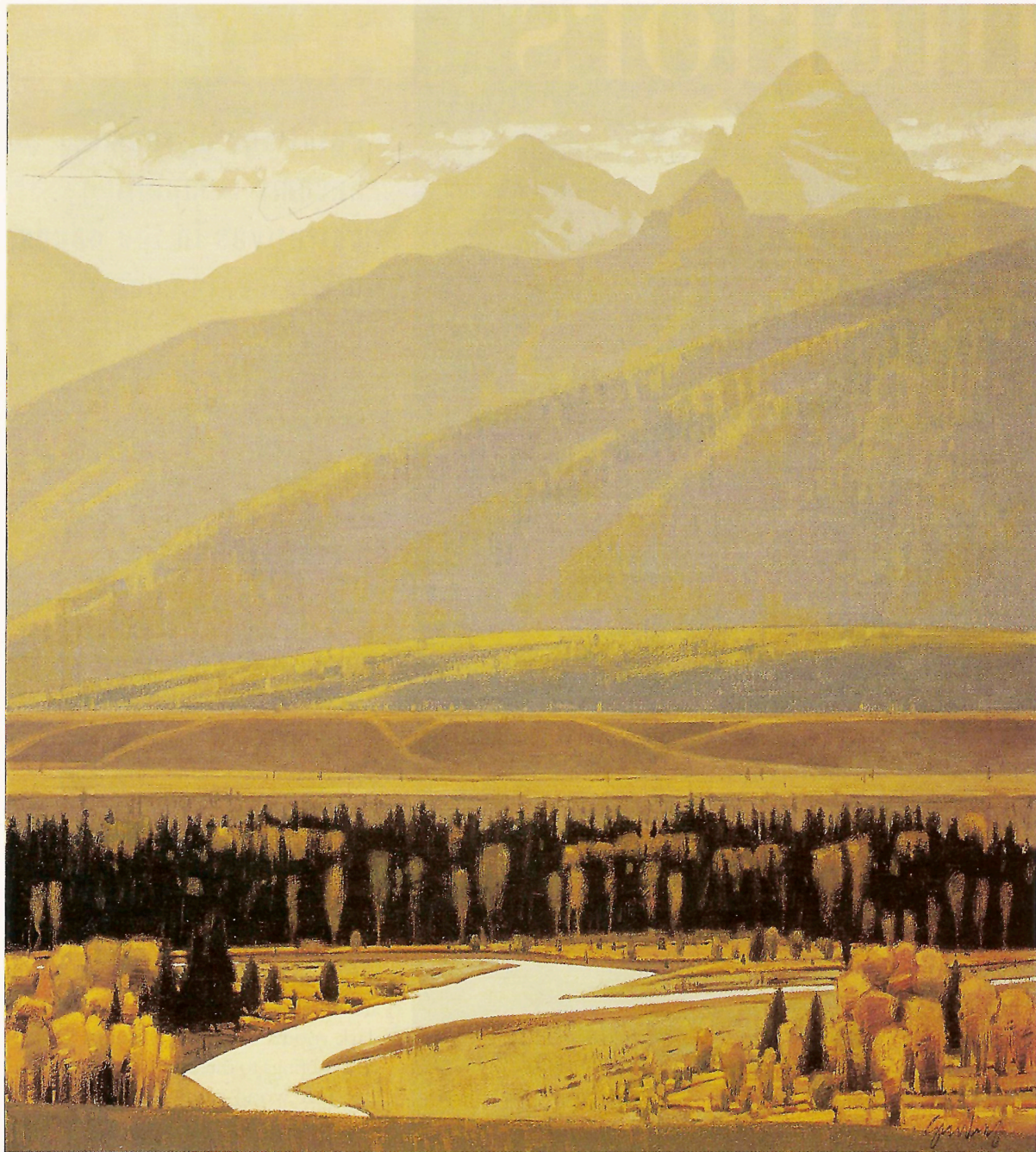
He graduated from Utah State in 1995 with a solid foundation upon which to build his professional career. Added emotional support came from his wife, Paula,

herself a graduate of the university's graphic design department, whom Sanders met at the second summer camp he attended.

Together the couple began to explore the western landscapes that appealed to them both. They usually traveled at less popular times of the year, when the landscape stood out in its most graphic relief. "I like it in autumn after all the leaves have fallen from the trees," Sanders says. "And my favorite time in the spring is when winter is just barely leaving—nothing is green yet, everything is still dead from winter, the trees are leafless, the willows are red, and a few patches of snow are left on the ground."

As much as possible, Sanders and his wife drive the back roads in search of places where humankind's mark may be seen only in a fence or furrow, a rambling lane or solitary haystack. "We'll watch the weather for the moment when the colors are just right," Sanders says. Paula attends to the steering wheel while her husband rides shotgun, gazing out the window, a camera poised in his hands. At any given moment,





Sanders says, "I might suddenly tell her to stop, turn around, go back." Something in the landscape, a particular organization of forms, will have caught his eye, and he'll take note of it with several clicks of the shutter. "You've almost just got to stumble upon it," he says. On the average weekend trip, he'll shoot anywhere from 12 to 20 rolls of film, 24

ABOVE: SNAKE RIVER AUTUMN, OIL,
26 ¼ x 23 ¼.

LEFT: WINTER ROAD,
OIL, 12 x 29.

exposures each.

Back home in his basement studio, Sanders sorts through pile after pile of snapshots until he finds a scene that remains as compelling to him in print form as it was in real life. "I'll start sketching the

scene in my sketchbook, resolving the composition in pencil," he says. Then, working while his sound system delivers an eclectic mix of talk radio, classical music, jazz, and rock and roll, he transfers the sketch using brown or sienna oils to gesso board that he has already finished in warm gray or ochre tones. He blocks in the colors of the (CONTINUED ON PAGE 148)

SANDERS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 105)

scene, covering up the background tone.

Then, he'll focus on getting the color of one object or shape in the painting absolutely right. "The rest of the painting and the rest of the colors I'll build from and relate to that," he says. The average painting takes him no more than three days to complete. When he's deeply involved in one, though, he might not emerge from the basement "until midnight or one or two or three in the morning, because I don't want to leave the paint to dry."

Such diligent work began to pay off for Sanders four years ago when Mountain Trails Gallery in Jackson, WY, began to represent him. The following year, as demand for his work grew, he quit his day job as a picture framer to devote himself to painting full time. The gallery gave him his first one-man show in August 1999. The following month, he placed among the top 100 entries in the prestigious national Arts for the Parks competition. Last year, in the same event, his works placed in both the top 100 and top 200, and his painting TETON SPRING received the People's Choice Award.

It's a humbling level of success for an artist just barely in his 30s. "I've been flattered and amazed," Sanders admits, while enthusiastically explaining that his current professional desire is "just to keep improving, striving to create my own look, and achieve an overall maturity to my work." In the process, no doubt, Sanders will also achieve a goal even closer to his heart: recapturing in oils the paradise of the western landscape that he has intimately known since boyhood. □

Norman Kolpas wrote about R. Kenton Nelson in the March issue.

PHOTOS COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MOUNTAIN TRAILS GALLERY, JACKSON, WY, PARK CITY, UT, SANTA FE, NM, AND SEDONA, AZ; AND A GALLERY, SALT LAKE CITY, UT.