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# A Change *of* SEASONS

**Jared Sanders** is drawn to times  
of transition in the western landscape

BY BONNIE GANGELHOFF



**SNOW-COVERED** fields, burnt-red barns, and bright blue skies. Welcome to the world of Utah painter Jared Sanders, who doesn't have to travel far to immerse himself in the rural landscapes he favors in his works. The scenes beckon from outside his front door in Midway, a small town of 4,000 people located north of Salt Lake City. Sanders lives on the southern edge of town, and his home and studio overlook fields sprinkled with Black Angus cows. Ideas for Sanders' atmospheric landscapes spring from his daily walks through this bucolic landscape, often with his Jack Russell terrier, Cosmo, leading the way. "I have a small sketchbook that fits in my back pocket and a small pen that I don't leave the house without, so that I can jot down notes and make small sketches when an idea comes," Sanders says.

His routines are reminiscent of another painter's daily rituals—an artist Sanders admires. Andrew Wyeth [1917-2009] also was known for depicting subject matter close to home; in his case it was the landscapes and people surrounding him in Chadds Ford, PA, and Cushing, ME. And the inspiration for his paintings originated in solitary walks through familiar terrain in these towns. Like Wyeth, Sanders is not afraid to depict what he knows best—the farmland, rivers, and trees he views every day.

While some landscape painters relish capturing cheery beach scenes or sun-dappled aspen trees, Sanders is drawn to the moody intervals that separate the seasons—the times between fall and winter and between winter and spring when he perceives subtle dramas unfolding. For him these in-between times are visual feasts that he portrays in palettes of soft browns, dusky yellows, and rusty crimsons. "I like it in the autumn after all the leaves have fallen from the trees. But my favorite time is in the spring when winter is just barely leaving," Sanders explains. "Nothing is green yet. Everything is still dead from the winter. The trees are leafless, the willows are red, and there are a few patches of snow left on the ground."

**SANDERS WAS** raised in Kaysville, UT, in a landscape similar to the ones he paints today. This small town in northern Utah was an idyllic place to grow



▲ **Red Door**, oil, 60 x 60.

◀ **Winter Sky**, oil, 42 x 32.

up, and early on he took great delight in exploring the outlying terrain, with the Wasatch Mountains to the east and local favorite Adams Canyon just north, where he and his pals regularly camped and caught fish in a nearby creek. When he wasn't in school or on adventures with friends, his parents packed him and his five siblings into the family's red station wagon for trips to Yellowstone National Park.

Teachers singled out Sanders as a talented artist as early as the ninth grade, and the vice principal of his junior high presented him with an offer he couldn't refuse—a \$50 commission for two pencil drawings of students surrounding and sitting in school buses. "I was so excited, and I thought it was a big deal," Sanders



### representation

**Altamira Fine Art**, Jackson, WY;  
**Montgomery-Lee Fine Art**, Park City, UT.

### upcoming show

Solo show, **Altamira Fine Art**,  
August 1-15.

Sanders is drawn to the **moody intervals that separate the seasons**, when he perceives subtle dramas unfolding.

recalls. Last time he checked, the framed pieces still hung in the school library.

By the time he graduated from high school, no one was surprised when he chose to focus on art at Utah State University in Logan. He studied with well-known painter and teacher Glen Edwards, who emphasized drawing from life and the philosophy that “if you could draw, you could paint.” Sanders worked hard, filled dozens of sketchbooks, and graduated in 1995 with a degree in illustration. For a brief time he worked as an illustrator and picture framer. But by 1997

Mountain Trails Gallery in Jackson, WY, had offered to represent him. He soon decided to quit his day jobs and devote himself to a full-time career in fine art. In 1999 Sanders placed among the top 100 entries in the national Arts for the Parks competition and received an award at the prestigious event. The following year, *Southwest Art* featured him in what would become the magazine’s annual “21 Under 31” story spotlighting emerging artists. Sanders was one of a cadre of 21 young painters who, over the next decade, would go on to become well-known

and respected artists, like Mike Malm, Nicholas Coleman, and Kevin Weckbach.

Today Sanders, 41, is represented by Altamira Fine Art in Jackson, WY. Gallery owner Mark Tarrant first met Sanders in 1999 at the Arts for the Parks competition. Tarrant says to this day he still regrets not purchasing an evocative Sanders painting that depicted the Grand Tetons. To make up for the one that got away, Tarrant says he now owns five paintings by Sanders, who also has established a strong collector base at the gallery. “After the first look at his paintings grabs your interest and



Summer in the Valley, oil, 36 x 60.



The Yard, oil, 25 x 25.

attention, you begin to notice how masterfully he can handle paint,” says Tarrant, who has been representing the artist since 2009. “He has the touch of a mature and confident artist who knows what he wants to do and can do it expertly.”

Sanders is perhaps best known for his moody, tonalist western landscapes, such as *SUMMER IN THE VALLEY* and *WINTER SKY*—paintings that feature muted palettes and evoke a sense of calm and serenity. But Tarrant is quick to point out that Sanders’ recent shows at Altamira Fine Art also have included more architectural pieces in which boldly painted barns and buildings fill almost an entire canvas. “He is having fun with edgier, more playful compositions,” Tarrant says.

**WHILE SANDERS** often finds inspiration during his daily constitutional strolls with Cosmo, he and his wife, Paula, also like to pack up the car and head into the West on back roads if the weather seems right and the seasons are in transition. They don’t make definite travel plans but remain open to spontaneous journeys. Paula usually takes the wheel so Jared can train his eye on the fleeting landscape. When a weathered barn or willow tree captures his attention, Paula pulls to the side of the road, and Jared sketches or snaps a photo for reference material. “I love living in the West—Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico have so much beauty in them. It’s the best place on earth,” he says.

Barns continue to hold special allure for Sanders. Although the structures are becoming rarer sights these days, he doesn’t paint them to tell the story of their fading presence on the American scene. “To



South Park, oil, 24 x 24.

me they are simply a great visual gift that someone built and left on the landscape for me to use in my work,” he says. “Their large, flat, geometric areas of color allow me to introduce elements of abstraction and design into the painting.”

Although Sanders didn’t grow up on a farm, there were many barns dotting the scenic landscape of his hometown, Kaysville. Recently he found an array of old pencil drawings of these structures that he had created in his teens. He notes that now the barns have been replaced by subdivisions. “I had no idea then that one day I would be painting barns like I am now,” he says. “It wasn’t until about 20 years later that I started using barns in my work, so I guess barns are kind of like coming home for me.”

Sanders is a self-described “regionalist,” a painter who, like Wyeth, Grant Wood, and Thomas Hart Benton before

him, captures the particular corner of the world where he lives. “I don’t feel the need to go to Europe. I paint what is part of me. There is plenty right here that inspires me,” he says. For Sanders, the purpose of art is to provide viewers with a visual experience. “Art should be the idea that what you see is what you get,” he says. “If you have to analyze or explain it, the painting has failed. I am trying to give people my own vision of what I see in the landscape, and I hope it’s something that is appealing for them to look at and live with in their homes.” ❖

Bonnie Gangelhoff is Senior Editor at *Southwest Art*.

See more of Sanders’ paintings at  
[www.southwestart.com/featured/sanders-j-feb2012](http://www.southwestart.com/featured/sanders-j-feb2012).