



GORDON McCONNELL  
"WILD RIDERS"

BAIR MUSEUM  
MARTINSDALE, MONTANA



*Steady Rider*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 12 x 12 inches

## GORDON MCCONNELL

Gordon McConnell's rich, painterly imagery evokes the West of John Ford and black and white western films. In a McConnell painting, a stagecoach, a scouting party, a woman at the helm of a fast-moving wagon become allegories for a dramatic and vital West. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Mark Stevens wrote in his essay for McConnell's 2008 Ucross Foundation Art Gallery exhibit: "(McConnell) brings to his work a rare fullness of mind, an unusual ability to understand the West in the round. He understands revisionist history, yet loves the grand old themes; he's adept at postmodern irony, yet does not condescend to the cowboy."

The American West as a topic, or as a subject swept up by the popular imagination, has run a long course and it has not run out. It is still being explored, deconstructed and reconstructed. The momentum



*Bullion Stage*, 2012, acrylic on canvas panel, 14 x 18 inches



*How Lonely Does It Get?*, 2012, acrylic on canvas panel, 12 x 16 inches

gathered when the great railroads laid tracks towards the Pacific Ocean resulted in the literal population of the West, but the artists who sought to interpret its mythic pathos, and capture its light, space and horizon within a rectangle, that also has not run its course. Consider one recent example, the exhibition at the Robischon Gallery in Denver entitled *Appropriated: The Chronicled West*. While McConnell also appropriates or makes use of existing imagery as his source material, such as western films or documentary photography, his work has an edge. He mines both the imagery and the art and history behind it. The facts form the armature on which he lays his interpretation. He looks back to locate an image, and he uses it to look forward. The result is allegorical landscapes — restless, energetic, and of our time.

~Elizabeth M. Guheen

Learn more at [www.gordonmcconnellstudio.com](http://www.gordonmcconnellstudio.com).



left: **Holding 'Em**, 2012, acrylic on canvas panel, 16 x 20 inches

below: **Fancy Buggy**, 2011, acrylic on paper, 9½ x 22 inches

cover: **Victorian Cinema: Relay**, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



## THE CHARLES M. BAIR FAMILY MUSEUM~INTRODUCTION

The painting collection of The Charles M. Bair Family Museum is small, eclectic, and very personal. The collection is a web of family ties and friendships and the past coexisting with the present carefully positioned in a sprawling 19<sup>th</sup> Century ranch house in Martinsdale, Montana.

Charles Bair began the collection through his friendships with Charles M. Russell and Joseph H. Sharp at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Sometime between 1900 and 1925 Mrs. Bair acquired (it is unknown if through trade, gift or purchase) paintings by Lewis Henry Meakin, Edward Potthast and Charles Drake, all contemporaries of Sharp's. When Marguerite and Alberta began to collect art and antiques in Europe starting in the 1950s, Marguerite was attracted by the expressionist, jewel-like scenes depicted in the Edward Cortes paintings they discovered in Paris and the color saturated post-impressionist imagery of the relatively unknown painters Suzanne Eisendieck and Dietz Edzard.

When the new museum building was completed in 2011, it included a small gallery for changing exhibits of work by artists that would both complement the Bair Collection and respect its history as well as expand on the far-ranging and diverse cultural interests of Marguerite and Alberta Bair. They were modern, forward-thinking women born during the age of the horse and buggy. (Charlie was a self-professed bad driver from the outset, but he bought his daughters racy sports cars and they would run around with goggles on all over Portland, Oregon.)

We are honored to feature **Gordon McConnell** "*Wild Riders*" as the third exhibit in the new Bair Family Gallery. The artist is known throughout Montana and the West for both his paintings and his curatorial work during his

tenure as Senior Curator at the Yellowstone Art Museum where he organized several landmark exhibitions and helped assemble the Montana Collection of modern and contemporary regional art.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the current Charles M. Bair Family Trust Board of Advisors: Joy Culver, John Jones, Bill Lucas, William Davies and Arville Lammers. Their support guides the "foremost desire" of Marguerite and Alberta Bair to leave their family homestead as a cultural and historic site for the public's enjoyment. We are grateful to Gordon McConnell for supporting the museum by lending us his extraordinary work and for believing in the museum's mission and goals. Thank you.

*Elizabeth M. Guheen*  
Director and Chief Curator

## THE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The Charles M. Bair Museum is to perpetuate the historic and artistic significance of the Bair family legacy through scholarly, educational and historic exhibits and programs. The museum focuses on the history and art of the Bair family and the family's impact and place in the fabric of Montana and the West.



**The Charles M. Bair  
Family Museum**  
2751 MT Hwy 294  
Martinsdale, MT 59053

## GORDON MCCONNELL “WILD RIDERS”

### **EXHIBITION:**

July 20–October 31, 2012

### **RECEPTION:**

Saturday, July 21, 2:00–4:00PM

### *Summer Hours:*

**Daily, 10:00AM–5:00PM**  
*(Memorial Day–Labor Day)*

### *Fall Hours:*

**Wednesday–Sunday, 10:00AM–5:00PM**  
*(September 4–October 31, 2012)*

*Closed November 1, 2012*  
*Reopens Memorial Day, 2013*

For more information:

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**[www.bairfamilymuseum.org](http://www.bairfamilymuseum.org)**