

North Dakota Museum of Art

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Contact: Brian Lofthus
blofthus@ndmoa.com
701-777-4195

REMEMBERING DAKOTA

They came and they went . . .

Sponsored by Ameriprise Financial with additional support from the North Dakota Council on the Arts.

June 10 - August 10, 2008

Opening Reception: Tuesday, June 10, 7 pm

Artists will share stories about their work and memories of North Dakota.

Please join us for wine, hors d'oeuvres and live music.

Exhibition Description

"I came to North Dakota because I wanted to see where Teddy Roosevelt went after his wife died. It turned out to be a place where you could empty your soul into the sky," according to American landscape photographer Greg Conniff. He is one of thirty-six artists from across the United States whose work will open on June 10 at the North Dakota Museum of Art in *Remembering Dakota*. Curated by Museum Director Laurel Reuter, this timely exhibition adds another chapter to the history of art in and of North Dakota.

"Places are known and remembered by their images and the sensations and emotions they provoke," according to Reuter. While photographers dominate the exhibition, painters, sculptors, and printmakers also assume their places within this newly identified, North Dakota canon. Many, such as sculptors Marlene Alt and Lowell Reiland, grew up in North Dakota but have gone elsewhere: Alt to Oregon, Reiland to Rhode Island.

Todd Hebert, a Dickinson native who graduated from the University of North Dakota, is a rising art star on both Coasts following his debut as the 2005 Aldrich Emerging Artist Award winner (Aldridge Museum of Contemporary Art in Litchfield, Connecticut). Given annually to an artist whose "work exhibits bold innovation, exciting originality, clear direction, and serious dedication," Hebert makes prints and drawings rooted in seeing the landscape through the blur of shifting snow and the haze of prairie sunsets.

Photographers are known for their passion for road trips. For years the painter Charles Forsman has made black and white photographs through the windshield of his van as he traveled across the West. Earlier in life, his parents, his brother, and his brother's children spent a few months working at the coal gasification plant in Beulah, North Dakota. When they left, young Chuck Forsman took with him a store of memories riddled with cold, and "wonderful people who watched out for each other." Much later, he revisited Beulah to re-experience the winter, to take the photographs in this exhibition, all of which were reproduced in his 2003 book *Western Rider—Views from a Car Window*.

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The late German photographer Dirk Reinartz was long fascinated by the myths and monuments attributed to Otto von Bismarck, founder of the German empire. When he discovered there was a city in North Dakota named for him, he came to photograph. The results were published in *Bismarck in America* (2000), which documents “the uniqueness of the American mundane,” according to Steidl, its publisher. A dozen images of local inhabitants, landmarks, and events are included in the exhibition, loaned by his estate.

Guðmundur Ingólfsson came from Iceland, having become friends with the North Dakota/Minnesota photographer Wayne Gudmundson. They made a pact: they would photograph each other’s country, both using black and white film. Ingólfsson would shoot new Iceland, that corner of northeast North Dakota and southern Manitoba settled by Icelandic emigrants in the late nineteenth century. His photographs of the gentle, rolling landscape around Icelandic Park and Mountain, North Dakota, were given to the State Historical Society, and subsequently were loaned to the exhibition.

Justin Newhall made his own journey, again recorded in his book *Historical Marker; Along the Lewis and Clark Trail*. Traveling along the Missouri, he captured on film lyrical images of *Lake Sakakawea, McClean County; Ft. Mandan Historical Site; Ft. Yates; and Williams County*, all included in the exhibition. Part of the Midwest Photographers Publication Project series, Newhall was one of “three young artists poised on the brink of stardom” who was included in the Midwest Photographers Publication Project undertaken by Aperture and the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Photography.

Inspired by the sight of a newly constructed prison glowing in a nighttime prairie landscape, Boston photographer Stephen Turlentes began a series of photographs of penitentiaries around the United States in 1996. In 2000 he arrived in North Dakota to shoot his exquisite and foreboding photo of North Dakota’s penitentiary. Turlentes found the glaring surveillance light of the prison beautiful from a distance yet deterring at close range, forming, as he describes it, “a physical and psychological border that affects those inside and out.” Using an 8-by-10-inch view camera and working at night, Turlentes creates luminescent photographs requiring exposure times ranging from five minutes to two hours.

David Graham, who photographs regularly for the *New York Times Magazine, Newsweek, Time, Fortune, and Forbes*, has published over a dozen books of his photographs. He travels endlessly across the continent recording the lives and makings of extraordinary human beings. In 1997 he came through Grand Forks and made a series of still-unseen flood photos that will be unveiled in the exhibition. Remarkable in their formal beauty, the photographs capture the stillness that inhabited the cities and the countryside in the days following the evacuation.

Minneapolis photographer Stuart Klipper became famous for his 12-by-38-inch, horizontal photographs of the polar regions of the Earth. He also photographed Minnesota and its environs, New Mexico, and wherever else he happened upon. According to Klipper, “I returned to North Dakota again this past January. I had been persuaded to ride shotgun with a friend who had some

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business to attend to in Grand Forks. She hadn't much need to inveigle; I very much wanted to go to North Dakota again.

"For one, I had to taste the fabled chocolate-dipped potato chips of Widman's chocolate shoppe. And a tad more challengingly, I had a yen to make pix out on these High-Lined plains in mid-winter, when it was good and cold and the northern tier states were snow-covered from the Wisconsin shores of Lake Michigan to the Eastern Slope of the Rockies in Montana, Wyoming and Colorado.

"I was not disappointed—I'll put it this way, if a mere smidgen of agriculture were ever introduced to the Antarctic, that's what winter looks like in North Dakota. I spent a couple of chilly wind-driven days on the road amply confirming this. The high point of this foray was finding the KVLV-TV mast, the planet's tallest structure. It occurred to me to perhaps shoot it in a vertical format."

Others, like Jeff Brouws, returned to visit ancestral homes or relatives still living in the State. Even then, Brouws was nudged into coming by his wife Wendy Burton, a literary agent and photographer. She had begun work on her own novel about a small town while concurrently shooting a photographic series of abandoned houses.

For Brouws, *Remembering Dakota* "has stimulated a pride in the remembrance of my deep family history and its relationship to North Dakota. The Gerlitz Clan were hearty folks and I can say unabashedly that I loved my Grandfather Gerlitz like no other He taught me to love books and music. What gifts he gave me. I miss him terribly." He was a "big hearted guy who liked to buy a round of drinks at the local bar after he got his paycheck. Even played guitar and fiddle on a country radio station up there around Goodrich. He loved Dickens. Bought me books when he didn't have enough money to cover his own expenses. Wrote me letters when I was ten years of age that dealt with important life matters. He was a philosopher."

Still others, such as Tom Arndt, married North Dakotans. He went on to take dozens of photographs at the Hazelton family farm. Included in the exhibition is Arndt's first photograph collected by New York's Museum of Modern Art, *Farm Yard With Yard Light* (near Hazelton, North Dakota), 1981, a black and white silver gelatin print, selenium toned by Tom Arndt.

Over two dozen additional artists are in the exhibition including new etchings of the Red River Valley landscape by Nancy Friese. Aerial photographs by Emmet Gowin and Terry Evans. Abstract, aerial paintings by Abner Hershberger who grew up in a Mennonite family near Amenia, North Dakota, and continues to paint "the fields I plowed well into adulthood with the stark markings of furrowed land, patterns of irrigation, and stubble fields." Stunning black and white landscape photos by Greg Conniff, Ward Davenny, Lynn Davis, and Joe Deal. several bodies of work by young artists who graduated from the University of Minnesota Moorhead and moved to Minneapolis to pursue their careers. Sculpture of castings of fissures in the North Dakota earth by Lowell Reiland. And quirky, stitched and sewn images of *Winter Kill*.

Often artists in the exhibition create both art and documentaries. Daniel Heyman draws emigrants,

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refugees, and students, drawn to Grand Forks for freedom in all its guises. Frank Sampson paints family and animal scenes from his childhood home near Edmore, North Dakota. Robert Polidori photographs abandoned, decaying buildings and Paul Shambroom shoots missile sites. Jim Dow photographs sports places "where children come to play and men come to dream." Peter Latner's photographs are from a long-term documentary project about landscapes on the north central prairies and plains. Speaking for many in the exhibition, he says, "I'm interested largely in ways that landscapes must adapt in an effort to maintain a region's economic survival (hence the ethanol plan, the new subdivision, etc.). As is the case with many documentary or "straight" photographers, the subject of my pictures is much like human aspiration. It may not always be pretty, but that doesn't mean it can't be beautiful."

Rites of hunting appear and reappear throughout the show. Marlene Alt cast over a thousand deer antlers in wax. Jes Schrom came home to North Dakota to take shooting lessons (for two hours) and then systemically shot two dozen stuffed animals, embroidered them back together again, took their pictures, and submitted an installation of the photographs and the shooting video. Guy Nelson, now an artist from Brooklyn, made paintings and sculptures of Bambi deer (Seeking Refuge) and bleeding deer legs (*November Harvest*). Brian Lesteberg created a photo documentary of hunting with his father, his bother, and the neighbors. Lesteberg's photographs, while clearly from a North Dakota place, suggest Northern European still life paintings from the seventeenth century.

Daily life is ultimately at the heart of the exhibition. James Dean and Todd Strand spent years making pictures in North Dakota which, when added up and heaped together with the work of their fellow artists, create a vast and complicated vision of the place and the people who inhabit that landscape. In Peter Haakon Thompson's charming self-portraits, he morphs into the landscape, whereas Todd Arsenault fractures his landscapes into jumbled, Cubistic, prisms. From every position, these artist address the endlessly evolving relationship between humans and the worlds they inhabit. This is specifically addressed in the photographic work of Scottish artist Roddy MacInnes.

In 1993 MacInnes found two photo albums in a flea market in Denver. Inside was the photographer's signature (Nina Weiste), the date the photographs were made (1917), and one geographical reference (Jim River). His research led him to Dickey County, North Dakota. According to MacInnes, "I began the project with the initial intention of addressing such questions as why do we have the need to create a photographic record of our lives, and what role do photographs play in the construction of identity? The project goals have since expanded to include an exploration of connections between people, landscape, memory, and time. I am interested in issues surrounding the relationships between people and the landscape, sense of place, memory and identity. Most often, personal stories, including my own, drive my work, but what interests me most is the area in which the personal becomes public and the specific becomes general.

Artists in the exhibition include Marlene Alt (Ashland, Oregon; born in New Leipzig, ND), Tom Arndt (St. Paul; born in Minneapolis), Todd Arsenault (New York, NY; born New Milford, CT), Jeff Brouws (Stanfordville, New York; born in San Francisco), Wendy Burton (Stanfordville, NY; born in New York, NY), Greg Conniff (Madison, WI; born Washington, DC), Ward Davenny (Carlisle,

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Pennsylvania), Lynn Davis (Hudson, New York), Joe Deal (Providence, RI; born Topeka, KA), James Dean (Avon, MN; born in Minneapolis, practiced as an architect in North Dakota), Jim Dow (Boston, Massachusetts), Terry Evans (Chicago, IL; raised in Kansas), Charles Forsman (Boulder, CO); , Nancy Friese, Emmet Gowin (Newtown, PA; grew up in Virginia), David Graham, Peter Haakon Thompson (Minneapolis; born St. Paul), Todd Hebert (, Abner Hershberger (Goshen, IN; grew up in Amenia, ND), Daniel Heyman (Philadelphia, PA; born Long Island, NY), Guðmundur Ingólfsson, Stuart Klipper (Minneapolis; born in New York, NY), Peter Latner (Minneapolis; born in New York, NY), Brian Lesteberg (Minneapolis, MN; grew up in Fargo, ND), Roddy MacInnes (Boulder, CO; born in Argyll, Scotland), Guy Nelson (Brooklyn, NY; raised in North Dakota), Justin Newhall, Anna Pedersen, Robert Polidori, Lowell Reiland, Dirk Reinartz, Ingrid Restemayer, Frank Sampson (Boulder, Colorado; born in), Fritz Scholder (deceased), Jes Schrom (Minneapolis), Paul Shambroom (Minneapolis; born Teaneck, NJ), Todd Strand (St. Paul), and Steve Tourlentes (Boston).

The North Dakota Museum of Art is located on Centennial Drive, Grand Forks. Weekdays 9 – 5 pm. Weekends 1 – 5 pm. The Museum Shop is open during these hours as well. The Museum Café is open weekdays 10 – 4 pm with lunch served from 11 – 2 pm. Although the Museum does not charge an admission fee, the suggested donation is \$5 for adults and change for children. Wireless internet access available.