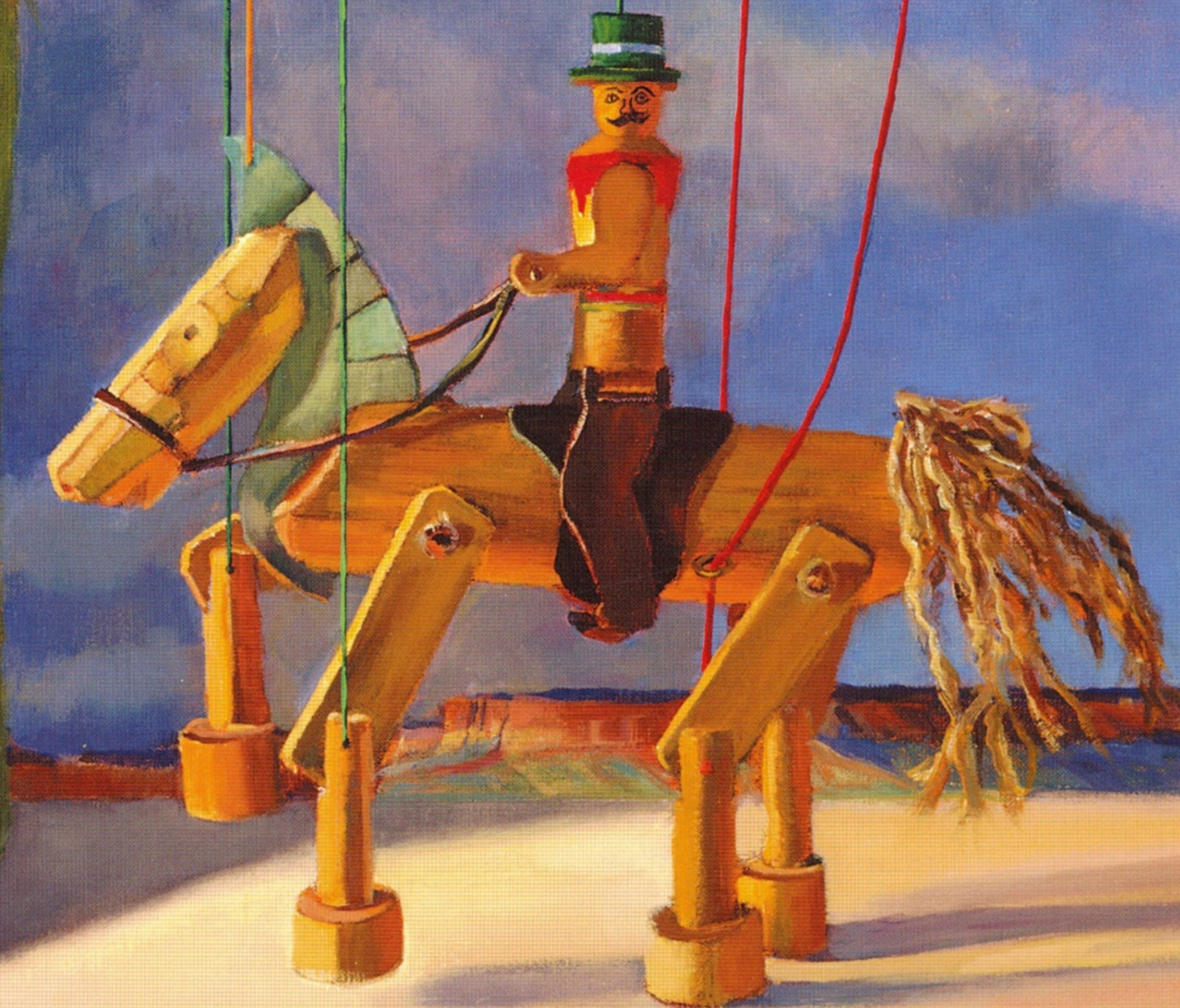


BIG SKY AIRLINES

LATITUDE

The Magazine of Traveling Interest



Fall 2006

"GRANDMA'S FANCY BOOTS"
Oil on Linen
30" x 24"
By: Carol Guzman





"MANY MOCCASINS"

Oil on Linen

22" x 40"

Finding Treasure

... in the Treasure State

In 1990, Carol Guzman left her advertising career in New York City, packed her bags and headed west. She followed the trail of immigrants who, seeking new frontiers, flocked to Montana in an earlier time, lured by stories of gold and silver treasure. Guzman came by Chevy van, not a covered wagon, and she was accompanied by her Jack Russell terrier, not the family milk cow. Indeed, she found her artist's life in the west and Montana treasure of a different sort: a wide open landscape that defied categorization, richly colored seasonal changes, cottontail rabbits and hollyhocks as still-life subjects, and a husband, noted landscape painter, Clyde Aspevig.

Guzman met Aspevig while exploring the Canadian Rockies. Aspevig, a product of Montana's Hi-Line, knows the state like the back of his

hand. He introduced Guzman to his Montana, via the back roads and small towns of his boyhood. The pair settled on the banks of the Shields River, north of Livingston, after a short stint in Colorado.

"For a time, I thought Clyde had an uncle or cousin around every bend," Guzman laughs, marveling at the connectedness of Montana people, despite the vast terrain.

Guzman and Aspevig live year round in Montana. "Since we work at home, we don't see folks in the valley often," says Guzman, "but we share their concern about the changes in south-central Montana and their love of the land."

"We buy locally when we can," says Guzman, committed to the idea that sus-

tainability creates a vibrant community. Their home, excluding their separate studios, is a modest 1500 square



Carol Guzman



"TIMOTHY REAL BIRD"
Oil on Linen
24" x 20"
By: Carol Guzman



"CHILD'S DRESS"
Oil on Linen
48" x 36"

feet. Many building materials were recycled from an earlier era. "The older I get," says Guzman, "I want to leave less and less of a footprint."

It's likely that somewhere in the Shields River valley in the 19th century, women gathered to quilt, paint china, discuss books, or simply share the trials of homesteading. In that same tradition, Guzman founded the present day Crazy Mountain Women's Art League, a loosely formed group of women of all ages who've gathered regularly for 5 years to paint, draw and study the lives and works of past artists. The group includes a journalist, a librarian, a gallery owner, and a court reporter. Some members began coming as teenagers with their mothers and now come as mothers with children of their own.

Guzman reports receiving "more enjoyment and fulfillment from this group than I ever imagined." A traditionalist in her approach, Guzman's students spend a lot of time drawing and working on fundamentals. "They're the building blocks of the language of painting, just like scales form the foundation of the language of music." In 2006, Guzman offered, for the first time, an Oil Painting Workshop through Open Box M Ranch near Cody, Wyoming.

Guzman's current still-life subjects include weather worn boots and chaps of Montana cowboys and intricately beaded Plains Indian moccasins. "I study these objects and try to see the lives that they represent, past and present. I work on them over an extended period of time, building up paint texture and

color." But when Guzman finishes, her subjects look as if they have a life of their own; they practically pulsate off the canvas.

Guzman participates in many national museum shows as an invited and juried artist. She likes the invitation process, as it affords some of the artistic freedom she craves.

"As an artist, it's important to explore new ideas and forms of expression." Artists must experiment, she insists, as it's through trial and error that an artist finds his or her voice.

Guzman entered a painting of a whimsical wooden cowboy puppet in the 2005 Masters of the American West show at the Autry National Invitational in Los Angeles, California. Since then, she's delighted in finding new toys to include in future paintings and letting her imagination travel in new directions. "I can see these toys with children who once lived in the west," she muses. She keeps the toys in her studio as inspiration for future compositions.

From Guzman's perspective, her life as a Montana artist is a "constant treasure hunt, a process that connects the past with the present and future." As Guzman continues her western adventure, the rest of us will have to just wait and see what treasured discoveries lie ahead.

Carol Guzman's work can be found at the Trailside Gallery in Jackson, Wyoming, the Simpson Gallagher Gallery in Cody, Wyoming, the Two Medicine Gallery in Whitefish, Montana and Betsy Swartz Fine Art Consulting in Bozeman, Montana. ■



"BEADED BAG AND MINI-PARFLECHE"
Oil on Linen
18" x 14"