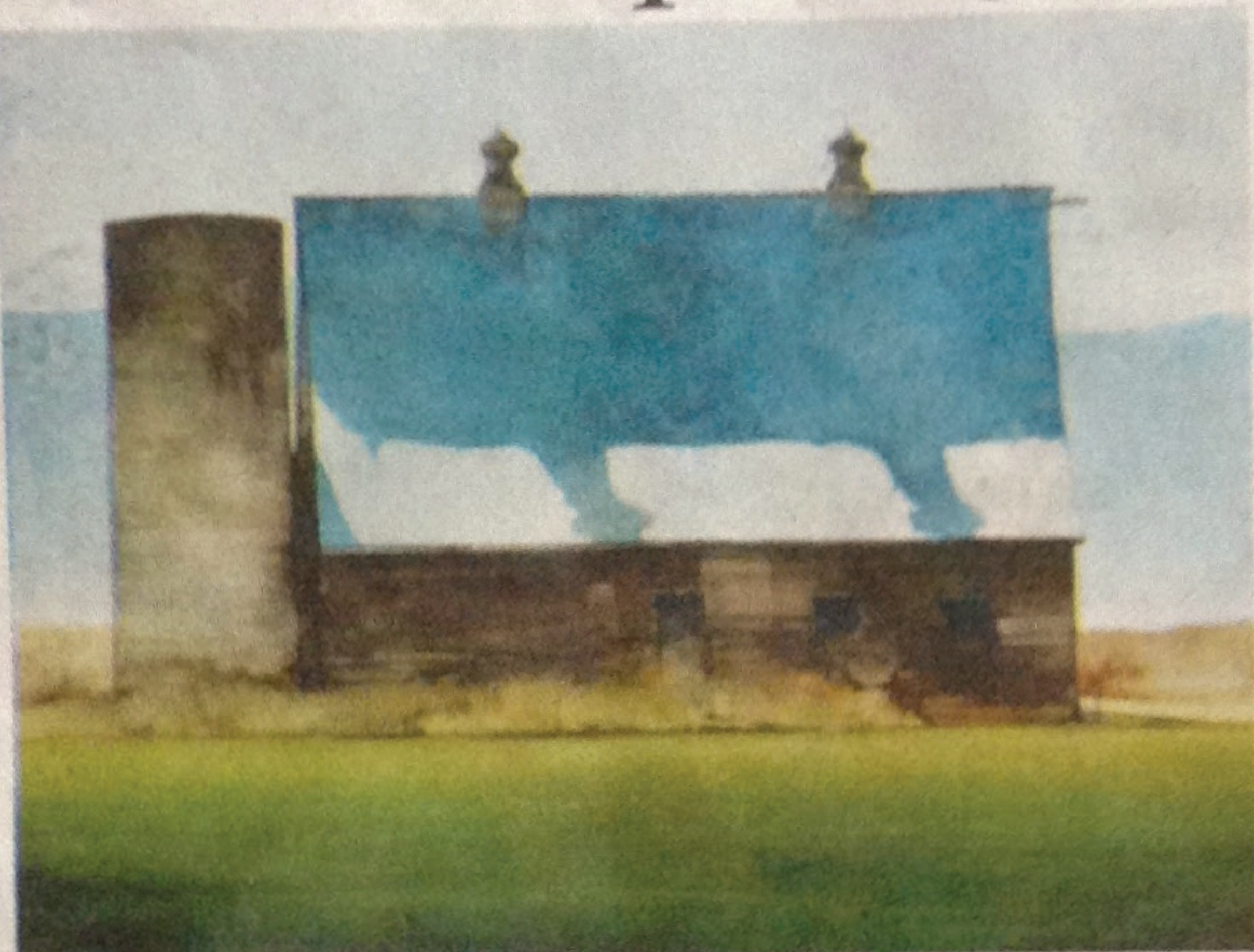


Exhibit spotlights three Utah artists



COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY LEE FINE ART

"Backlit Spires," a watercolor work, shows artist Joseph Alleman's control with one of his preferred mediums. Montgomery Lee Fine Art will host an artist reception for Utah-based artists Alleman, Ivan Blagorenko and Eric G. Thompson on Saturday, Dec. 27.

Show will open at Montgomery Lee

By **SCOTT IWASAKI**

The Park Record

Montgomery Lee Fine Art planned a special exhibit that will open on Saturday, Dec. 27.

The show will feature the works of three Utah-based painters -- Ivan Blagorenko, Joseph Alleman and Eric G. Thompson.

The artists took time out of their schedules to talk with *The Park Record* about their influences, methods and works.

Ivan Blagorenko

Blagorenko's love of art percolated while growing up in Belarus, which was part of the former Soviet Union.

I took a lot of trips to St. Petersburg and Moscow and spent time in various museums in those cities," Blagorenko said. "I had a lot of friends who were artists and I guess I have an artistic gene, so that was the combination that did it for me. That exposure gave me a push to go into art."

The painter works mostly with oils, but also enjoys drawing

shape studies with pencil.

"Oil gives me the ability to express myself," he said. "I can use the colors to put life into shapes that I draw."

Blagorenko is known for his landscapes, although he has done some portrait work.

"I think I'm drawn to landscapes because of the environment I grew up in," he said. "We had a cottage where I would spend my summers. We would go fishing and have to hike through a thick forest to get to the lake."

"When I was there, it was just part of my life, but now I can realize how rich nature was for me," he said. "That's probably one of the reasons why I paint in the realistic style."

Realism fascinates Blagorenko.

"There isn't much I can add to the scene that I look at, and my goal is to make a portrait of nature as close to what I see as I can," he said. "I want the viewer to be engulfed in that experience."

He is also drawn to the juxtaposition of light and dark.

"If you start with a dark or even black canvas, adding light makes everything come alive," Blagorenko said. "By casting light into some areas, you can make things stand out."

The artist finds solace in the challenge of painting.



COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY LEE FINE ART

"Autumn Jewels" shows how oil painter Ivan Blagorenko utilizes his understanding of light and dark to bring a scene to life.

"I think it's always difficult to know what to paint, but when I start to paint, I don't think about the technicality of it. I just let it go and allow it to take over me," he said. "I think that's why I enjoy it so much. I just paint."

Blagorenko has created 10 new paintings for the upcoming exhibit.

"They called me a month and a half ago and I've been spending a lot of late nights working," he said with a laugh. "This is my first show in Park City and I hope to bring my best work and hope people will come and enjoy them."

Please see Gallery, C-10

Gallery will open exhibit

Joseph Alleman

Alleman's road to visual art and painting came by "default," he said.

"I didn't ever decide on doing anything else and this was the career path that started when I was a kid," Alleman said, giggling. "It wasn't ever something that I made a conscious decision to do."

From the time he started working with paints in elementary school, Alleman knew he wanted to work with watercolor.

"I've always liked the feel and look of that medium," he said. "When I would look at oil paintings, I would try to copy what I saw in watercolor."

The lack of watercolor painters also intrigued Alleman.

"There isn't a vast body of watercolor works, like what's been done with oils," he said. "That also gave me a sense of identity."

While watercolors have a reputation of being a difficult painting medium, Alleman kept at them.

"They go back to my early painting instruction and exposure to fine art beyond middle school," he said. "When I was growing up in Salt Lake and taking lessons from retired art teacher Harold Petersen, watercolor was the most comfortable and natural paint for me and I took that with me when I went to college."

These days, Alleman does intertwine oil painting with his watercolors.

"It's interesting to see how the two mediums play off each other," he said. "There are elements in my work in oil that are unique because they were developed through years of watercolor technique and vice versa."

"I always thought more of myself as a painter and not just a watercolorist," Alleman explained. "So, to incorporate oils seemed a

natural progression."

Still, the artist has certain reasons when he uses each medium.

"Oil feels more comfortable if I want to do bigger works, and at the same time, watercolors are more fitting for more intimate and smaller works," he said. "However, it was awkward for me when I started working with oils. I had to reinvent the wheel again, but then after a while it all started to feel the same."

Alleman will show 15 new pieces.

"Selecting what to paint varies piece by piece," he said. "I mean, there are times when you're never going to go out and walk into a scene that's in your mind, so you just sit down with a sketch book and create it. Then sometimes you see something you've driven past 50 times and all of a sudden the lighting will catch your eye one day."

Many of his works feature a building or structure within a landscape.

"The landscape element gives context to the structure," Alleman said. "I've enjoyed the play between the geometry and straight



COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY LEE FINE ART

Visual artist Eric G. Thompson has combined color and realism to tell a story in his work "Introspection."

lines and the organic setting. It's the dumb stuff you think about when you're painting that makes you say, 'This is fun.'"

Eric G. Thompson

Thompson is different from the other two artists because he is self-taught.

"Sometimes I think I would have learned more things quicker if I went to [art] school," Thompson said. "I guess I'm like a masochist, because I like to do things on my own and continue to fail and get back up and fail again."

One benefit of being self-taught is the lack of constraints on the art.

"The good thing about going my own way and choosing my own path is that I'm not too influenced by a teacher, so I was able to develop my vision and style on my own," Thompson said. "I have found that my vision has come from my own soul and how I see the world."

"It's all about what catches my eye and how I'm moved by it," he said. "It can be light moving across the wall or a balance of objects on a shelf."

Most of his works are about that balance, but other elements seep into the composition, ac-

cording to Thompson.

"Color and mood also play into this, as well as the energy of the object and what I can bring to it with brushstrokes," he said.

Thompson made the decision to become an artist when he was a child.

"I saw different artworks when I was growing up and was just inspired by them," he said. "I couldn't believe that these emotions and feelings could be captured in paint."

Thompson liked how paintings captivated him more than photographs.

"There is an energy in a painting that stems from textures and brushstrokes," he said.

At first, Thompson considered himself a surrealist artist.

"I switched to realism nearly overnight because of an Andrew Wyeth painting," he said. "It just floored me because he showed me that you could capture a story in a real way."

Today, Thompson works with three mediums -- oil, egg tempera and watercolor.

"I don't have a medium of choice, because I use each one for different subject matters and what I want to capture," he said. "If I want to do something that is super detailed and earthy with

a matte finish, then I go with egg tempera."

There will be an egg tempera painting in the show.

"It's of my dad's tractor and it's special to me because the eggs from his chickens were used to make the paints," he said.

If Thompson wants to paint something free and loose, he will turn to watercolor.

"It's a little more washy and [abstract,]" he said. "Then if I want something more textural, I will use oils. They are all great at expressing what I want to convey."

Thompson's not sure how many works he will show during the Montgomery Lee exhibit, but said he will probably display between five and seven new paintings.

"Most of them were completed in the past year and I have a couple that I've held on to for a couple of years," he said. "I'm really looking forward to the show."

Montgomery Lee Fine Art, 608 Main St., will host an artist opening reception for Joseph Alleman, Eric G. Thompson and Ivan Blagorenko on Saturday, Dec. 27, from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.montgomeryleefineart.com.