

TIM SHINABARGER

Impressions From The Wild

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TIM SHINABARGER'S
Impressions From The Wild

"I WOULD NOT CHANGE MY LIFE FOR ANY OTHER,
BUT MY LOVE HAS ALWAYS BEEN DIVIDED. I AM
ETERNALLY OBSESSED WITH TWO DEEP DESIRES-
ONE, TO SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE IN THE
WILDERNESS, AND THE OTHER, TO ACCOMPLISH
SOMETHING WORTHWHILE IN ART."

A.P. PROCTOR



*Tim Shinabarger sculpting
"Savannah Winds"*



T H E L E G A C Y G A L L E R Y

BOX 4977 • 75 NORTH CACHE • JACKSON, WYOMING 83001 • 307 733-2353

7178 EAST MAIN STREET • SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA 85251 • 480 945-1113

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Impressions From The Wild

The Grand Return of Sculptor Tim Shinabarger

By Todd Wilkinson

In 21st-century America, most of us dwell in cities or suburbs, and it's fair to say, albeit with sadness, that a vast majority regards wild nature as existing apart from our daily human existence. What once was inseparable now feels strangely exotic.

For sculptor Tim Shinabarger, contact with wild country remains a nurturing bedrock. Wilderness is more than an abstract state of mind; it is, for him, the source of eternal artistic truth, the cradle from which sentient life emerged. On a deeply emotional level, wildness and the creatures that depend on it for survival represent an intersection where the physical tactile world merges with the spiritual one.

I have known and been writing about Shinabarger for two decades. I have watched him evolve. Today, few wildlife sculptors on Earth have a more genuine familiarity with wild country or go to such painstaking ends to immerse themselves in it.

About two years ago, Shinabarger knew that he was falling into a creative rut. He worried about his work becoming rote, even though his pieces were in high demand. He saw the first flicker of gray in his hair and he realized that an artist's life is finite, that unless you set aside the time to push boundaries, it will never happen.

The only antidote was to withdraw from the rat race, revisiting the reasons why he had become a sculptor. Introspection led him back to his muse: the wilderness. And sheer determination to heed his inner voice—that which has made him one of the most acclaimed of his generation—pulled him into the studio to escape distractions.

He has re-emerged never more energized. Think of this show as the bounty of Shinabarger fully engaging his wellspring. What you have before you now is, without question, the most impressive and heartfelt massing of new work in his career.

Classical and yet contemporarily distinctive, daring and mature, each piece owes its inspiration to wondrous wild places on a map. Those points of geography are as diverse as the still-unspoiled velds of southern Africa, the glacier-carved valleys and tundra of the Far North, and closer to home, Shinabarger's beloved boyhood haunts in the Absaroka-Beartooth mountains of Montana.

Whether it is a stoic bust, a lively tabletop piece, a high-relief wall hanging, or figurative predicament scene, be it a pair of lions, a massive grizzly bear in full contortion as it rubs its back on an old snag, bighorn sheep in the high crags, a regal sable, dreamy kudu or stately warthog, each work commands a sense of universality that, when achieved through the noble gesture, becomes transcendental.

Collectively, they all stir a yearning. They excite us, draw us closer, and leave us entranced in the changing light. Deep down, we know that when we bring nature back into our conscious awareness, we become richer, smarter, more perceptive and more empathic.



Tim and Roxane in British Columbia

◦ ◦ ◦

Not long ago, I sought a perspective on Shinabarger from one of America's living masters. George Carlson, a two-time Prix de West winner and the only artist ever to win the prestigious prize as both a sculptor and painter. Shinabarger, too, is ambidextrous in two and three-dimensional media.

Carlson had this to say: "I've always felt that Tim gets a tremendous surface energy going in his pieces," Carlson says. "They are very engaging to the eye. And always a good sculptor who aspires to be great knows the fine line between pushing too much energy while resisting the temptation of becoming glib."

Carlson mentions a book, *The History of American Sculpture*, written by Lorado Taft and published exactly a century ago in 1903. Taft identifies four criteria for assessing a great work of art.

First, he asks, does the artist convey sympathy for the subject? Second, is the portrayal pursued with intelligence, a pondering that begs: Is there an inner power emanating from the work which gives voice to a force far greater than any surface detail?

Third, does the artist know what taste is? Does the creator have the discipline to court a harmonic melding of busy and quiet surface areas, balance mass with negative space, offer viewers a revelation and yet invite them to indulge in contemplating a bigger mystery? Finally, as Taft notes, there must be skill informed by insight that can only be hewn through the experience of sketching, handling clay, building up and tearing down, pushing the edge but knowing when to start over, and letting go of inhibition.

Most of all, mastery of the three-dimensional illusion comes from the heavy lifting of direct observation, of imprinting the spirit of a subject upon the memory.

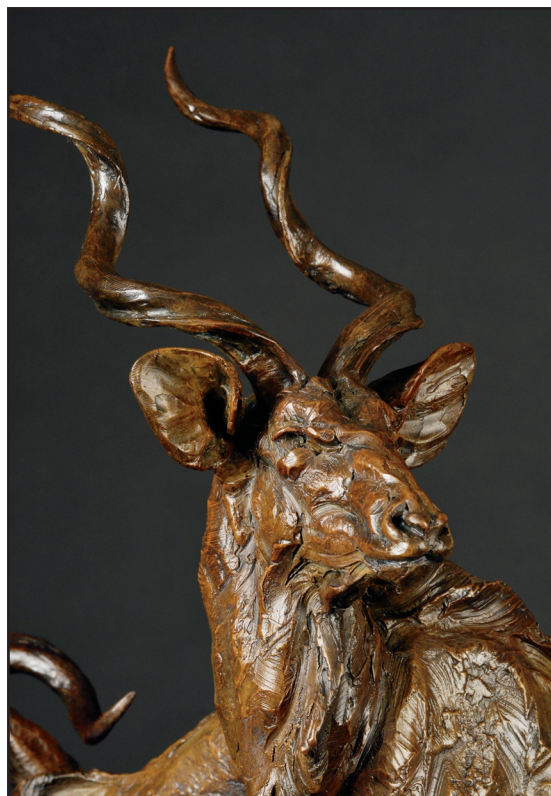
"These days taking a sabbatical and immersing yourself in solitude is pure bravery," says Shinabarger's colleague in animal sculpture Tim Cherry. "It's taking a chance and believing in yourself, knowing that you'll find a way in and out again."

Adds the sporting sculptor Walter Matia, who is anxiously awaiting the unveiling of Shinabarger's new work: "Every one of us goes through an evolution of simply trying to get it right and then, if we have it in us, moving onto what is actually worth talking about in the sculptures we do. Tim has a string of big ideas that, when well executed, read much larger than they actually are."

Has Shinabarger succeeded? Consider this observation from Adam Duncan Harris, chief curator of the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming: "Tim Shinabarger is like an elder statesman of wildlife art without actually being very old. He has risen to the top and has remained there with work that is consistently innovative and of the highest quality."

Savor the feast that Shinabarger brings before you now and enjoy his written studio notes accompanying each piece. He reminds us why we need to take refuge in wildness. Fortunately, his art is there to transport us.

Todd Wilkinson has been a writer/journalist for more than a quarter century. Well known for his stories about the arts, he contributes regularly to national publications and has written several books about art and nature, including the 2013 critically-acclaimed biography, "Last Stand: Ted Turner's Quest to Save a Troubled Planet"



THE MIRAGE
27" x 16" x 20"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 24

KUDU ARE THE REAL DEAL AS FAR AS TOTEMIC, MYSTICAL CREATURES. I HAVE NEVER ENCOUNTERED A MORE BEAUTIFUL, MESMERIZING ANIMAL. FROM THEIR TRADEMARK HORNS, TO PERFECT ATHLETIC PROPORTIONS, TO THEIR EXTRA FINE PAINT JOB, THEY ARE THE BEST OF SUBJECT MATTER FOR BOTH PAINTING AND SCULPTURE. NOT ONLY DO THEY HAVE ELEGANTLY PATTERNED MARKINGS, BUT THEY ARE COUNTER SHADED MAKING THEM APPEAR FLAT AND GHOSTLIKE WHILE SLIPPING THROUGH THE AFRICAN BUSH. ONE BEHAVIORAL TRAIT THAT I OBSERVED WAS THEIR FONDNESS FOR USING LARGE ANTHILLS AS VANTAGE POINTS FOR SPYING THEIR SURROUNDS—AND KEEPING A READY EYE OUT FOR PREDATORS.





BIG ITCH
36" x 16" x 15"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 24

LIFE DOES INFORM ART AND EVERY PIECE I CREATE HAS ITS ORIGINS IN SOMETHING I'VE SEEN. THIS BRUIN TABLETOP RISES FROM ONE OF THOSE PERFECT OCTOBER DAYS, THE KIND THAT YOU MEASURE YOUR LIFE BY. I WAS GLASSING ACROSS A DEEP VALLEY IN THE WILDERNESS OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA. I NOTICED A TREE WAVING BACK AND FORTH. WHEN I BROUGHT THE SPOTTING SCOPE INTO FOCUS THERE WAS AN ENORMOUS GRIZZLY SCRATCHING HIS BACK. THIS PIECE IS INTENDED TO BE A MIXTURE OF WHIMSY AND BRUTE STRENGTH, ALL WRAPPED IN THE ILLUSION OF MOTION.

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THE SWORDSMAN
27" x 12" x 10"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 24



YET ANOTHER ICONIC UNGULATE THAT, LIKE THE KUDU, SEEMS LIFTED OUT OF A FAIRY TALE. BUT DON'T LET THEIR SOOTHING COURTLY APPEARANCE FOOL YOU. WITH RAPIER-LIKE HORNS AND A FEARLESS ATTITUDE, THEY ARE WARRIORS OF THE MOPANE WOODLANDS. EVEN LIONS THINK TWICE BEFORE ADDING THIS ANTELOPE TO THE MENU. THEY'RE WORTHY OF BEING CELEBRATED AS A BUST AND THROUGH THE INTERPLAY OF LIGHT, SHADOW AND TEXTURE, I WANTED TO COMMUNICATE THEIR ELUSIVENESS.





WILD THING

14" X 14" X 17"

BRONZE, EDITION OF 30

THE WARTHOG, A SUBJECT SO MALIGNED YET SO COOL BECAUSE OF A LARGER THAN LIFE ATTITUDE. TRUTH BE TOLD, THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL SCULPTURAL ANIMALS. ON MY RECENT VISIT TO AFRICA, I WAS TAKEN BY HOW PEPPY AND SPIRITED THEY ARE, NOT AT ALL THE SLOW HOG-LIKE ANIMALS YOU WOULD EXPECT.



TOUGH GUY

15" X 11" X 11 1/2"

SHOWN IN CLAY, EDITION OF 30

ON THE HIGH PLAINS OF THE WEST, IF I HAD BEEN HERE 200 YEARS AGO, I WOULD HAVE BEEN SMITTEN WITH BISON. IN AFRICA, CAPE BUFFALO ARE THEIR VERSION OF WILD TOROS OR ANCIENT MINOTAURS AND THEY ARE TOUGH CUSTOMERS. THEY'RE A SCULPTOR'S DREAM ANIMAL WITH LOTS OF MASS, MUSCLY TEXTURE, AND CHARACTER. IT BEGINS WITH THOSE UNIQUE SWEEPED-BACK HORNS THAT FORM SUCH A FORMIDABLE HELMET OVER THEIR HEAD. I DIDN'T WANT TO MERELY REPLICATE ONE IN BRONZE; I IMAGINED HOW THEY WOULD BE TREATED IN THE HANDS OF A 19TH CENTURY ANIMALIER.





THE MOUNTAINEERS
48" x 23" x 10"
WALL HANGING
BRONZE, EDITION OF 20



IN THIS WORK, I CLIMBED OUT ON A LEDGE AND FEEL REWARDED. I VIEW THIS COMPOSITION AS A SCULPTURAL LANDSCAPE WITH BIGHORN RAMS IN IT. IT'S A DEPARTURE FOR ME, AND PART OF MY DESIRE TO ENGAGE THE VIEWER ON DIFFERENT VISUAL PLAINS IN ORDER TO HEIGHTEN THE VISUAL ILLUSION. I LOVE THE ALPINE. THIS IS MY TRIBUTE TO AN AMAZINGLY AGILE RAM AND THE AWESOME TERRAIN IT INHABITS. ON A TECHNICAL LEVEL, IT WAS QUITE A CHALLENGE TO ORCHESTRATE THE PLAY OF LIGHT AND OTHER DESIGN ELEMENTS YET MAINTAIN A SENSE OF SPONTANEITY. BEFORE I NARROWED MY FOCUS TO SCULPTURE I WAS ALSO A PAINTER. BEING A WALL PIECE, IT'S LIKE A MELDING OF BOTH MEDIA. ONE OF MY HEROES, CARL RUNGUIS, WORKED SUCH WONDERFUL PATTERNS INTO HIS PAINTINGS, ESPECIALLY THE ROCKS, SOMETHING THAT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO DO. THIS IS ALL ABOUT REALISM AND ABSTRACTION.

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SAVANNAH WINDS

24 1/2" x 38" x 17"

SHOWN IN CLAY, EDITION OF 20

IN MANY PARTS OF AFRICA, LION POPULATIONS ARE IN TROUBLE. THEY DEPEND ON LARGE TRACTS OF UNDISTURBED WILDERNESS TO THRIVE. I HOPE ART ENGENDERS A BROADER AWARENESS ABOUT THE TIME IN WHICH WE LIVE. AS BEAUTIFUL AS I FIND THE KUDU, AND SABLE, THERE IS SOMETHING INEFFABLY SPECIAL ABOUT THE

LION, A MAGIC TO THEM THAT REACHES BACK INTO OUR PRIMAL MEMORY. I CAN SEE WHY THE FAMOUS GERMAN ARTIST WILHELM KUHNERT BECAME SO ENAMORED WITH THEM TO THE EXTENT THAT A LARGE PORTION OF HIS WORK INCLUDED LIONS. KUHNERT GAINED THE NICKNAME HIMSELF OF "THE LION." BEING LIONHEARTED IS A GOOD THING. I THINK THAT I COULD SPEND THE REST OF MY DAYS CONTEMPLATING THEIR FORM AND NEVER HAVING A BORING DAY AT THE SCULPTURE STAND. THE CHALLENGE IS TO AVOID THE CLICHÉ AND MAKE A STATEMENT IN YOUR OWN VOICE.



WINTER WILLOWS

14" x 15" x 8"

WALL HANGING

BRONZE, EDITION OF 30

MY SOJOURN AWAY FROM THE GRIND ALLOWED MY MIND TO EXPAND. I WOULD SOMETIMES HAVE 10 DIFFERENT PIECES GOING AT ONCE, SPURRING MY CREATIVITY IN WAYS I HAD NOT EXPERIENCED BEFORE. WE AS SCULPTORS CAN HELP VIEWERS REALIZE NOT ONLY NEW APPRECIATION FOR SUBJECT MATTER AND MEDIA BUT HOW SCULPTURE ITSELF CAN ENTER OUR LIVES. HERE, IN THIS ORNAMENTAL DECORATIVE WORK, I WANTED TO HAVE FUN WITH MY FAVORITE ANIMAL, THE MOOSE. HERE, A COW AND CALF ARE BUSY STRIPPING LEAVES OFF OF WILLOWS, OFFERING AN ECOLOGICAL NARRATIVE TOO FOR COLLECTORS WHO FANCY THEMSELVES AS NATURALISTS.



FLY SWATTER

14 1/2" x 18" x 12"

BRONZE, EDITION OF 30

I AM A REAL PUSHOVER FOR MOOSE. BEFORE SCULPTING, I ALWAYS STUDY AN ANIMAL AND DETERMINE WHAT CHARACTERISTICS SEPARATE IT FROM OTHER SPECIES. IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT MAKES A MOOSE A "MOOSE" WITH A CAPITAL M? AS WITH THE HUMAN FIGURE AND JUST AS RODIN OBSERVED, OUR JOB IS TO BEND REALITY AND WITH A MOOSE WHAT ENTERS OUR CONSCIOUSNESS IS THEIR DISTINCTIVE SHAPE AND IF IT'S A BULL, ITS RACK. I TRY TO SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATE THESE ELEMENTS TO STRENGTHEN THE VIEWER'S CONNECTION MUCH LIKE AN ANIMATOR WOULD. A SUMMERTIME MOOSE IS A GRAND BEAST. ITS LONG THIN LEGS, BIG HOOVES, THICK VELVET HORNS, AND LITHE BODY ARE PERFECT FODDER, IN MY MIND, FOR THIS TREATMENT.

SWITCHBACK

30" X 25" X 18"

BRONZE, EDITION OF 24

IF THERE IS A COMMON THEME THAT THREADS ITS WAY THROUGH MY WORK, IT IS WILDERNESS. I AM NOT ONLY ENTHRALLED WITH THE WILDLIFE THAT INHABITS THE TRUE BACKCOUNTRY BUT I HONOR THE EARLY EXPLORATION OF IT. I HAVE AN INSATIABLE APPETITE FOR READING THE JOURNALS AND STORIES OF EARLY DAY EXPLORERS. THEY TRAVELED BY FOOT, CANOE, DOGSLED, AND HORSE. THE DRAMA INTRIGUES ME, ESPECIALLY THE BRUTE PHYSICAL STRENGTH, DETERMINATION, AND ENDURANCE THEY HAD TO DISPLAY IN ORDER TO OVERCOME INTENSE HARDSHIPS. AT THE SAME TIME, THIS IS ALSO TIPPING MY HAT TO CLASSIC FIGURATIVE SCULPTURE, THOUGH WITH A WILD TWIST.



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HEADED TO THE HIGH COUNTRY
22" x 58" x 7"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 30



INTO THE WIND
20" x 30" x 10"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 35



MOONLIGHT HUNTERS
27 ½" x 31" x 15"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 25



ECHO CANYON
20 1/2" X 20" X 9"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 30



BOUND FOR COVER
17" X 18" X 6"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 30



CURIOUS
48" X 17" X 35"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 15



CANYON LANDS
28 1/2" X 13" X 18"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 30



CLASH OF THUNDER
31 1/2" 35" X 9 1/2"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 25

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THE WANDERER
MONUMENTAL, 9' 6" H
BRONZE, EDITION OF 6



BLACK TIMBER
MONUMENTAL, 10' H
BRONZE, EDITION OF 7





ANTICIPATION
30" X 18" X 8"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 30

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THE SNEAK
12" X 19" X 5"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 35



CRACKER JACK
14 1/2" X 11" X 6"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 35



RIDIN' SHANK'S MARE
31" x 16" x 16"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 35



THOR
15" x 11" x 5"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 35



KLUANE DALL
14 1/2" x 12" x 8"
BRONZE, EDITION OF 35

Honors & Awards

- 2011** Red Smith Award, Western Visions Show, National Museum of Wildlife Art – Jackson Hole, WY
- 2010** James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award, Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition – Oklahoma City, OK
- 2010** Elected to the Board of Directors of the National Sculpture Society
- 2009** Honored Guest Artist, CM Russell Art Show & Auction - Great Falls, MT
- 2008** James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award, Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition – Oklahoma City, OK
- 2008** Elected Fellow, National Sculpture Society
- 2007** “Black Timber Bugler” Monument selected for permanent placement at the National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole,WY
- 2005** James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award, Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition – Oklahoma City, OK
- 2005** “Push Comes to Shove” selected for placement in the permanent collection of the Museum of The American West, Autry National Center – Los Angeles, CA
- 2004** Robert Lougheed Memorial Award, Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition – Oklahoma City, OK
- 2004** James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award, Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition – Oklahoma City, OK
- 2004** “Sik Sik Shell Game” Selected for placement at the Leaning Tree Museum of Western Art – Boulder, CO
- 2003** Elected Professional Member, National Sculpture Society
- 2003** “Sik Sik Shell Game” Selected by Oklahoma City Zoo for permanent placement
- 2003** Featured Sculptor & Artist in Residence, Western Visions Miniature Show, National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, WY
- 2001** The C. Percival Dietsch Prize, National Sculpture Society Annual Exhibition
- 1999** Elliot Liskin Award, Society of Animal Artists Annual Exhibition
- 1998** Louis Bennett Prize, National Sculpture Society Annual Exhibition
- 1996** Merit Award, Wildlife and Western Art Exhibition & Sale - Mound, Minnesota
- 1993** Tuffy Berg Memorial Award, CM Russell Art Action - Great Falls, Montana

Selected Private, Corporate, and Public Collections

- Autry National Center, Los Angeles, CA
- Booth Western Art Museum, Cartersville, GA
- Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History, Jackson, MI
- Governor & Mrs. William Clements, Dallas, TX
- Leaning Tree Museum, Boulder, CO
- Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Nicholas
- Mr. and Mrs. Charles Schwab
- National Museum Of Wildlife Art, Jackson, WY
- President and Mrs. George W. Bush, Crawford, TX
- Sinclair Oil Corporation, Snow Basin, UT and Sun Valley, ID



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