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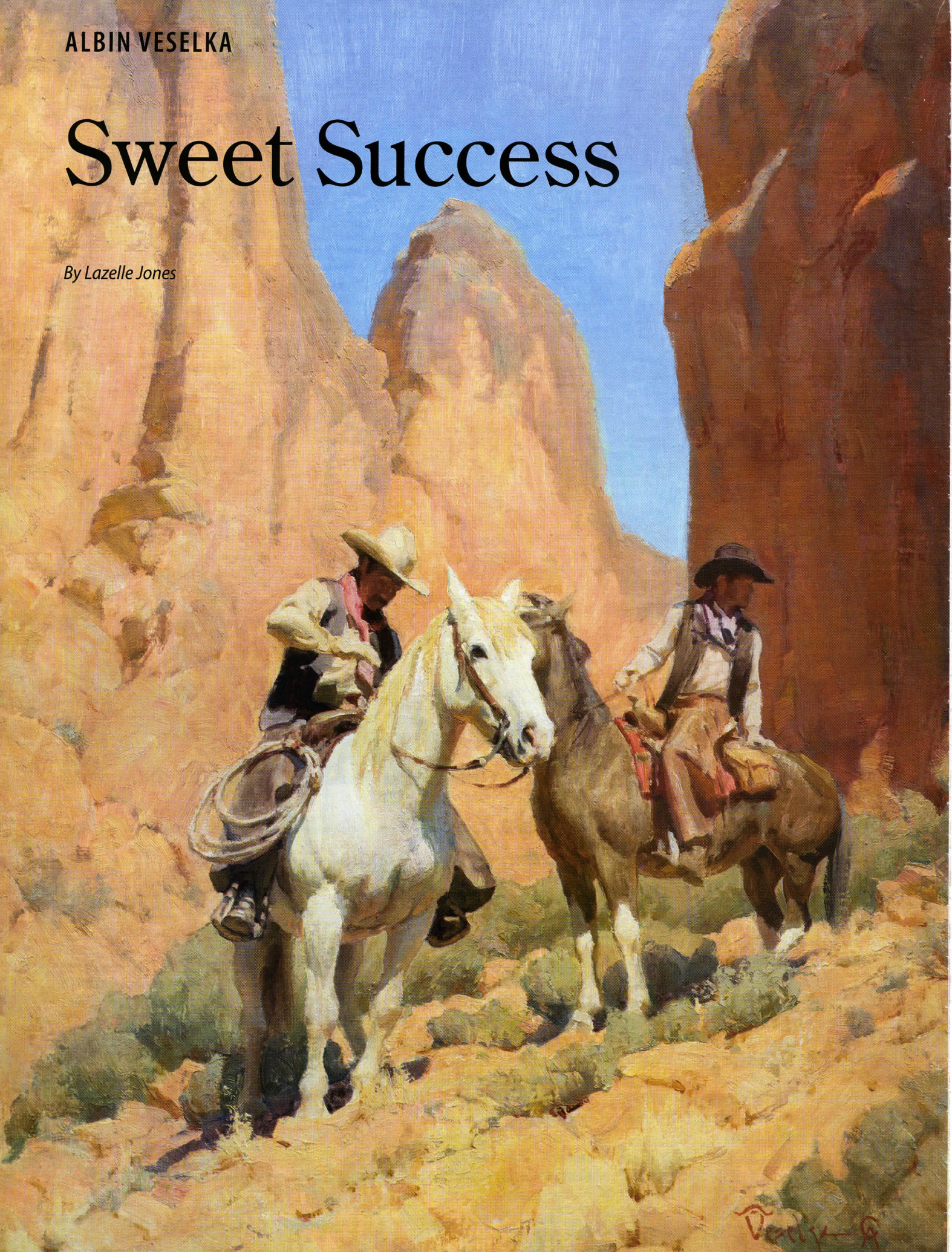


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ALBIN VESELKA

Sweet Success

By Lazelle Jones





Rustlers, oil, 36" by 55"

"Whether this cowboy is at the back of the herd on a drive or rounding up stock, he was interrupted by a couple of rustlers willing to fight, and he was ready for them. While the guy on the white horse got off the first shot, it looks like the first accurate one will be from our hero in the foreground. Never wager a distant, hasty shot from a pistol against a good man with a rifle."

Albin Veselka has paid his dues, just as most successful artists have, and is now reaping the rewards of overcoming the struggles of developing a career in the world of fine art. He participates in several invitational events, includ-

ing the Cowboy Artists of America's Show, the Coors Show, the Buffalo Bill Auction, the Out West Art Show, the Coeur d'Alene Auction, and a few shows each year at Settlers West Gallery in Tucson, Arizona.

Veselka lives with his wife Jenee and their four children in the southeast corner of Idaho. He grew up on a small ranch in Western Idaho, where he came to believe in—and practice—the ethics that are fundamental to the cowboy lifestyle. His family raised a small herd of registered Polled Herefords, and his grandparents had a larger cattle operation where Veselka learned to ride horses and developed an affinity for life on a ranch.

He started his artistic development obsessively drawing wildlife when he was young. One thing led

to another and, in 2006, he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Brigham Young University-Idaho (BYUI). Following his graduation, he scrambled to earn a living and provide for his family while working in sales, in grocery stores, and doing night security and farm work.

After a few years of scrambling, Veselka took on a part-time teaching position in the BYUI art department. He had been selling his paintings since he was a student there, but it would take several years before sales were consistent enough to allow Veselka to quit all those other jobs and focus on his art.

He has been creating fine art on a full-time basis for about 12 years now. His subjects include portraits, narrative illustrations, wildlife, still lifes, landscapes, and religious paint-

(Left) Rocky Canyon, oil, 30" by 24"

"Being more of a Northwestern guy, I get perplexed by the barren beauty of harmony in Red Rock country whenever I visit it. There's so much subtle variety to the red sandstone in terms of color that I love to try to capture in paint. The number of cattle that are scattered, eking out a grazing in country like this, never ceases to amaze me, nor does the amount of work it takes to account for and round up these Southwestern desert range cattle."



Packin' Out, oil, 24" by 40"

"I painted this to represent the commute, the time cowboys had to just ride with nothing really to do but get from point A to point B between jobs or camps and home. I'm sure, as used to it as they were, they still appreciated the beauty of the surroundings like the view I put these two gents in. As to where they're heading to and where they're coming from, I'll leave that up to the viewer."

ings. Wildlife was his first love, taking him out into the field where he sketched, did plein air painting, and took photographs to use as reference back in his studio. He found, however, that his field research was taking more time than he was able to spend painting in his studio. As a result, he shifted his focus to the human figure.

Veselka didn't entirely leave behind his love of animals and landscapes, however. He eventually discovered that he could incorporate all the subject matter that interested him in the genre of Western art. He

doesn't believe he was gifted with something in his DNA. Rather, he says, it's a gift from God to have the passion for something and the resources to turn that passion into art. "The responsibility to do the work, to turn that into a skill and a work of art is a responsibility that lies squarely on the shoulders of the potential artist," he says.

Primarily painting in oils and sketching with charcoal, Veselka has also set his sights on learning to sculpt. Always ready to support her husband, Jenee recently gifted him with a sculpture stand and a

horse armature. "Hopefully, before too long, you'll see some sculptures come out of my studio," he says, "but I'll have to wait a bit since I'm so booked with upcoming shows."

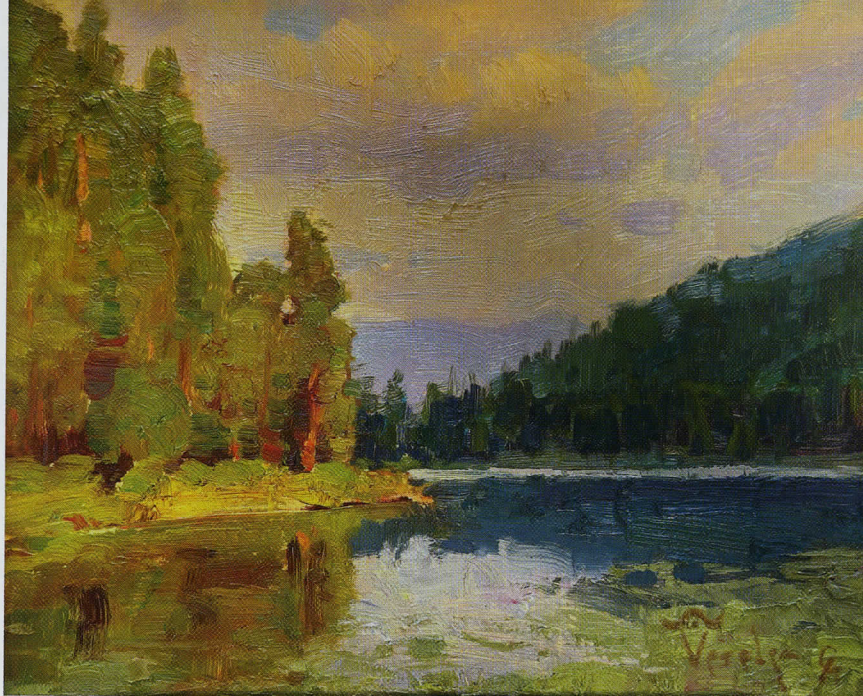
In September, Veselka will show his paintings at the Buffalo Bill Live





Into the Night, oil, 20" by 16"

"There's something very provocative in seeing just enough by the light of the moon to get by on a walk or a ride, but with plenty obscured to fill your imagination with what might be in the shadows. Add the comfort of not having to deal with the blazing heat of the sun, and it's the perfect time to travel, if it's in familiar territory."



Mirror Lake, oil, 10" by 12"

"I love painting a sunset more than most things, but most often facing away from it. I love the way the green in the trees and the blue in the sky gives way to the hot colors that bathe the entire vista in a harmony that fills my heart with gratitude to the creator of it all. There are a lot of lakes with the same name, but this particular Mirror Lake was painted on a family camping trip last year to one of my favorite places on earth: the Panhandle of Northern Idaho."



To Provide, oil, 32" by 32"

"Beneath most of my work there is a message or a value I hope the viewer can take home with them, some more overt than others. In an age where the common criticism of 'toxic masculinity' is repeated so often, the word masculinity is associated with toxicity to too many people. This painting celebrates the endurance through hard physical labor by generations of men from the beginning of time to provide a living and get the things done that no one wants to do and many don't have the strength for, as an attribute to honor and be grateful for."

Auction in Cody, Wyoming, and, in October he'll participate in the Cowboy Artists of America 60th Anniversary Show in Denver, Colorado. He'll also have a showing of his works at Settlers West Gallery in Tucson, Arizona, in November. Along with all of those demands on his time, he continues to do commissions for his growing list of collectors.

When Veselka began his studies at BYUI, he planned to major in architecture and minor in art. That quickly changed when he enrolled in art classes taught by Leon Parson, who would become his mentor. The other major determining factor in that trajectory shift was seeing the work of Carl Rungius, who exemplified the type of work Veselka wanted to learn to create.

One of Veselka's greatest honors was being inducted into the Cowboy Artists of America (CAA) in 2023, on his first application for membership. The organization has a long-standing reputation of excellence and consists of top-notch artists, but what impressed him most was members' sense of camaraderie and their personal characters.

"I knew from my first association with them that I wanted to belong to their group, in part to further develop as an artist, but more so to belong with them, to grow old with them," Veselka says. "It's a select group with only 18 active members, but it's been around for 60 years for a reason. They are a brotherhood with common goals, values, and a sense of who they are and where they came from."

Those values run deep through Veselka's heritage. His grandfather was a World War II veteran, and he and Veselka's grandmother homesteaded and carved a family ranch out of the desert of Western Idaho, intent on leaving it to future generations.

"I think that's one reason the CAA resonated so deeply with me," he says. "They felt like my people—serious artists pulling for one another, trying to give the world something good to hold onto in a time when the world is forgetting where it came from and where its values lie."



My Own Son, oil, 20" by 24"

"Upon learning about the amazing life of U.S. Marshal, Bass Reeves, I decided to do a series of paintings exemplifying his primary character strengths as shown in his actions of bravery, ingenuity, and moral character. This one is when he discovered his own son, Benny, was wanted for murder. His resulting decision to hunt him down and bring him to justice might have had an additional motive to protect his son from whomever else might have done it in a less sympathetic manner, but Bass's unwavering dedication to justice was definitely proven in this act."

Veselka credits artists such as N.C. Wyeth, Dean Cornwell, and Harvey Dunn for holding on to the skills and motives that communicate to observers honestly, without the pretense of pseudo-intellectualism over down-to-earth, common-sense substance. "From man's earliest depictions on rock through the renaissance and down to the illustrators of our modern age, art has been the voice to communicate aesthetics, stories, and ideas," he says. The

separation between illustration and fine art is fuzzy at best, he says, adding that some of the greatest fine art can also be classified as illustration.

New opportunities for Veselka continue to come his way. He is currently working on a project for the Louis L'Amour family, who asked him to create an illustration for the republication of one of his books: "How the West Was Won." He offered to do that illustration as a 57"-by-76" fine art oil painting that would also

serve as an illustration for the book cover rather than a smaller, quicker painting whose sole purpose would be to illustrate the cover of a novel.

Veselka will reveal that painting at the Cowboy Artists of America Show in October. Meanwhile, he's busy creating paintings for several other shows—and he's still planning to sculpt a horse. 

Lazelle Jones lives on the West Coast.