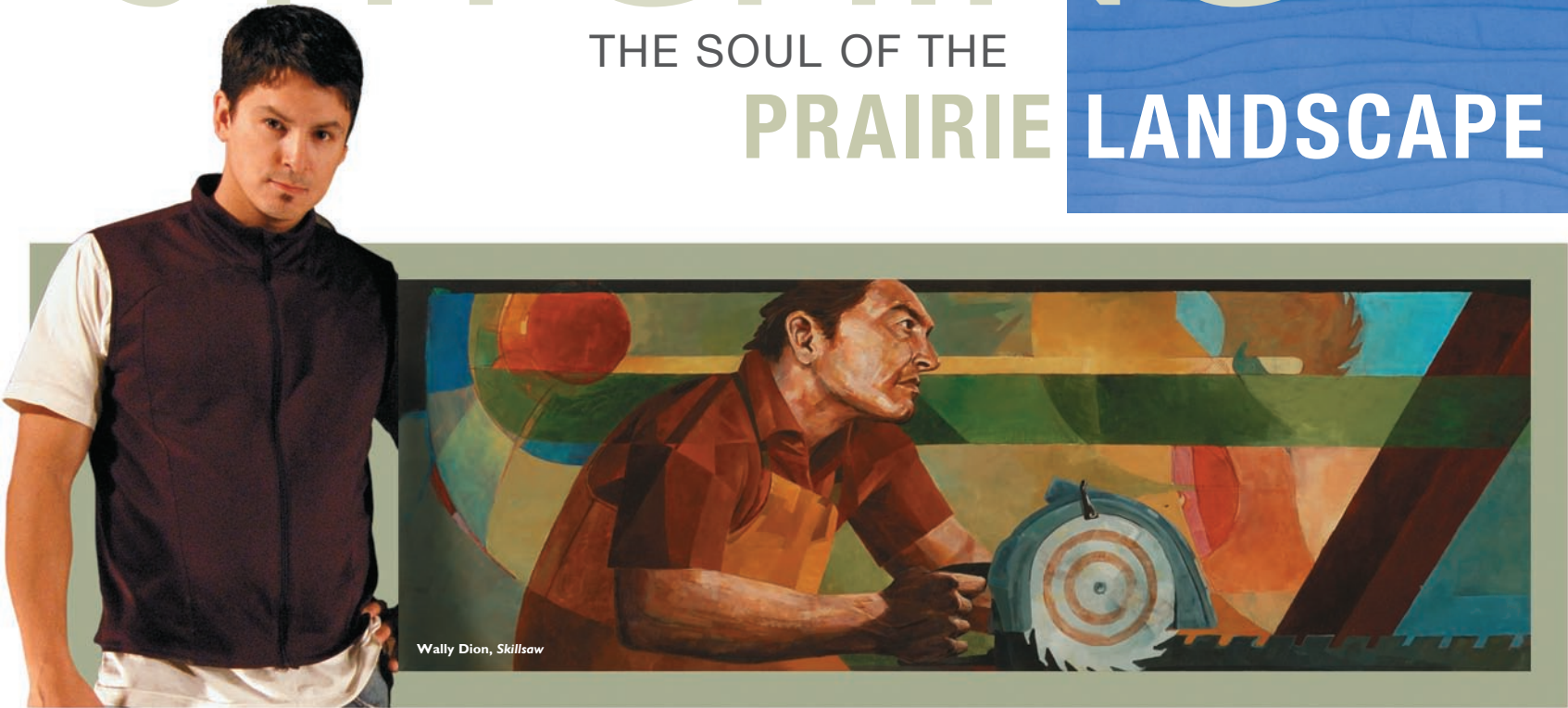


STITCHING

THE SOUL OF THE
PRAIRIE LANDSCAPE

“Living in Saskatchewan is at the core of my process.”



Saskatchewan artist Martha Cole is as much a product of Saskatchewan as the natural grasses that blanketed the prairie before pioneers arrived with plow and oxen. Her current series of fabric-based “elevator portraits” pays homage to prairie women who quilted for survival and to an icon of a society sculpted by climate, landscape and change.

“Living in Saskatchewan is at the core of my process,” says Cole, who was born, raised and resides in the small town of Disley, just north of Regina about 50 kilometres. “It has informed my spirituality; it has informed the approach to my work; and it has informed the themes that I work with. I am attached to this land.”

Survival is a current theme in Cole’s work. The small-town grain elevator is disappearing as Saskatchewan’s population base shifts to the cities. A single inland terminal now used to store grain does the job of 50 traditional wood elevators.

“The elevators I’ve chosen are elevators that still exist. The reason they still exist is because they now function in a different way in their community. That’s what our farming population needs to do.”

Saskatchewan’s First Nations people are very much a part of this population shift. They’re beginning to leave their traditional reserve lands to establish new lives in larger communities. Young First Nations artist Wally Dion, a rising star from Saskatoon, paints worker portraits and creates circuit board star blankets as part of an optimistic dialogue on the future of First Nations people in their new settings.

“It isn’t so much a cultural thing that gives me and a lot of my friends motivation,” says Dion, who’s commissioned to create one of his high-tech blankets for the Museum of Civilization in Quebec. “It’s wanting to succeed and wanting to be healthy.”

Dion was an accomplished sketcher long before he entered university and discovered the “explosion of colour” in paint. He became interested in portraiture after finding some images created by an early 20th century photographer who set out to record the North American Indian before, as Dion puts it, “he became extinct.”

“These are beautiful images. I appreciated the fact these people would pose and that they were proud. And I also liked them, of course, because nobody vanished.”

Southeast Saskatchewan glass artist Jacqueline Berting touched the hearts of people across the province more than a decade ago when she ran short of funds while creating her first major work, *The Glass Wheatfield*. Berting was moved and astonished when media reports of her circumstances opened the hearts and wallets of people from across the province.

Comprised of 14,000 waist-high stalks of glass wheat, the work was a tribute to farming life that led to a successful career as an artist in glass. Today, Berting Glass creates glass wheat as a popular production item while Berting follows her creative spirit into large commissioned and non-commissioned projects. It’s a spirit born prairie pure.

“I play a lot on my childhood memories of wide open spaces and amazing sunsets,” says Berting. “Blowing glass is almost like getting to play with the sun every day.”



DISCOVER ORIGINAL SASKATCHEWAN ART

In addition to the many art galleries, outlets and gift shops all across the province, summertime studio tours and art events offer numerous opportunities to see and purchase original works of Saskatchewan art. You can search for them on sasktourism.com or call Tourism Saskatchewan toll free at **1-877-237-2273**.

For more information on where to see or buy Saskatchewan art and crafts, visit spaga.com (Saskatchewan Professional Art Galleries Association), saskcraftcouncil.org and www.artsboard.sk.ca.

