

*Previews of Works For Sale at Upcoming Shows*

SEPTEMBER 2015

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# WESTERN ART

## C O L L E C T O R



## UPCOMING SHOW

Up to 10 works

September 1-12, 2015

Altamira Fine Art  
172 Center Street  
Jackson, WY 83001  
(307) 739-4700

SHOW LOCATION JACKSON, WY

# R. TOM GILLEON

## *Icons of the West*



R. Tom Gilleon works on a piece at the easel in his studio in Cascade, Montana.



Ask R. Tom Gilleon how he started painting his famous nine-paneled portrait grids and he has a strange answer: “It began with Heidi Klum,” he says.

Gilleon came to fine art from a long and successful career in commercial illustration, where he worked on design projects for NASA, Disney and many others—he even did the matte paintings for Warren Beatty’s film *Dick Tracy*. For a period during the early Internet boom years, he was doing illustration for a celebrity website. One of the pieces he worked on was a series of Heidi Klum portraits arranged in a grid. The website long ago went bust during the dot-com bubble, but the portrait grid stuck and it’s something he utilizes still to this day.

In his new show at Altamira Fine Art—opening September 1 in Jackson, Wyoming—Gilleon uses the collage-like grid to paint *Innocents in a Sense*, which features nine Native American portraits, each figure is turned in a different direction and revealing a different emotion. They are anchored around a central figure, whose headdress is billowed out to the sides.

“It looks a little kinetic, as if there really is some motion there that’s causing the feathers to move,” Gilleon says. “These all came from the Glenbow Museum in Canada. I purchased a license to paint these individuals from their collection. They are from the Blood Tribe of the Blackfeet. I chose them not for their reputation or names, but purely for the headdresses and compositions of their faces. A figure with a headdress is such an iconic and powerful image—take it to anywhere in the world and people know it is a Native American.”

Gilleon is no stranger to iconic American imagery. Besides his grids of images, he’s also widely known for his paintings of teepees,

*Freudian Sleep*, oil, 50 x 100"

*Innocents in a Sense*,  
oil, 58 x 58"



which he frames in simple compositions and paints in gradations of green, orange, blue and other bold colors. Examining these works, their simple compositions peel open, revealing abstract shapes and colors, complex configurations, and a cobalt-tinted horizon line that seems to stretch into the oblivion. "Someone, who was not being very kind, once asked me, 'How many teepees do we need?' I told him I didn't know but I was going to try to find out," he says. "I liken the teepees to portrait painting; each one is similar to the others, but each one also provides its own unique challenge."

Teepee highlights in the show include *Eastern Gold* and *Red Ochre*, and a three-teepee nocturne titled *Freudian Sleep*, which depicts its trio of subjects glowing on the dark prairie. While viewing the piece, Western art fans may immediately think of works by Frank Tenney Johnson or Frederic Remington, both of whom painted very famous nocturnes. With Gilleon's image, though, he takes the nighttime scene even darker than his predecessors, and in doing so creates this field of blue so dense that it would drown the leather structures if not for the campfires burning within them.

"Nocturnes can be very difficult to paint, but when you do happen to hit a good one it can have a tremendous appeal to the eye," the Montana artists says. "Earlier artists, like Johnson and Remington, had more restrictions and had to lighten their pieces up a little bit. I'm happy this piece can be as dark as it wants." 🖼️

For a direct link to the  
exhibiting gallery go to



[www.westernartcollector.com](http://www.westernartcollector.com)

*Eastern Gold*, oil, 36 x 36"

