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## **Vanishing landscape celebrated**

By David Frey/Aspen Daily News Correspondent

GLENWOOD SPRINGS - In Walter Gallacher's photo of the old Wulfsohn Ranch, a lone Russian olive tree casts a long shadow across golden grass below the steep, ochre slopes of Red Mountain west of town.

It's a view that no longer exists on a piece of land now called Glenwood Meadows, even though the meadows are giving way to parking lots and "big box" retail stores. In recent months, the landscape has become a muddy mess as crews make way for Target, Lowe's Home Improvement Center, Pier 1 Imports and others.

But the memory of the old Wulfsohn Ranch will remain, for another month at least, on the walls of the Main Street Gallery in Glenwood, when the new art exhibit opens.

Dubbed "Vanishing Point -Wulfsohn Ranch: An Artists' Tribute," the exhibit features 25 artists' work focusing on the changing landscape on a piece of land many are sad to see turning from classic Western vista to retail center.

"It used to make me so sad," said painter Mary Noone, who organized the exhibit, a benefit for the Aspen Valley Land Trust. "And then I thought, 'I've gotta just kind of capture this moment, this spot.'"

The exhibit runs through Jan. 29. An opening reception will be held Friday from 5-8 p.m.

Artists include painters like Noone, whose vivid expressionist paintings are based on the two-and-a-half years she spent painting on the property with the landowners' permission; realist painter Dan Sprick; photographers like Gallacher and Ed Kosmicki, and sculptors like Annette Roberts-Gray and Greg Tonozzi, who used some of the dirt from the site in a marble bowl.

Some works, like Doug Arneson's, show the landscape as it was. Others, like Sprick's, show it with its recent construction scars.

The show isn't meant to be overtly political, Noone said. Since it's too late to block the retailers from moving in.

"I just wanted to have an artistic tribute to the beauty of that spot," she said.

Still, it's hard to take on the subject without making a statement.

"I think we sort of lost perspective," said Gallacher, whose Russian olive seems to stand like a lost monument. "People who visit come here for the beauty of the place, not so they could buy something at Lowe's.

The 405,000-square-foot Glenwood Meadows shopping center is expected to open next October with Target, Lowe's, Bed, Bath & Beyond; Petco, Gart Sports and other shops and restaurants. It is taking the spot once eyed for a golf course on the west side of town, a landscape that has long been a sweeping grassland at the foot of steep sandstone fins and a broad alluvial fan covered with scrub oak and sagebrush.

"I used to love it when the longhorn cattle were there," Noone said. "I remember driving on the bypass when it was first started thinking, 'God, I do live out West. You look out and you see nothing but cattle and nice grassland stretching out in the distance.'"

The exhibit also serves as a reminder of the importance of the natural landscapes that still remain, she said, and so a portion of the proceeds benefit AVLT in its preservation work.

It's also meant to preserve the historical record of what was there. The paintings may contribute to a history of Wulfsohn Ranch for Glenwood's Frontier Historical Society. Noone is also collecting people's stories and memories about the place.

"My brothers and I used to hunt rabbits over there," said Gallacher, a Glenwood native, who made his photo when he knew the landscape, which he sees from his Oasis Creek home, would be changing.

"It's an incredible piece of the earth that I wish wasn't being developed, but it is," he said. "So in a way, it's to honor the passing, the way I look at it. It's gone and there's not much we can do about it, but one thing we shouldn't do is just shrug our shoulders. This is to celebrate that old ranch and the passing of that great piece of ground."

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