

## *Overlooking Two Medicine River, 1806*

High on the ancient buffalo jump that overlooks the Two Medicine River, a band of Blackfeet soldiers remember the recent fateful encounter with Captain Lewis and his men while they explored the upper tributaries of the Marias River. The memory of that deadly incident would enflame relations between the Blackfeet and the U.S. for the next sixty years with dire consequences for all who sought adventure in Blackfeet territory.

It is hard for outsiders to imagine the vastness of much of the Western landscape. Its sheer size and mystery have captivated artists since early in its discovery and exploration. Men like Catlin, Bodmer, Audubon, Sohon, Kurz, Wimar, Bierstadt, and Moran came west to record these boundless and beautiful lands. Others followed, and the succession continues to this day.

Zhuo convincingly captures the sweeping expanse in the strong compositional design of this painting, which also anchors the primary elements together. The central, dark, rock shape connects with the left foreground rider, who in turn connects to the massed shapes of the group. All are balanced by the dark, cliff rock on the right.

“When I stood upon that vantage point looking into the expanse of the landscape through the blue haze of distance, virtually unchanged by time, I had no doubt that what I saw was just what Blackfeet warriors saw two hundred years earlier,” said Z.S. Liang. “I looked about at the remnant of this place of great provision dating back to Paleolithic times and I could see those people, I could see their footprints, and I could see the painting.”