

Merkel Family Foundation  
Spring 2007  
Distinguished Lecture Series

The Charles M. Russell Center  
of the University of Oklahoma  
School of Art

presents

**M. Melissa Wolfe**

Associate Curator of American Art  
Columbus Museum of Art  
Columbus, OH



"Solomon D. Butcher, Sylvester Rawding Family Sod House, North of Sargent, Custer County, Nebraska, 1886." Nebraska State Historical Society, RG2068 PH-1784

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## "Staking a Claim in Custer County:

The Homesteading Experience and the  
Solomon D. Butcher Photographic Archive (1886-1892)"

**Thursday, February 22, 2007 at 7 p.m.**

*free and open to the public*

**Pitman Recital Hall, Catlett Music Center**

500 West Boyd (enter on Elm Avenue)

**followed by a reception at 8 p.m.**

at the **Charles M. Russell Center, Old Faculty Club**

409 West Boyd Street



Charles M.  
**RUSSELL CENTER**  
for the Study of Art of the American West

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The University of Oklahoma School of Art • <http://art.ou.edu/russellcenter/> • 405-325-5939

For special accommodations please call (405) 325-5939. The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution.

**STAKING A CLAIM IN CUSTER COUNTY: THE  
HOMESTEADING EXPERIENCE AND THE SOLOMON D.  
BUTCHER PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE (1886-1892)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NORMAN, OKLA. (Jan. 25, 2007) – The Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West at the University of Oklahoma School of Art will present a lecture by M. Melissa Wolfe, associate curator of American art at the Columbus Museum of Art. She will speak at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2007, in Morris R. Pitman Recital Hall of the Catlett Music Center, located at 500 West Boyd St. on OU's Norman campus.

The lecture is part of the Merkel Family Foundation Distinguished Lecture Series and will be followed by a reception at the Charles M. Russell Center in the Old Faculty Club, 409 W. Boyd St. Both the lecture and reception are free and open to the public.

In her illustrated lecture, “Staking a Claim in Custer County: The Homesteading Experience and the Solomon D. Butcher Photographic Archive (1886-1892),” Wolfe explores Butcher’s photographs – a group of nearly 1,500 glass plate images – capturing the prairie settlement of Custer County, Neb. Beginning in 1886, Butcher, who himself had been a homesteader, decided to document the history of Custer County in photographs, which he later published as *Pioneer History of Custer County and Short Sketches of Early Days in Nebraska* (The Merchants Publishing Co., c. 1901). The Solomon D. Butcher Photographic Collection is owned by the Nebraska State Historical Society and serves as an important record of American history.

Before coming to the Columbus Museum of Art, Wolfe worked as the curator of collections at the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio, and for the Museum of Art and Archaeology at the University of Missouri - Columbia. Wolfe completed her doctoral degree on the photography of Solomon D. Butcher in 2005, at Ohio State University, where she was the recipient of several prestigious educational awards including, the Ohio State University Presidential Dissertation Fellowship in 2002-2003 and the Henry Luce Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies American Art Dissertation Fellowship in 2001-2002. In addition

to curatorial work, Wolfe now serves as an adjunct assistant professor of American art history at Ohio State University, specializing in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century American art, African-American art, art of the American West, and museum studies.

Founded in 1998, the Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West is the first such university-based program in the nation. The center is dedicated to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge in the field of American art history as it relates to the western United States. Through its resource holdings, national symposia, lecture series, course offerings and outreach programs, the Russell Center actively engages students and the public in developing a better understanding of, and appreciation for, 19th- and 20th-century Euro-American and Native American artistic traditions. Special focus is given to the art of Charles M. Russell and his contemporaries. For more information on the Russell Center, visit <http://art.ou.edu/russellcenter/>. For accommodations on the basis of disability, call 325-5939.

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Editors: please find attached a scan of Solomon D. Butcher's photograph, "The Sylvester Rawding Family Sod House, North of Sargent, Custer County, Nebraska, 1886." Please credit photograph as courtesy of the "Nebraska State Historical Society,

RG2068.PH-1784.” This family photograph represents one of Butcher’s most well-known sod-house images, and is an intriguing example from the artist’s *oeuvre* as technological studies have since revealed the contents inside the open doorway. For an in-depth look at Butcher’s photographic work, we welcome all to attend the upcoming free art lecture by Dr. M. Melissa Wolfe, which is offered as part of the Russell Center’s Merkel Family Foundation Distinguished Lecture Series.