



Photo by Karen L. Utzinger in 1987

# JESSIE WILBER

1912–1989

Jessie Wilber was one of Montana's most notable artists during the better part of the 20th century. She was a beloved educator as well as an exceptional painter, collage artist, and print-maker.

Jessie was born in 1912 in Wisconsin. Her family moved a number of times when she was young. Wilber said that when she moved to Colorado when she was 8, it was the first place where she experienced a deep emotional feeling towards her environment. She loved Colorado. It affected all of her subsequent moves. When she got the opportunity to return to Colorado later, she jumped at the chance. Jessie received her Master's degree from Colorado State College of Education (now University of Northern Colorado) in 1938 and began teaching at Montana State University Bozeman in 1941. Once World War II started, she was employed in the Air Force Meteorology unit that was being trained at MSU. Jessie returned to teaching after the war and taught in the Art Department until her retirement in 1973. Jessie Wilber was very active in the Montana art scene and was a founding member of the Montana Institute of the Arts. She was part of exhibitions and received awards from across the country for her painting and printmaking (lithography, woodblock, and silkscreen). In 1988, she received the Governor's Arts Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Arts. Over 800 people attended the ceremony including former students, friends, colleagues, and collectors. "It was literally the social art event of the decade." Jessie Wilber died in October 1989. *Magpies in the Snowstorm* was the last print that Jessie completed.

*"She fed the magpies all winter on the stump in the garden, delighted in their flight, of which she made many, many drawings. She enjoyed the way they swooped in, courteously waited their turn, thriftily picked up the pieces they dropped in the snow and was particularly tickled by one who discovered the suet he got was a frozen chunk too big for him to manage, brought it back, and picked up another!"*

*-Gennie DeWeese*



*Magpies in the Snowstorm* (1986)  
Serigraph (screen print)  
25 x 20"