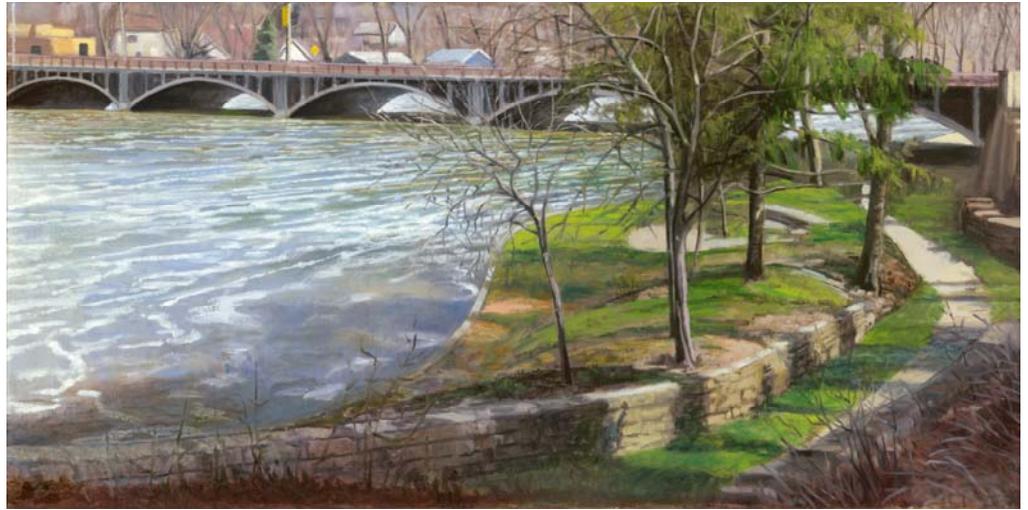


Exhibition showcases the beauty and diversity of the Fox River

A project that began nearly two years ago to bring attention to the importance, beauty, and many moods of the Fox River has resulted in 73 original oil paintings that will be exhibited at the Schingoethe Center at Aurora University from Thursday, September 20 through Friday, December 14, titled, "A Fox River Testimony."



The opening reception on Thursday, September 20 is from 5 to 6:30 p.m. followed by a lecture, "The Paradoxical Landscape Frame," presented by the artist at 6:45 p.m. in the Tapper Recital Hall. Reservations are necessary for the artist lecture and can be made at aartsandideas.com or by calling (630) 844-4924.



The paintings are the work of plein air artist Joel Sheesley, who partnered with The Conservation Foundation for Art of the Fox as part of its Fox River Initiative, a program to help connect residents with the river and engage them to become environmentally conscious through local projects. As artist-in-residence, Sheesley set up his easel at various points along the river in all kinds of weather at different times of day to showcase the beauty of the natural areas and human communities along its shores.

What began as a project to produce 50 to 60 oil paintings, ended with 73 for the exhibition.

"I ended up with 73 paintings because I really couldn't see a place to stop," Sheesley said. "I like that number because it has a kind of indeterminate feel — as if in mid-stream."

The project has taken Sheesley along an 80-mile stretch from Dundee down to Ottawa. The Fox River headwaters begin near Waukesha, Wisconsin before entering Illinois at the Chain O'Lakes in McHenry County, flowing through Kane and Kendall counties before meeting up with the Illinois River near Ottawa in LaSalle County.

Sheesley's travels included canoeing to some locations, hiking trails and off the path with his French easel and paint box across his back, and even camping overnight to capture the light from the sunset and sunrise as it caressed the river surface. Following the meandering river, Sheesley found himself in some diverse habitats: wetlands, agricultural, glacially formed lakes, sandstone bluffs, and densely populated urban areas.

The paintings are available for purchase, ranging from \$575 for an 11x14 inch canvas, up to \$2,175 for an 18x36 inch canvas. High quality giclée prints of 16 selections from the exhibit will be available at a reduced cost.

Sheesley, an Emeritus Professor of Art at Wheaton College, chronicled his field experiences along with photos of the paintings in a 160-page coffee table book entitled "A Fox River Testimony," which will be available for purchase at the exhibit for \$49.95.

For more information on the exhibit, visit aurora.edu/museum and artofthefox.org.

PHOTO: Plein air artist Joel Sheesley makes sketches of the landscape before returning with his paint box to capture the Fox River. The artist's oil paintings for The Conservation Foundation's Art of the Fox project will be on display beginning Thursday, September 20 at the Schingoethe Center at Aurora University. Photo by Jill Johnson