

“Joy in the Outdoors”
Written by Gallery Coordinator Karen Jean Smith

What is it that you enjoy doing outdoors? Perhaps you like to take leisurely walks in search of birds. Cross-country skiing through a fluffy new fallen snow might be your sport of choice or maybe you prefer horseback riding through the woods. Activities such as these are the topics of “Joy in the Outdoors,” an exhibit of recent work in watercolor by Sally Stormon at Baltimore Woods Nature Center. The exhibit will be on display from January 7 through February 24 in the John A. Weeks Interpretive Center at 4007 Bishop Hill Road, Marcellus.

The public is invited to attend the opening reception on Saturday, January 7 from 2:30 until 4:00 pm. In addition, the exhibit may be seen when the Interpretive Center is open Monday through Friday (9am - 4pm) and Saturdays (10am - 4pm). There are no admission or parking fees. A portion of the proceeds from sales will be used to support the mission of Baltimore Woods Nature Center.

We are fortunate in Central New York to have so many choices of activity afforded us by nature’s change of seasons, and the variety in our landscapes and waterways. Artist Sally Stormon has taken advantage of this in finding and choosing her subject matter. She began with painting landscapes to portray how beautiful nature is, but now in her work we also find human beings against a natural backdrop pursuing activities such as taking pictures, riding bicycles, snowshoeing and more. “Artists at Delphi Falls” is just one example. The viewer will see a trio of artists all set up by the waterfall endeavoring to capture its beauty.

Because of her abstract style, which includes the simplification of facial features, we can easily personalize the work and picture someone we know having a place in her paintings. For example, in “Spirit of the River,” we find a lone fisherman out on the water in a canoe and we can imagine him enjoying the crisp cool air of fall. Perhaps this could be a portrayal of our father, brother, or even ourselves. Another possibility for this type of imagining might be in the paintings that depict skiers and snowboarders, such as “Shreddin’,” works that illustrate the excitement that we relish in those activities now or in days gone by.

In regard to her style, Stormon states, “I want to see how much I can abstract the marks that I make and still communicate with my viewer. If I can reduce my shapes and values to their essentials then the viewer will be able to participate and interpret those values and shapes in the way that is most pleasing to them.”

The luminosity and freshness of watercolor are just two of the compelling characteristics that drew Sally Stormon to work in this medium. Temperature, humidity and quality of light also come into play as she develops her paintings. Stormon will tell you that even her mood can affect the process, lending an additional factor to determining the results.

Of the medium itself, the artist states, “Using watercolor is more like having a conversation with the paint and the paper. Other mediums just sit there and wait for you to tell them what to do. Watercolor steps right in and makes its opinion known.”

Sally Stormon has a bachelor’s degree in Art Education, but went on to make her living in another field. She drew and painted as more of a hobby until a few years ago. She has exhibited in the National Exhibition of American Watercolors, The Art of New York, as well as numerous regional exhibitions. She won the Elsie M. Birch Memorial Prize for Watercolor at the Cooperstown National Juried Art Exhibition in 2021. Her work was chosen for the Syracuse Poster Project where it was paired with a poem and made into a poster to be displayed in downtown Syracuse.

Recently, she was commissioned to design three art banners for the City of Auburn, NY to draw attention to attractions in and around the city where she resides. In addition to painting outdoors, she also enjoys outdoor activities such as hiking, canoeing, and skiing.

Connecting communities and nature in wisdom and wonder.

Baltimore Woods Nature Center is a leader in facilitating opportunities for people to build personal connections to nature. Through engaging experiences and place-based exploration, we envision communities united in stewardship and love of the natural world.

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