

NEWS RELEASE

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Plein Air Voices of the Natural Landscape on View at Adkins Arboretum

Light, shadow and color are the language of the seven artists whose exhibit, *Plein Air Voices of the Natural Landscape*, is on view at Adkins Arboretum’s Visitor’s Center through December 21. Celebrating the natural beauty of the Eastern Shore with joy and playfulness, they capture moments of changing light throughout the seasons. There will be a reception to meet the artists and view their work on Saturday, November 23 from 2 to 4 p.m.

There are few art forms as fresh and energetic as plein air painting. Deriving its name from the French for “in the open air,” it’s a particularly challenging art form requiring the artist to work outdoors, painting quickly to catch the light and atmosphere of a scene before it changes and is lost.



Left: Diane DuBois Mullay, Radiant. Right: Jim Rehak, Last Light

Cambridge artist Jose

Ramirez’s watercolor, “Autumn by the River,” captures a fleeting moment of orange and green leaves swirling in an exuberant dance, while a forested path is suffused with hushed radiance in Easton artist Maggii Safarty’s “Cathedral.” In “Last Light,” an oil painting by Seaford, Del., artist Jim Rehak, you can practically feel night’s darkness creeping across the water and a shadowy marsh under a huge cloud brushed in shades of purple.

The artists in this show were chosen both for their skill in plein air painting and for the variety of their mediums and approaches. While Ramirez’s watercolors describe the details of autumn trees in gently luminous shades of color, startlingly vibrant colors radiate from Easton artist Richard Fritz’s oil paintings. With its simplified forms, “Morning Haze,” is hardly more than a patchwork of colored shapes, yet there’s no question that you’re looking at a tree-lined marshy creek reflecting a misty sun.

Sheryl Southwick, also of Easton, shares Fritz's love of unexpected colors but with a more descriptive, almost cartoonlike energy hinting at fantastical stories behind each of her oil paintings. In contrast, both Diane DuBois Mullaly, another Easton artist, and Chestertown artist Kate Quinn have a talent for creating a sense of place by blending just enough realism into their quick impressions of mood, lighting and color to identify specific landscapes, yet their work is very different. Mullaly paints in oils with a palette knife, creating highly textured works that shimmer with color. She often scratches back into the wet paint to reveal the color hidden underneath. In "Radiant," spidery red lines flash through the myriad colors of marsh plants and the dark boughs of an evergreen like glimpses of a vital life force.

Like Mullaly, Quinn has a knack for bringing a scene alive with light and color but she paints with pastels. Rendered with quick, light strokes of luscious color, "Morning Walk" shows a forest path striped with sunbeams and purple shadows. More sunlight glances off the edges of tree trunks and dances high in the branches above. Enticing and mysterious, it's an invitation to explore the beauty and mysteries of nature.

These artists are all inspired by a deep love of nature and art and have won awards for their work in plein air competitions or exhibits. Several teach classes or workshops in their respective mediums, and all are members of the Plein Air Painters of the Chesapeake Bay, a group of over 70 artists whose members gather regularly to paint outdoors in a variety of Eastern Shore locations.

Because of plein air's focus on studying nature firsthand to discover what is present in the landscape at a particular moment in time, it often reveals deep beauty and a sense of awe. In Safarty's "Cathedral," the path running between the trees is indeed like an aisle in a cathedral, and the scene is infused with a magical feeling of stillness that speaks of nature's ever-present potential for rejuvenation and healing. It's an image of a moment so brief that you might miss it if you weren't paying attention.

As Rehak noted in his artist's statement about plein air painting, "What better situation to practice moment to moment awareness?"

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through December 21 at the Arboretum Visitor's Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 100 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

CUTLINE: "Radiant" by Diane DuBois Mullaly and "First Light" by Jim Rehak are among the works on view at Adkins Arboretum.

A 400 acre native garden and preserve, Adkins Arboretum provides exceptional experiences in nature to promote environmental stewardship.

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