

The background of the slide is a painting of a landscape. In the foreground, a river flows from the bottom center towards the middle ground. The river is depicted with dark, swirling brushstrokes in shades of blue, purple, and black. The middle ground shows a dense line of trees and foliage, rendered in dark, textured strokes. The background features a vast, open landscape with rolling hills or mountains under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The sky is painted with broad, expressive brushstrokes in various shades of blue, white, and yellow, suggesting a bright, possibly stormy day. The overall style is impressionistic, with a focus on color and light over fine detail.

Watercycle

Greg Lecker

Paintings of Water Ecology



Breaking Up
24" x 24", Oil on canvas

Northern United States Watersheds



US Watershed map By Shannon1 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47308146>

Watercycle

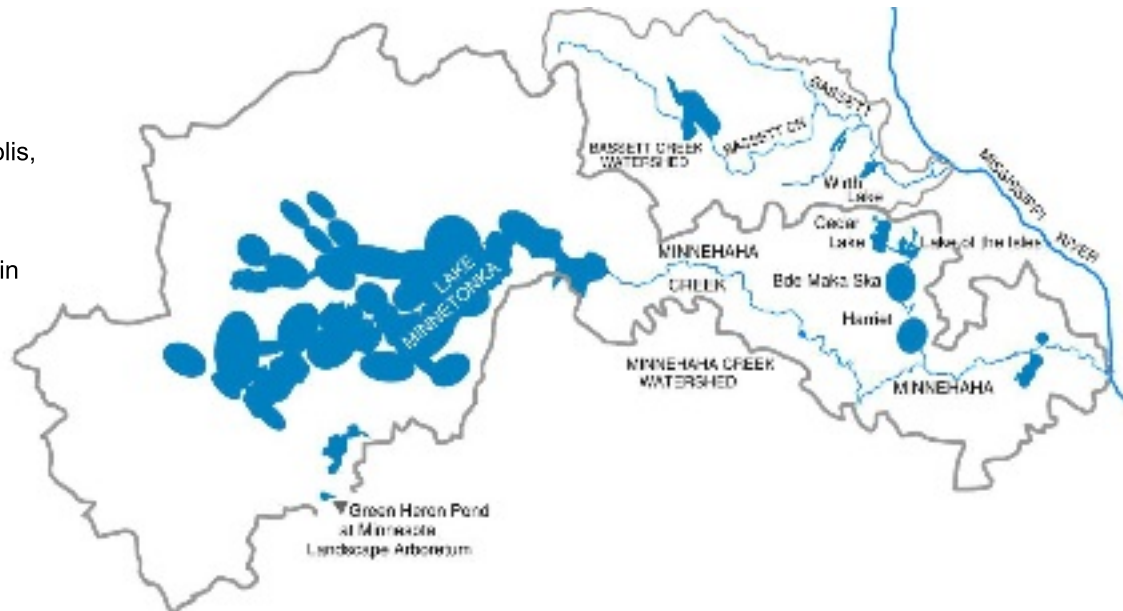
Greg Lecker
Paintings of Water Ecology

Second Edition
Images and Text
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MN

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Design, Paintings, & Maps by
Greg Lecker unless otherwise noted.





First Names for Waters

Lake Superior – Gichi-gami = Great Sea, Ojibwe.

Snake River – Ginebig-ziibi or Ginebigo-ziibi = snake river, Ojibwe.

St. Croix River: Manoominikeshiinh-ziibi = Ricing-Rail River, Ojibwe;

Hogan-wau-ke-kin = "The place where the fish lies", Dakota.

Bassett Creek: Haha Wakpadan = Falls Creek, Dakota.

Minnehaha Falls: mni (water) + haha (falling or curling); waterfall, rapid water
sometimes "laughing waters" from haha and iha, root of ha for "to curl" = smile,
laugh.

Mississippi River: Mississippi comes from the French rendering of the Ojibwe name

Misi-ziibi = Great River; "gathering-in of all the waters", "father of waters";

Gichi-ziibi = Big River, Ojibwe.

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Preface

An artist creates. How that creation is shared will vary. For a painter, there are online postings, group and solo exhibitions, maintaining Open Studio events and galleries – often collaboratively with friends and business partners, and if the right person meets the right work of art ... a sale! Presenting paintings in a book like **Watercycle** is a different art form – part visual art, part literary work, and part primer. The book assembly involved much research and introspection. For the reader, the book triggers memories and makes introductions.

Introduction

Watercycle is a collection of one-hundred full color reproductions of my paintings, watershed maps, and field notes that describe waterways across Minnesota. I painted these works from 2014 through 2024, primarily on location – en plein air (literally “in the open air”). Readers may study high quality reproductions, learn about the ecology of watersheds, and gain insight into my painting methods.

Watercycle focuses on the characteristics and changes in watersheds as I have observed them. As you look at a water body, ask yourself these questions. *What size and shape is the water? Describe the transition between land and water. Is it shallow, flat or sloping, or steep; soft or rocky? Is the water flowing quickly or slowly; weakly or powerfully?* You're engaging in scientific observation.

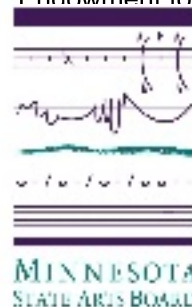
The word “watershed” has two meanings: 1) a turning point; 2) an area of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers or basins, lakes or oceans. Water cycles through regions, time, and three states: frozen, liquid and gaseous; snow and ice, still and flowing water, invisible evaporation and visible clouds. In Minnesota, recently, water has cycled from scarcity to near over-abundance. A statewide drought in Minnesota lasted from 2021 through 2023 followed by one of the wettest years in 2024!

Paintings are organized by their watershed, not in chronological order. “Field Notes” includes details and descriptions of works, the subject's location and the year I painted it. Snapshots of my painting tools demonstrate my methods. I hope you enjoy reviewing this reference.

- Greg Lecker, painter and author; 2025



Greg Lecker is a fiscal year 2024 recipient of a Creative Individuals grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature; and by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Foreword

From the moment you open *Watercycle*, you are in for a gift. A gift of knowledge, art, and beauty.

I first met Greg Lecker around 1997 through community activities in the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood in Minneapolis, where we both live. I've known Greg as an active volunteer, gardener, and artist.

Greg has contributed so much to our Bryn Mawr neighborhood. Community and environmental causes are the essence of his heart. Greg threw himself into committees and work groups—he served on the neighborhood board, joined the garden club, and took an active role in leading garden tours of Bryn Mawr and "busting buckthorn" the invasive non-native shrub. For the past ten years, Greg has focused his time and energy on outdoor painting, also better known in the art world as plein air painting.

Greg's articles and illustrations for our Bryn Mawr Bugle neighborhood newspaper (2003-2013) blended education and entertainment. Subjects included urban street trees, native wildflowers, mushrooms and fungi, weather, and yes, watersheds. Greg has studied Minnesota ecology through the Minnesota Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Volunteer programs – and through his own first-hand observations.

We have remained friends over the years as I grew into my role as a policy maker, where I focused on our natural environment, climate change, and decarbonization. One of the pieces of legislation that links directly to Greg's work to my work in the legislature is the 2008 passage by voters of the Legacy Amendment for Clean Water, Outdoor Heritage, Arts and Cultural Heritage. Greg has been the recipient of a few Legacy Amendment grants that have afforded him the time and space to bring us this stunning art and education on watersheds.

As I previewed an early copy of ***Watercycle***, I was struck by its beauty and how, through Greg's stunning artwork, he educates the reader about the ecology of the watersheds. He also identifies the threats our watershed faces: climate change, loss of flora and fauna, and how urbanization can change nature. Greg's combined paintings, maps, and notes make ***Watercycle*** easy to pick up and a joy to read.

Watercycle and Greg's work immediately connected with me. I grew up on a small family farm along the Minnesota River with my mother, who was trained as an artist and art teacher. This is one of the reasons why ***Watercycle*** is so special to me. It brings together ecology, science, art, and artistry to produce a book that will be a treasure to have on the tabletop, in the library, or as a guide as you travel and experience these magnificent watersheds.

Margaret Anderson Kelliher

First elected in 1998, Margaret Anderson Kelliher served in the Minnesota House of Representatives until 2011, serving as the Speaker from 2007 to 2011. She is the second woman (after Dee Long) to hold that leadership position. She has continued to serve in public roles, including Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Director of Public Works for the City of Minneapolis, and City Operations Officer for the City of Minneapolis. She is also an artist working in textiles and painting.

Lake Superior Watershed



Inner Harbor, 2016
Oil on canvas, 10" x 20"

I painted this during the Plein Air Duluth - Paint du Nord festival. The working title was "Next Stop - The Atlantic" since Lake Superior and the other Great Lakes are connected to the Atlantic Ocean via the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Except for this instructional example of "Inner Harbor", the reader can review Field Notes on pages 82 to 89, for a map and description of where the work was painted and/or the subject.



Lake Superior Watershed



Fog at First Light
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



Clear Colors
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



Day's End
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



Northern Ripples
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Lake Superior Watershed



Strokes of Color
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



Unsettled Skies
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



Overlook
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Lake
Superior
Watershed



Cascade
Oil on panel, 20" x 16"

Lake Superior Watershed



Cascade Pool - Plein Air
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



Cascade Pools
Oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

Lake Superior Watershed

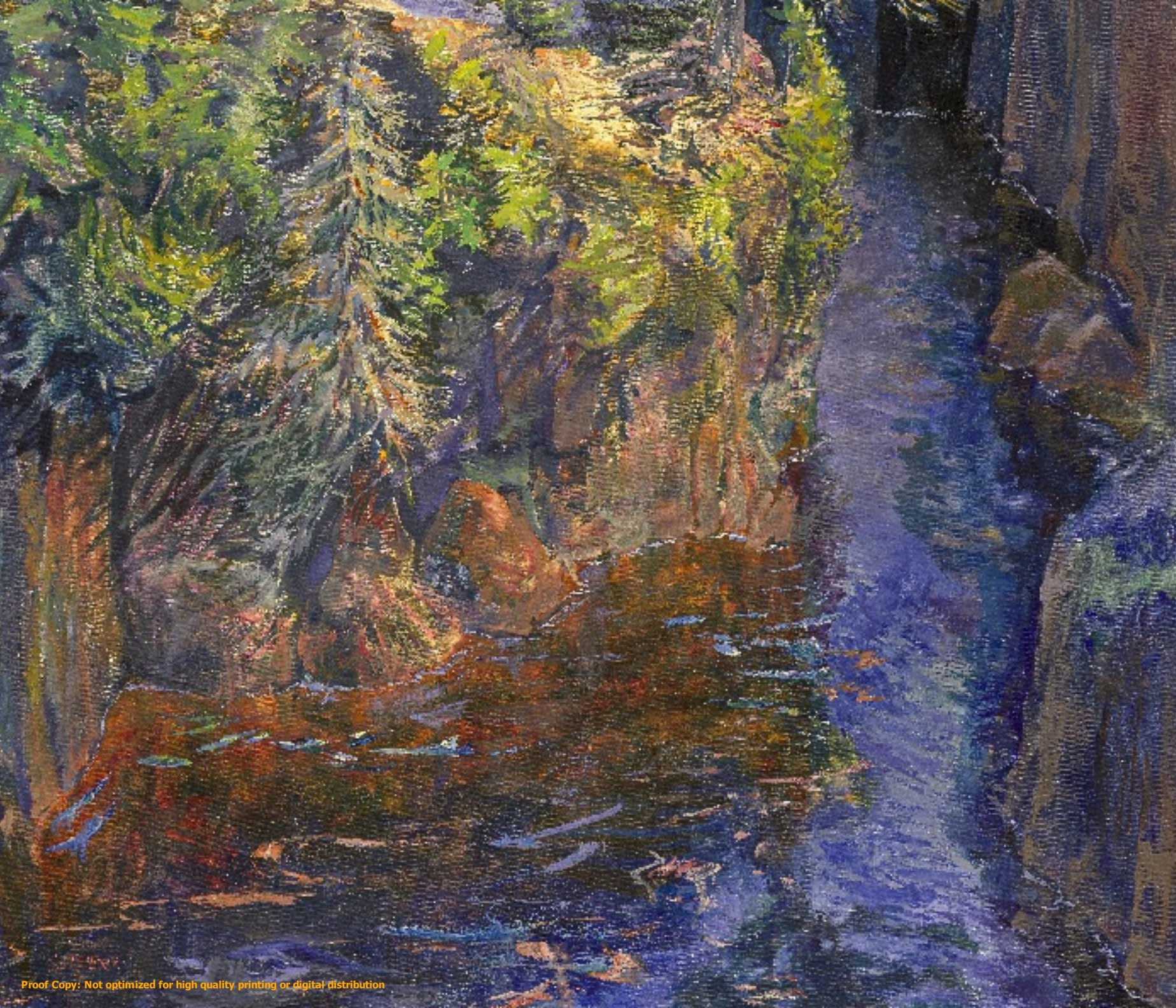


Cascade River Mouth
Oil on panel, 16" x 12"

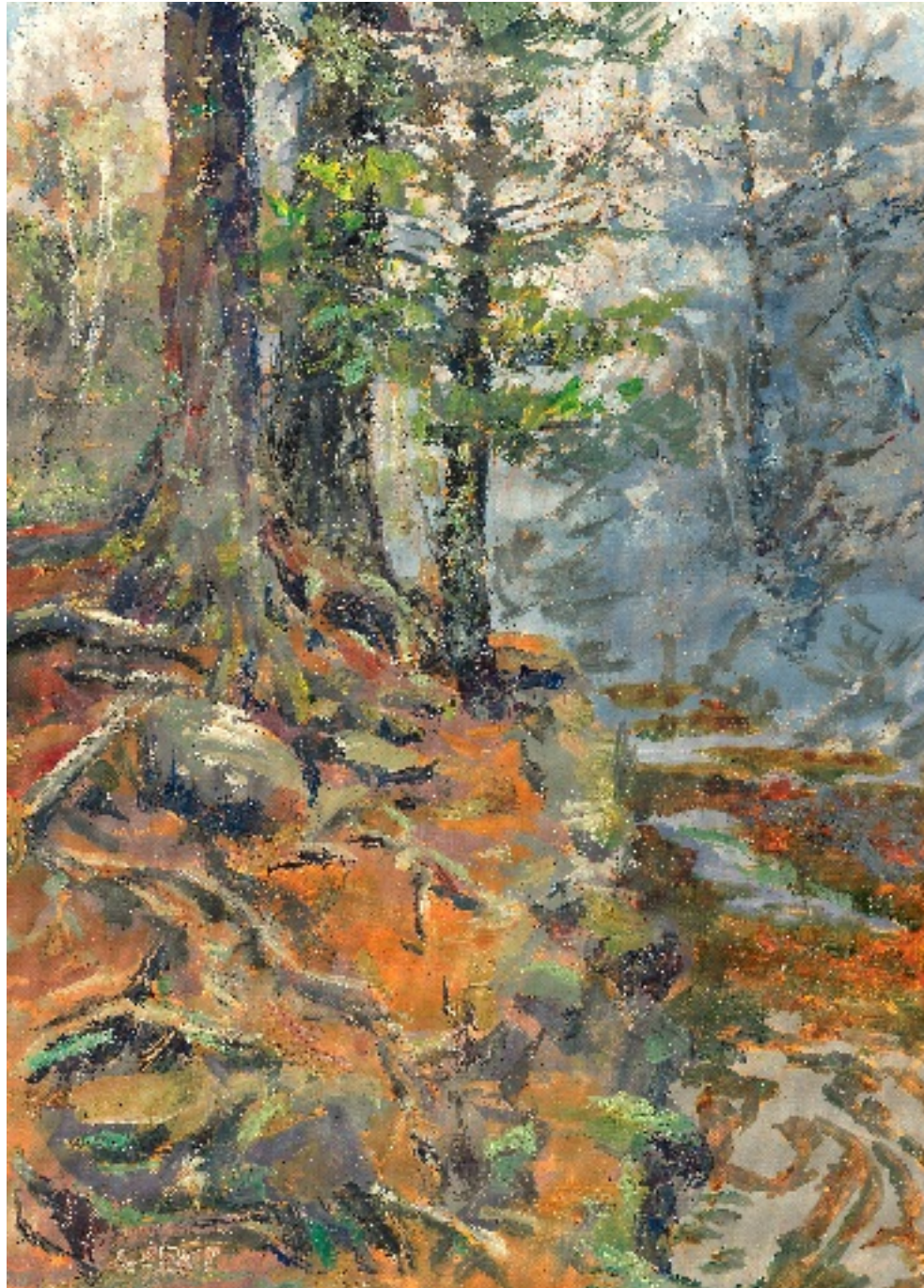
Lake Superior Watershed



Tracing the Gorge
Oil on canvas, 60" x 36"



Lake Superior Watershed



Looking Up and Down
Oil on panel, 16" x 12"

Lake Superior Watershed



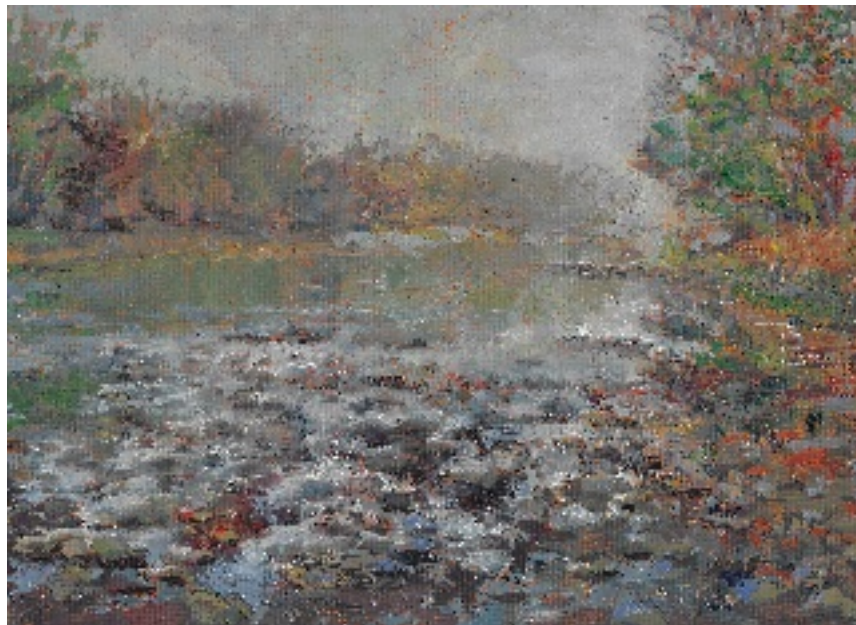
Cold Moon
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed

First Sunset; Color & Cobbles
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"



Fog on the Cobbles
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"



Snake River Watershed



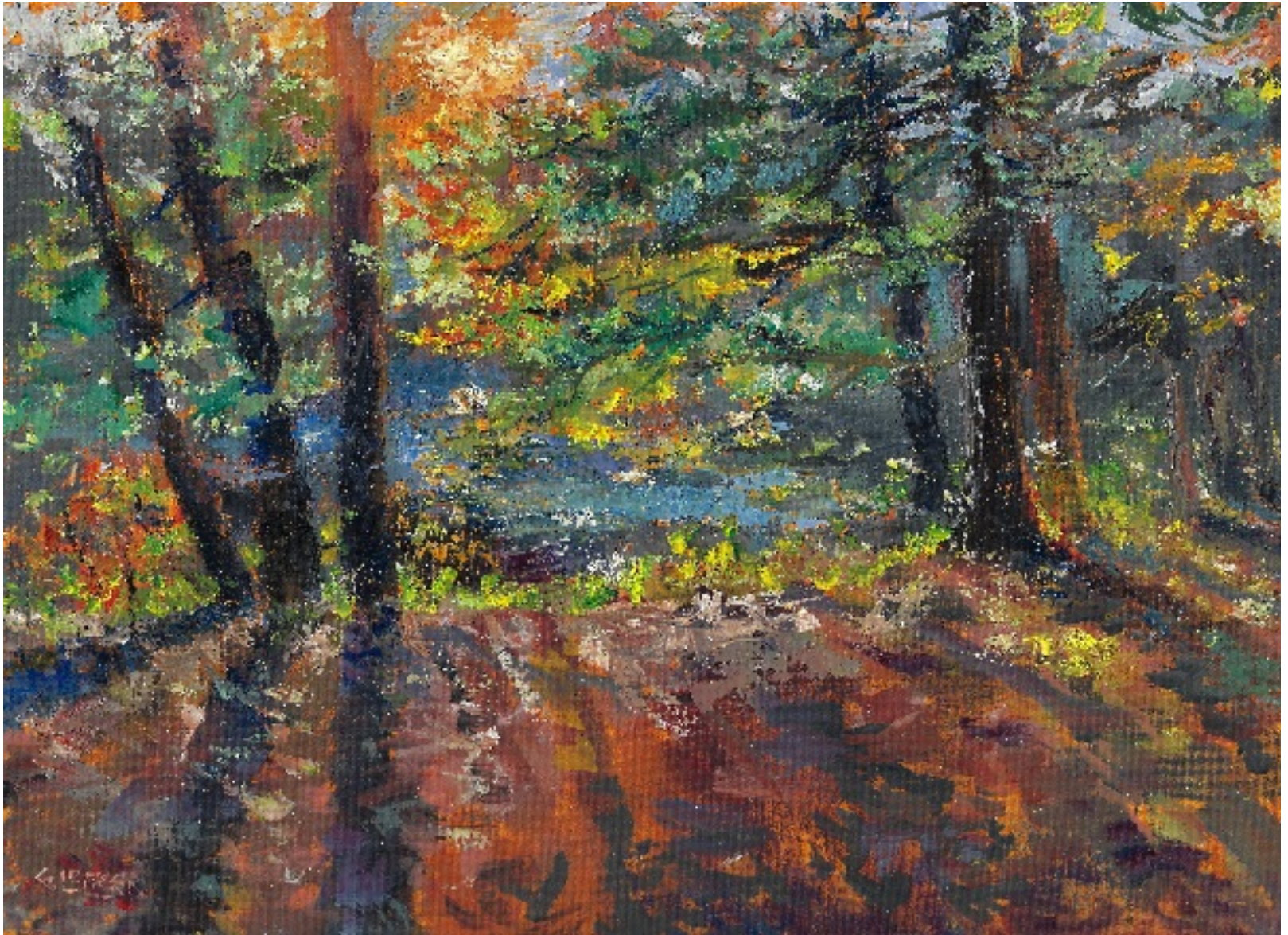
Second Sunset; Color & Cobbles
Oil on panel, 16" x 20"

Snake River Watershed



Shadows Lengthen
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Stopped in the Tracks of the Sun
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Through the Trees - Winter
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Through the Trees - Winter With Snow
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Looking Across - Winter
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Looking Across - Spring
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Moon on the River
Oil on canvas, 6" x 12"



Rising Waters - Spring
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Rising Waters - Spring
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Snake River Watershed



Shadows Racing Upstream
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Wave Ripples
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Day in the Life of the River 1
Oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Day in the Life of the River 2
Oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Day in the Life of the River 3
Oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Day in the Life of the River 4
Oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Foggy River
Oil on canvas, 12" x 16"

St. Croix River Watershed



Sun Sparkle
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Willow River Watershed



Hidden Falls
Oil on panel, 16" x 20"



Willow River Watershed

Waterside
Oil on canvas, 48" x 36"

Bassett Creek Watershed



Reflected Trees and Shadows
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Bassett Creek Watershed



Bassett Creek Gold
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Bassett Creek Watershed



Marsh
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Bassett Creek Watershed



Abandoned
Watercolor, 12" x 9"

Bassett Creek Watershed



Winter Shadows
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Bassett Creek Watershed



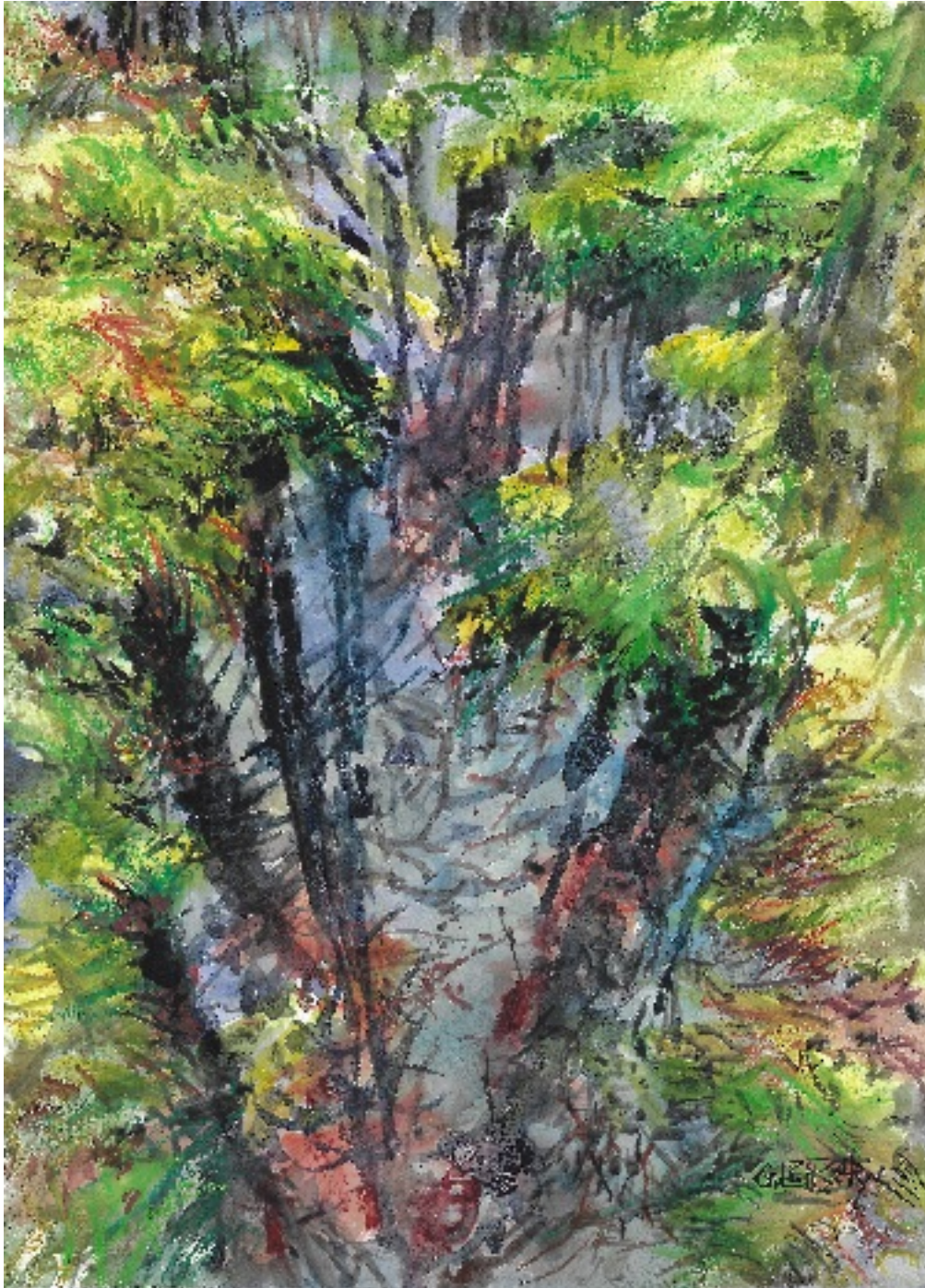
Winter Rust
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Bassett Creek Watershed



Spring Melt
Oil on panel, 16" x 12"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Looking Deep
Watercolor, 12" x 9"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



January Thaw
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Water's Edge
Oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Lily Pads
Watercolor, 9" x 12"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



White Water Lily
Oil on panel, 5" x 7"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Flow
Oil on canvas, 24" x 36"



Minnehaha
Creek
Watershed



Magic Carpet
Oil on canvas, 24" x 24"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Morning Mist Lifting
Oil on panel, 9" x 12"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Unexpected
Oil on canvas, 20" x 16"



Minnehaha
Creek
Watershed

Refresh
Oil on canvas, 24" x 24"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed



Frozen and Flowing - Winter's End
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Minnehaha Creek Watershed

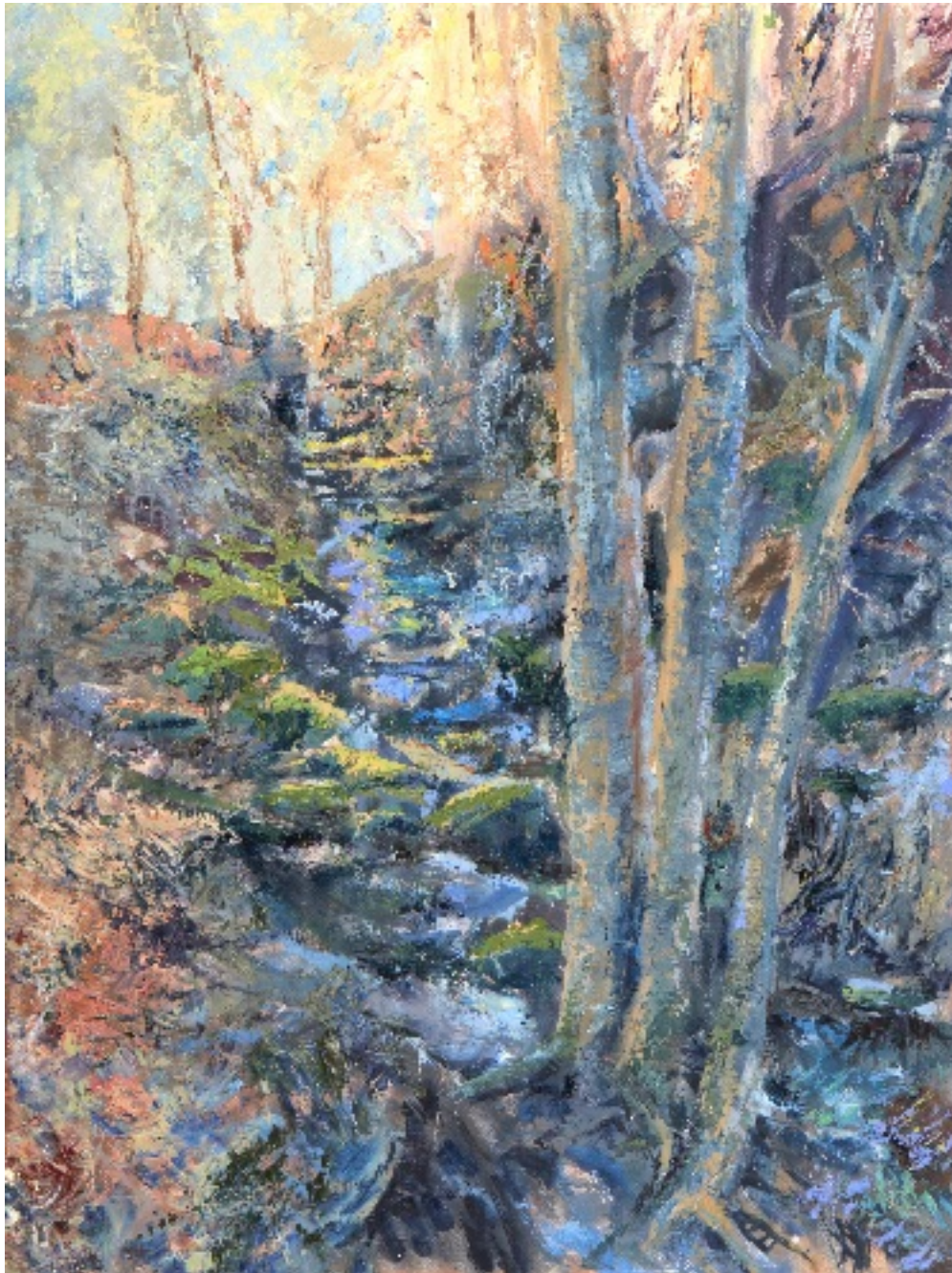


Frozen and Flowing - Winter's End
Oil on canvas, 24" x 30"

Mississippi River Watershed

Around the Bend
Oil on panel, 20" x 16"





St. Croix
River
Watershed

Mississippi
River
Watershed



Triple Pane
Oil on panel, 12" x 9"

Climbing Up
Oil on panel, 16" x 12"

Mississippi River Watershed



Sparkle
Oil on panel, 16" x 12"

Mississippi River Watershed



Rushing Past
Oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

Mississippi River Watershed



Stream of Shadow
Oil on canvas, 36" x 24"



Flood
Oil on canvas, 36" x 24"



Mississippi River Watershed

Meltwater
Oil on canvas, 20" x 16"

Mississippi River Watershed



Top: Backwater
Oil on canvas, 6" x 18"

Bottom: Flood
Oil on canvas, 6" x 18"



Mississippi River Watershed



Stone and Steel
Oil on canvas, 12" x 24"

The painting **"Confluence"** shows a bird's-eye view of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers confluence, in St. Paul, Minn., called "B'dote" by the area's native Dakota people. In the center is Pike Island, called Witi Tanka by the Dakota.

Lecker says he is drawn to areas where rivers intersect. "Rarely are two rivers exactly the same quality and color; and thus, [there is] a visible division when they meet," Lecker says. "Sometimes the edge is a straight line. At other times the rivers meet and mix in organic, cursive patterns that reminded me of the trees that line the banks of the rivers."

The rivers' curves and forested banks may be familiar to Minnesotans. The brown waters of the Minnesota River flowing into the blue channel of the Mississippi may also be recognizable. The significance of the trees in this work is perhaps easy to miss, but it's an essential part of the story it tells, and was influenced by conversations Lecker had while working at the Research Station.

Land-water connection

When Lecker arrived at the Pine Needles cabin last August, he soon found himself sharing some work and discussing a range of subjects with the station's staff. A small painting of the Minnesota-Mississippi River caught the attention of director emeritus, Dr. Daniel Engstrom.

Engstrom and others on the Research Station staff have studied the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers extensively, including inquiries into why the Minnesota carries so much sediment. The reasons range from the region's geologic history, to intensive modern agricultural practices.

These insights informed an interesting conversation. "He noted that I had painted the tree foliage as a summer scene but the river flow as a spring scene," Lecker said. It's in spring that the rivers carry enough water to create the swirling eddies at their confluence that had grabbed Lecker's imagination.

It's also in spring that runoff from bare soils in farm fields increases the amount of sediment in the Minnesota River, making the contrast between the two rivers most visible. The fact that most corn and soybean fields remain bare until May has a serious impact on the water cycle, meaning much less water absorbed by plants, and more heading downstream.

"In the larger work, I chose to paint the lower left-hand mass of trees as leafless to illustrate a more accurate 'cause-and-effect' between landscape and river flow," Lecker explains.

Confluence of Art and Science

Greg Seitz continues: In this painting, though, Lecker was most interested in what it looked like when the waters meet. Some of his other work has a stronger environmental angle, but he says he simply enjoys the chance to convey the beauty of the confluence.

"I often paint compositions and subjects that hold one's attention, I encourage viewers to question what they're seeing and invite them to do more research – to ask questions," he says. "The painting shows one river that is 'clean' (Mississippi) and another river, that by comparison, is 'dirty' (Minnesota). In this work, I'm not overtly judging the Minnesota River nor advocating a change in any human practice."

- Greg Lecker, quoted by Greg Seitz

"I'm an eagle in this painting. It's an anthem to our great waterways. It is also a warning, I think. As we move down the composition, the state of the river becomes unclear, like where the Ohio River mixes its mud with the Mississippi. The forced perspective speaks to the force of nature, and I think to the river's unknown outcome. Nicely done. Fabulous point of view." - Juror, artist Marty Harris

Minnesota, known as *Mni Sota Makoce* to the Dakota, is "the land where the waters reflect the skies." <https://sacredland.org/bdote/> Mixing of Waters
Oil on canvas, 36" x 24"







Mississippi River Watershed



Mixing of Waters
Oil on canvas, 36" x 24"

Mississippi River Watershed



Valley Backwater
Oil on canvas, 12" x 24"

Mississippi River Watershed



Respite
Oil on canvas, 20" x 16"

Mississippi River Watershed



Wet
Oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

Mississippi River Watershed



Waiting for the Light
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Mississippi River Watershed



Working River
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Minnesota River Watershed



Sandy Shore
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

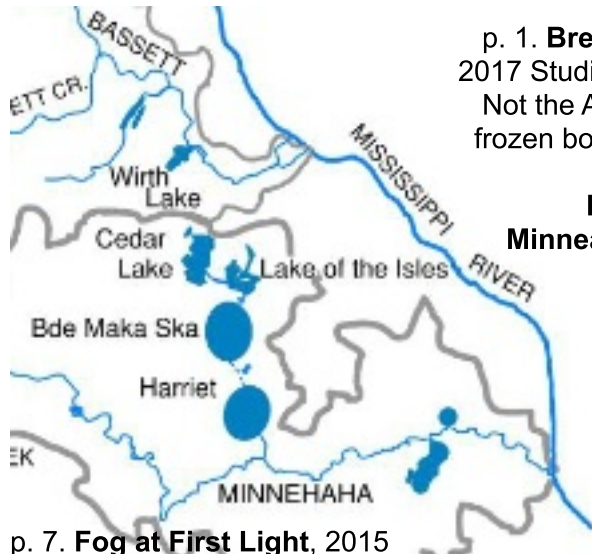
Minnesota River Watershed



Evening Light
Oil on panel, 12" x 16"

Field Notes

(Art created on location unless otherwise noted)



p. 1. **Breaking Up**,
2017 Studio Painting
Not the Arctic, just a
frozen boat launch at
Wirth Lake,
Bryn Mawr;
Minneapolis, MN

p. 7. **Fog at First Light**, 2015

While camping on a favorite northern lake, I awoke to a cool autumn morning. Fog skimmed the surface of the water and rose up the hillside surrounding the lake.

East Lake Agnes Campsite, Superior Hiking Trail;
Lutsen, MN

p. 8. **Clear Colors**, 2014

East Lake Agnes Campsite, Superior Hiking Trail;
Lutsen, MN

p. 9. **Day's End**, 2015

East Lake Agnes Campsite, Superior Hiking Trail;
Lutsen, MN

p. 10. **Northern Ripples**, 2014

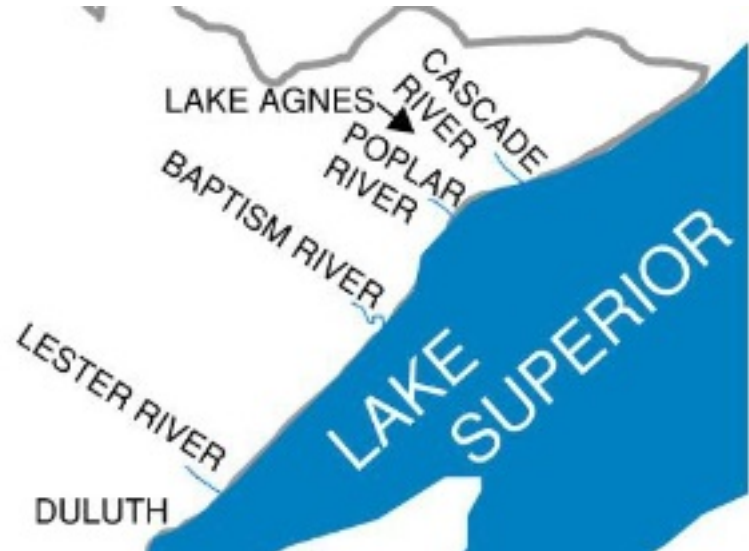
The bedrock peninsula of the campsite extends out under the water surface – offering a natural swimming launch.

East Lake Agnes Campsite, Superior Hiking Trail;
Lutsen, MN

p. 11. **Strokes of Color**, 2014

The available time for painting affects the style of my

82



painting. A through-hiker unexpectedly arrived at my campsite. I refereed the play between his dog and mine; and I wrapped up my painting session a bit earlier than planned. I appreciate the freshness of this piece.

East Lake Agnes Campsite, Superior Hiking Trail;
Lutsen, MN

p. 12. **Unsettled Skies**, 2022

East Lake Agnes Campsite, Superior Hiking Trail;
Lutsen, MN

p. 13. **Overlook**, 2015

To reach this overlook I hiked an hour along the hiking trail carrying my field easel and painting supplies.

Poplar River Overlook, Superior Hiking Trail; Lutsen,
MN

p. 14. **Cascade**, 2016

One of the many rivers that cascade through a gorge on its way to Lake Superior. The eight-mile round-trip trail up one side of this river valley and down the opposite side is among my favorite hiking loops on the Superior Hiking Trail. To the right of this view, the river plunges twenty-feet

Field Notes (Art created on location unless otherwise noted)

into the void beyond the edge of the cliff.

Cascade River, Superior Hiking Trail; Lutsen, MN

p. 15. **Cascade Pool** - 2020 Plein Air Painting
Cascade River, Superior Hiking Trail; Lutsen, MN

p. 16. **Cascade Pools**, 2018 Studio Painting
All the power and all the calm of the North Shore. I referred to studies painted on location, and focused on a swirling pool of water and its contrast with a still puddle.
Cascade River, Superior Hiking Trail; Lutsen, MN

p. 17. **Cascade River Mouth**, 2020
Cascade River; Lutsen, MN

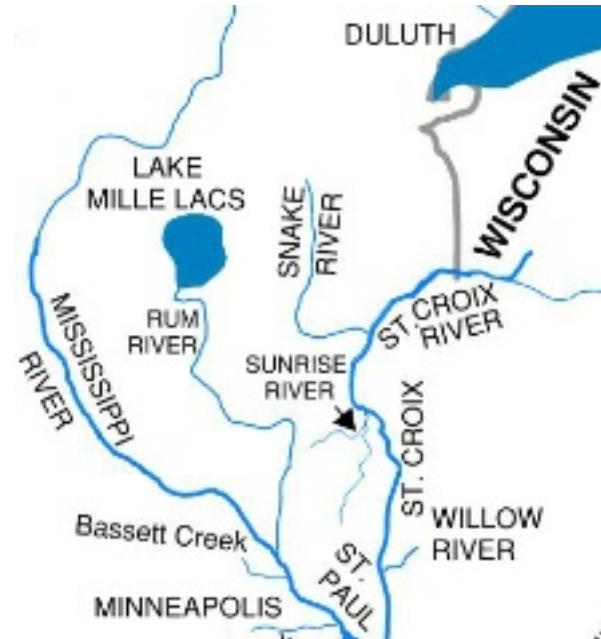
p. 18. **Tracing the Gorge**, 2020 Studio Painting
Walking from state park visitor towards the campground, I planned to paint the upstream waterfall. But then I turned toward Lake Superior and found this scene. My teacher Mary Pettis would describe discovering this s-curve of the Baptism River as “finding the dragon”, a graceful motif for a work of art. The old white pine has held tight to the rocky peninsula for decades. Each time I’ve visited this spot since I see that more and more of the tree’s crown has toppled into the waters below.

Based on my plein air study of the Baptism River Mouth, Tettegouche State Park; Silver Bay, MN

p. 20. **Looking Up and Down**, 2021
Lester River; Duluth, MN

p. 21. **Cold Moon**, 2020
Lake Superior near Cascade Creek; Lutsen, MN

p. 22. **First Sunset; Color & Cobbles**, 2021
The Snake River illustrated in these paintings is a special place. The river flows through a shallow valley of white pines, red and white oak, and maples. During four



separate trips to a cabin lying just above the river floodplain, I created paintings depicting autumn, winter and spring. The autumn of 2021 was midway through a two-year drought. Where the water flowed low and slowly, cobbles - small and medium sized round rocks lay exposed on the river bed on the inside of the river curve.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 22. **Fog on the Cobbles**, 2021
Midway through my first visit, the overnight chill and warmer waters brought fog to the morning light.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 23. **Second Sunset; Color & Cobbles**, 2021
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 24. **Shadows Lengthen**, 2021
The drought had deepened enough that river cobbles lay exposed. I could walk nearly halfway across the river.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

Field Notes

(Art created on location unless otherwise noted)



p. 25. **Stopped in the Tracks of the Sun**, 2021
Only adrenaline could drive me to start the day's third painting in late afternoon. The sun was so brilliant – I couldn't miss the opportunity to capture this.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 26. **Through the Trees - Winter**, 2021
Even on an overcast day, the sky shows color.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 27. **Through the Trees - Winter With Snow**, 2021
On a handful of times in my life, I've watched snowflakes start falling. This day was one of these times.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 28. **Looking Across - Winter**, 2021
When I returned at Christmas, thick ice stretched across me from bank to bank; and more than six inches of snow covered the land and the ice. A narrow spear of open water aimed downstream.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 29. **Looking Across - Spring**, 2022
Morning sun spotlighted the sprouting of brush along the river bank.

Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 30. **Moon on the River**, 2022
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 30. **Rising Waters - Spring**, 2022
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 31. **Rising Waters - Spring**, 2022
Snake River; Pine City, MN
in late May, river waters had swollen to cover the several shelves of river bank where I had descended seven months earlier. Snow melt and runoff from recent rains flowed across the watershed through forests, fields, and into the river. I witnessed the water rise – six inches daily. Each morning, the river surrounded more tree trunks and encompassed further green lawn.

p. 32. **Shadows Racing Upstream**, 2021
This spot is a special place: the sun rises downstream casting these shadows upstream.
Snake River; Pine City, MN

p. 33. **Wave Ripples**, 2019
A passing boat sends out a wake that gently washes across the river shore.
Marine on St. Croix, MN

p. 34. **Day in the Life of the River 1**, 2018

p. 35. **Day in the Life of the River 2**, 2018

p. 36. **Day in the Life of the River 3**, 2018

p. 37. **Day in the Life of the River 4**, 2018

This was my daily view for two weeks during an artist residency awarded to me by the St. Croix Watershed Research Station (part of Science Museum of Minnesota).
Pine Needles Cabin; Marine on St. Croix, MN

Field Notes (Art created on location unless otherwise noted)

p. 38. **Foggy River**, 2019

During an artist residency, I painted this river almost twenty times! On this morning, river islands played “hide-and-seek” amidst the fog until the rising sun burned off the misty veil.

Pine Needles Cabin; Marine on St. Croix, MN

p. 39. **Sun Sparkle**, 2017 (p. 93 shows work in progress)

Each day, the sun rose over the distant hill and passed overhead. The sun sparkles on the water at mid-day.

Pine Needles Cabin; Marine on St. Croix, MN

p. 40. **Hidden Falls**, 2021

This is the third time I painted this waterfall.

Willow River State Park; Hudson, WI

p. 41. **Waterside**, 2018 Studio Painting

I found this new vantage point as I stood on rocks in the river. I aimed to capture the water flow, sound, the spray, coolness and even the fresh smell.

Willow River State Park; Hudson, WI

p. 42. **Reflected Trees and Shadows**, 2023

A large pond is formed along the second branch of the braided creek at the edge of my neighborhood. Canada geese, mallards, and wood ducks inhabit this quiet place just two miles from downtown Minneapolis.

Bassett Creek, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 43. **Bassett Creek Gold**, 2023

Bassett Creek flows along the north border of my Bryn Mawr neighborhood of Minneapolis, where I’ve lived since 1995. Two miles downstream, Bassett Creek joins the Mississippi River in downtown Minneapolis. Though Bassett Creek is a larger flow, the similarities between Bassett Creek and Elk Creek would suggest that the creek drew me to the neighborhood. Hours have been invested in creek clean-up, creek woodland restoration, and exploring



and painting the creek.

Bassett Creek, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 44. **Marsh**, 2023

Though the areas depicted here are scenic, the creek flows adjacent to and under industrial sites, a Superfund site, bridges, and the Minneapolis impound lot before being diverted underground into tunnels that flow under downtown Minneapolis to the Mississippi River.

Bassett Creek, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 45. **Abandoned**, 2023 Studio Painting

Nature is slowly reclaiming these disused railroad tracks.

Bassett Creek, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 46. **Winter Shadows**, 2024

From the bridge shown in previous watercolor I’ve often painted this bend in the creek.

Bassett Creek, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 47. **Winter Rust**, 2019

Wirth Lake Wetland, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 48. **Spring Melt**, 2014

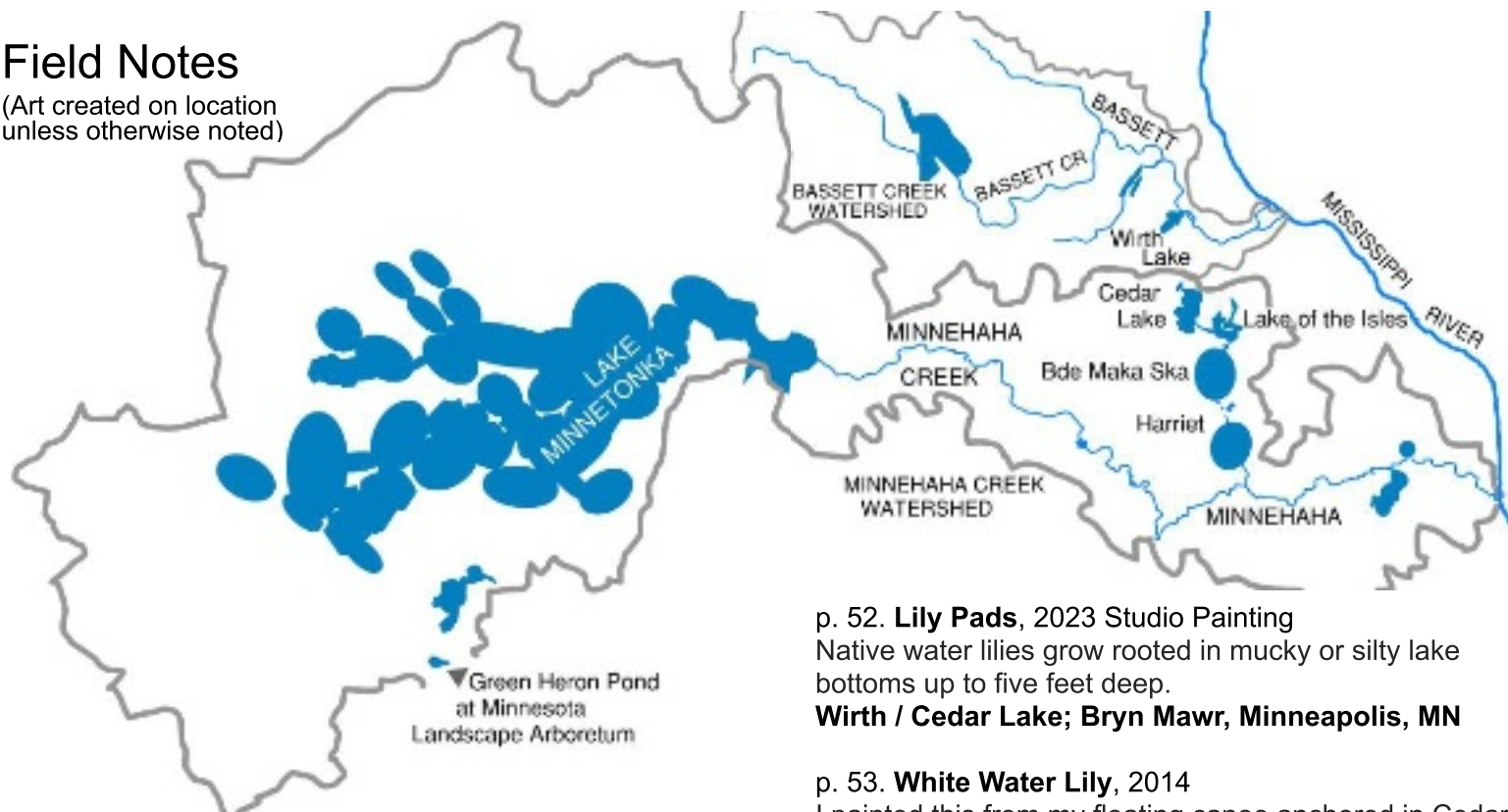
Snow melt in the marsh is a special time, full of promise!

Wirth Lake Wetland, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 49. **Looking Deep**, 2023 Studio Painting

Field Notes

(Art created on location unless otherwise noted)



Minneapolis Quaking Bog is a five-acre acid bog where nearly 200 mature tamaracks shade understory sphagnum moss. Along floating boardwalks, one can tour this, the furthest south bog in the state of Minnesota.

Quaking Bog, Wirth Park, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 50. **January Thaw**, 2014
Cedar Lake, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 51. **Water's Edge**, 2018 Studio Painting
Foot traffic and then rain water flow carves a gully into a lakeside berm, disturbing mossy areas and exposing the underbelly gravel.
Cedar Lake, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 52. **Lily Pads**, 2023 Studio Painting
Native water lilies grow rooted in mucky or silty lake bottoms up to five feet deep.
Wirth / Cedar Lake; Bryn Mawr, Minneapolis, MN

p. 53. **White Water Lily**, 2014
I painted this from my floating canoe anchored in Cedar Lake, in the chain of lakes Minneapolis, on the southern edge of my Bryn Mawr neighborhood.
Cedar Lake, Bryn Mawr; Minneapolis, MN

p. 54. **Flow**, 2018 Studio Painting
The duality of this painting – its simplicity and depth – is verbalized by quoting the opening of poet William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence":
"To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour."

Flow's subject is just a square yard's area of a wetland – painted nearly life-size. A just discernible direction of water flow can be detected in the subtle ripples.
Green Heron Pond Boardwalk, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum; Chaska, MN

Field Notes (Art created on location unless otherwise noted)

p. 56. **Magic Carpet**, 2018 Studio Painting
Viewers have described seeing several different things here: long cast morning shadows, a reflection, tree roots, glare reflected from ice.

Unnamed Pond North of Green Heron Pond, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum; Chaska, MN

p. 57. **Morning Mist Lifting**, 2016 Studio Painting
On this early autumn morning, a frosty fog hung suspended just above the surface of Green Heron Pond.
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum; Chaska, MN

p. 58. **Unexpected**, 2018 Studio Painting
At first glance, a gray day is uninteresting. Closer inspection reveals subtle colors. Manipulating paint from top to bottom in a series of squeegee swipes both preserves and mixes the colors initially applied.
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum; Chaska, MN

p. 59. **Refresh**, 2018
I painted this work over four consecutive Saturdays and spent countless hours studying the work and refining it since my field work. My goal was to capture the way the “just right” angle of sunlight illuminated the rocks lying beneath water surface and foam.
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum; Chaska, MN

p. 60. **Frozen and Flowing - Winter's End**, 2017
Over three February days, I watched as the waterfall slowly broke free of its icy wintry cage. On the second and third day, I painted this. By the third day, due to the warm February days, the creek had burst the prison wall of its frozen fall and the entire fifty-foot-tall falls were fully visible from top to bottom.
Minnehaha Falls; Minneapolis, MN

p. 61. **Frozen and Flowing - Winter's End**, 2018 Studio Painting. Frozen falls descend fifty feet, flowing between massive drapes, ramparts and shelves of ice that winter

sculpted from water spray.
Minnehaha Falls; Minneapolis, MN

p. 62. **Around the Bend**, 2017
Wetlands hold a multitude of plant species. Exploring a boardwalk, I found this composition. A philosophical theme comes to mind when finding a pathway that bends around a corner. Just as what lies around the corner is unseen; so is one's future uncertain.
Harriet Alexander Nature Center; Roseville, MN

p. 63. **Climbing**, 2018 Studio Painting
Springs and runoff flow downhill to the St. Croix River.
Marine on St. Croix, MN

p. 63. **Triple Pane Plein Air**, 2016
This work combines my passion for architectural lighting with public painting demonstrations to interpret watersheds for the public.
White Bear Lake, MN during Art Shanty Projects

p. 64. **Sparkle**, 2018
Foam on water; sunny reflections – these are ephemeral.
Manomin Park, Rice Creek; Fridley, MN

p. 65. **Rushing Past**, 2018 Studio Painting
Manomin Park, Rice Creek; Fridley, MN

p. 66. **Stream of Shadow**, 2018 Studio Painting
Channeled by flood water, this gulch is usually dry. Snow melt and spring rain temporarily forms puddles. “Paint mud” from the bottom of a brush washer forms the basis of the rich neutrals against which more intense blues and oranges are painted.
Manomin Park, Rice Creek; Fridley, MN

p. 66. **Flood**, 2018 Studio Painting
I experimented with wiping and squeegee techniques especially in the foreground (lower) half of this work to illustrate the annual spring flood of the Mississippi River.

Field Notes (Art created on location unless otherwise noted)

Manomin Park, Mississippi River; Fridley, MN

p. 67. **Meltwater**, 2018 Studio Painting

The cycle begins with snow fallen from winter clouds. Meltwater channels through silty sand to undercut ice shelves, setting them adrift at the mouth of Rice Creek.

Manomin Park, Mouth of Rice Creek at Mississippi River; Fridley, MN

p. 68. **Flood**, 2019

Manomin Park, Rice Creek; Fridley, MN

p. 68. **Backwater**, 2019

St. Croix River, Marine on St. Croix, MN

p. 69. **Stone and Steel**, 2018 (p. 94 is work in progress)

In 2018, the National Park Service invited me to paint the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock. Note the difference between the still water in the lock and the freely flowing water under the Stone Arch Bridge arches. The Army Corps of Engineers closed the lock mainly to stem upstream migration of invasive non-native carp; but also due to declining commercial shipping use.

Stone Arch Bridge; Mississippi River, Minneapolis, MN

p. 70. **Confluence**, 2022 Studio Painting

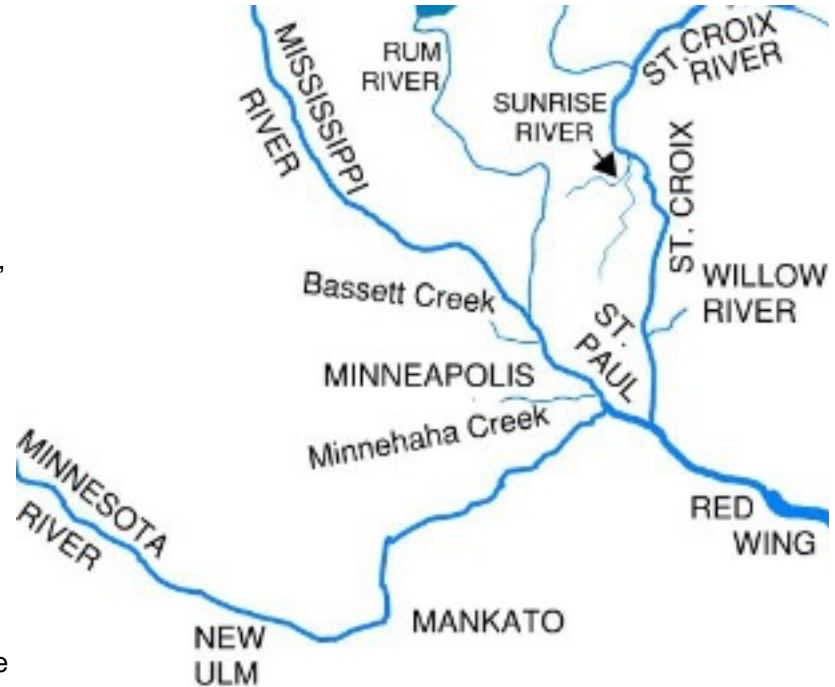
B'Dote; Pike Island; Confluence of Minnesota & Mississippi River, St. Paul, MN

p. 72-73. **Confluence** detail, 2022

B'Dote; Pike Island; Confluence of Minnesota & Mississippi River, St. Paul, MN

p. 74. **Mixing of Waters**, 2019 Studio Painting

Mixing of waters is phenomenon that occurs worldwide where two bodies of water meet. Rarely are two rivers exactly the same quality and color; and thus, often, there is a visible division when they meet. Sometimes the edge is a straight line. At other times the rivers meet and mix in organic, cursive



patterns that remind one of the trees that line the banks of the rivers.

In a scene repeated worldwide, rivers of different composition mix in organic, cursive patterns. Making invisible eddy currents visible, differences between the cloudy Minnesota and clear Mississippi offer lessons in fluid flow and geography.

B'Dote; Pike Island; Confluence of Minnesota & Mississippi River, St. Paul, MN

p. 75. **Valley Backwater**, 2024 Studio Painting

At La Crosse, Wisconsin, the river bluffs and the river banks offer sweeping views. River confluences are good places to explore and to paint. Often, the floodplain remains in a natural state or relatively undeveloped (and used as park land), even in urban areas. I first painted this subject - the La Crosse river, upstream from downtown La Crosse - standing on the berm of a roadway bridge. I assembled a composite view while looking left and right

Field Notes (Art created on location unless otherwise noted)

through roadside brush and trees. This is a studio painting based on my plein air study.

La Crosse River just upstream of Mississippi River; La Crosse, WI

p. 76. Respite, 2021

Red Wing, MN

p. 77. **Wet**, 2020

The patterns of open water, reflection and floating vegetation at this fishing dock in Frontenac, MN attracted my attention.

Frontenac, MN

p. 78. **Waiting for the Light**, 2017

Breathtaking but moving clouds captivated me as I drove towards this marina to paint this view of Barn Bluff along the Mississippi River. Shortly before sunset, enough clouds parted to allow light to wash across the distant shore.

Harbor Bar; Hager City, WI

p. 79. **Working River**, 2018

The Mississippi River, here painted from atop Barn Bluff in Red Wing, is a working river. While I painted, I watched tugboats skillfully guide barges along the flooded river. Their relatively slow progress was still too fast for my painter's brush!

Barn Bluff; Red Wing, MN

p. 80. **Sandy Shore**, 2022

Flowing from the left foreground towards the center of the painting, the Blue Earth River carries stormwater runoff from erodible soils especially from agricultural areas. The river's sediment levels have increased since European settlement in the late 1800s. By volume, the Blue Earth is the Minnesota River's largest tributary, accounting for nearly half of the Minnesota's flow at the rivers' confluence

here at Sibley Park, Mankato.

Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers; Mankato, MN

p. 81. **Evening Light**, 2022

The setting sun shown yellow light on the cottonwoods at the boat launch.

Minnecon Park; New Ulm, MN

p. 94 and Back Cover, **Foggy**, and **Clear**, 2022

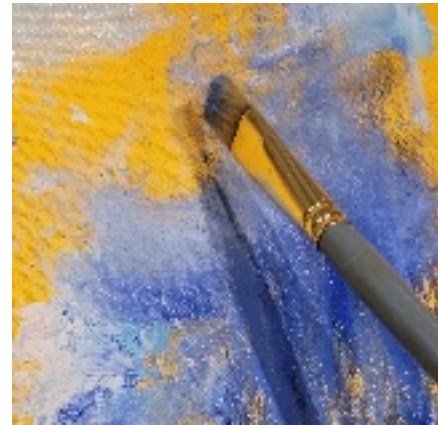
Twelve hours separated these two paintings. Early evening, the narrow side branch of the river was still, the reflection clear. In the morning, the trees felt suspended in air, a violet colored mist.

Minnecon Park; New Ulm, MN

Painting Tools



Rubber Brush



Bristle Brush

Painting Tools



Painting (Palette) Knife



Squeegee



Gloved Hand

Acknowledgments

This collection and I would not be here without my mother and father, Jane and Lavern Lecker who gave me Elk Creek and the time to play. I am grateful for my siblings Doug, Melissa, and Brady with whom I explored the creek. Pete Winklebauer, my first art teacher, introduced me to also to the university that would prepare me for a life of design.

The Minnesota school of landscape painter-teachers changed my life: first, Joe Paquet, and then Mary Pettis and Kami Mendlik. For their encouragement, I thank the Northrup King Building community of artists, especially longtime gallery mates Mary Ann Treanor Morgan and Tom Dimock.

Special thanks to Dave Stack and Aaron Torberg who introduced me to kayaking and to the Boundary Waters; and to David Logsdon who led me to the Superior Hiking Trail that parallels the North Shore of Lake Superior. Minnesota organizations offered me so much:

- The Minnesota Master Naturalist program taught me about Minnesota's three biomes.
 - The Minnesota State Arts Board granted me funds and many years of introspection and planning.
 - Artist residencies at Pine Needles (St. Croix Watershed Research Station) and Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts (BLCA) gave me time and space to experiment and to learn.
- Many thanks to my mentor Jeffrey Ebeling who has guided me since my 2017-2018 BLCA Artist Residency.

About Greg Lecker's inspiration, Greg Seitz wrote: The artist traces his observations of the confluence back to 2005, when he took a Minnesota Master Naturalist course at Fort Snelling, overlooking the area. He later got a view from the water while kayaking with friends as part of the Friends of the Mississippi River's fundraiser, the Mississippi River Challenge.



Portrait of the painter "Greg Lecker En Plein Air", original oil on linen by Mary Pettis, 2016, Interstate Park, MN.

Greg Lecker is a fiscal year 2024 recipient of a Creative Individuals grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature; and by a grant from the National Endowment for



Biography

Greg Lecker paints landscapes en plein air (in the open air). Greg captures the changing atmosphere in man-made and natural settings in art filled with color, motion, and emotion. He explains that we are moved by changes in light intensity, color temperature (cool light, warm light) and also color and saturation. Greg communicates his experiences in “real-time” with passersby and shares oil paintings with gallery visitors and visitors to trigger memories of favorite places or make introductions for newly discovered treasures.

Working on location (“plein air”) and in his studio, Greg interprets Watersheds not to paint “pretty places” that include water – but to increase understanding of the relationships that our waterways play in our state and worldwide – now and in geologic history. Three watersheds convey any water that flows out of Minnesota:

- Minnesota/Mississippi River watershed terminates at Gulf of Mexico;
- Superior/Great Lakes watershed terminates at North Atlantic Ocean;
- Red River watershed terminates at Arctic Ocean.



Greg paints using brush and palette knife, gloved hands and a variety of tools to squeegee pigment across a surface.

www.greglecker.com Let's go farther tomorrow.

Portraying Minnesota landscapes and waterscapes grew through Greg's lived experiences playing and paddling in waters; restoring landscapes and teaching about ecology. His creative practice connects art, science and community during artist residencies along the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers (via the Science Museum of Minnesota) and in the Arctic Ocean (Svalbard, Norway).

Greg Seitz writes: Lecker does much of his work on location, in the outdoors. Even if he doesn't actually do the painting under an open sky, his studio work is based on his careful studies of light, form, and other elements. It's a little like researchers studying sediment cores or water samples to get real-world data about how lakes, rivers, and watersheds work.

“Direct observation is used by both artists and scientists,” Lecker points out.

- quoted by Greg Seitz

Minnesota River Watershed



Clear
Oil on canvas, 8" x 8"



Foggy
Oil on canvas, 8" x 8"

Afterword

I hope that you have enjoyed **Watercycle** and learned something about watersheds. To learn more about my art practice, please visit my website www.greglecker.com and my Greg Lecker Arts social media platforms on Facebook and Instagram. Since 2014, I have maintained a gallery and studio in Northrup King Building in Northeast Minneapolis. The public is invited to tour our Open Studios on Saturdays from 12-4 pm. Visit www.northrupkingbuilding.com to learn more.

- Greg Lecker, painter and author; 2025



Watercycle

Greg Lecker

Watercycle is a collection of 100 full color reproductions of watercolor and oil paintings, watershed maps, and field notes by the artist describe waterways from across Minnesota. Greg Lecker painted these works from 2014 through 2024, primarily on location – en plein air. Readers can study high quality reproductions, learn about the ecology of watersheds, and gain insight into his painting methods.

Paintings of Water Ecology

