

About the Artist

2011 Featured Artist

Robert Sissel

Robert Sissel makes his home on the outskirts of Sioux City, Iowa, at the junction of two rivers and the meeting of three states. This Midwestern setting, rich in history and unspoiled nature, forms the backdrop for many of his paintings. From the bluffs above the Missouri an endless panorama stretches away over grassland and trees, harboring wildlife and joining the unpolluted skyline in the distance. A native of this land, Robert was born in eastern Iowa and grew up in the town of Marion. Here the works of painters such as Andrew Wyeth and Norman Rockwell moved Robert to begin experimenting with portraits of family and friends and then to the rural scenery of the American Midwest.

This transition produced a melding of themes that became more involved in nature as time went on and led inevitably to the realm of wildlife art. From an education in a small Nebraska college to the extensive background in commercial art, Sissel began his search for technical as well as creative fulfillment. After several symposiums with distinguished artist from America and Europe, Sissel's studies had matured to the degree of readiness he desired and he returned to the Midwest with a sense of purpose and an eye toward exposing the beauty around him. He did not have to look far for subjects. The land around him would easily provide all that he required. Here in nature the particular talents of Robert Sissel appear to have found their home.

His limited edition prints and original works hang in businesses and homes throughout America. Robert's appearances at national wildlife art shows have gained him several awards for Best of Show. As winner of the 1989 Iowa Habitat Stamp and the 1989 Iowa Trout Stamp he began to gain recognition on an even greater scale. In 1992, the climb in prestige brought him honors from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation as Artist of the Year. Since then Sissel has been published by several large publishing firms and has settled at last into the busy world of artist and self-publisher. His days are spent in his studio and art gallery.

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About the Artist

Julia Licht

Julia grew up in Sioux City surrounded by a family of artists. Her father painted and many members of his family painted as well. Her family traveled extensively, visiting museums and art galleries all over the US. Through these experiences she learned to appreciate all forms of art.

Three dimensional art has always been a favorite of hers, as an adult she started doing stained glass windows and lamps. Her fascination with glass then moved to fusing glass. She still works with a combination of stained and fused glass. She creates detailed and unique designs in her bowls using various methods, including the “boiling” technique.

Julia is married to Peter who is also an artist. His medium is clay and he also helps out with design and patterns. They have three children Jacob, 8, Emily, 6, and Michael, 4. There is never a dull moment at home.

Julia Licht
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About the Artist

Jana Sawin-Peterson

Jana Peterson was born and raised on a farm near the Loess Hills by conservation-minded parents. Beginning at a young age, she and her family spent hours fishing, hiking, rock hunting, gardening and creating arts and crafts. Even as a child, Jana's projects were crafted by thinking "outside the box." Jana has a passion for rocks and continually searches for treasures along the river, in gravel pits—anyplace one can find unusual rocks and agates. She and her dad cut and polished the agates and started the foundation of her collections and jewelry interest.

After a few different traditional business careers Jana moved back to western Iowa and became an apprentice jeweler. Several years of repairing, sizing and setting of gem stones in traditional jewelry have again given way to creating "outside the box."

Jana's jewelry is made of precious and semi-precious stones and "just plain rocks with soul." She believes that all the earth's natural resources are precious and receives her inspiration for her artwork from nature.

Jana now lives on one of her family's century farms with her husband Craig and daughter Autumn, who is the seventh generation to live there. Her family is extremely supportive and always willing to go for a walk to enjoy the outdoors and search for precious treasures.

Jana Sawin-Peterson
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About the Artist

Barry Knapp

Barry lives with his wife Carolyn on a Century farm that has been in his family since 1893. Much of the land is in the Loess Hills south of Westfield, Iowa on which he raises cattle and hay.

Barry has done woodworking most of his life and has been turning since 1990. He uses Burr Oak, Walnut, Ash, Apple, Elm, Hackberry, Mulberry, Maple and Red Cedar from his farm. Most of his work is functional objects such as bowls, plates, jars, wine toppers and ornaments. Some are embellished with inlay work.

All have a food safe finish, mostly walnut oil and beeswax and must be hand washed.

For fun he uses these same woods to make cedar chests for his Granddaughters when they become 13 years of age.

Barry Knapp
Burr Oak Woods
26259 K18 N
Westfield, IA 51062
712-568-3006

About the Artist

Jess Elofson

Jess lives on his family homestead just outside of Sioux Falls, South Dakota where he creates most of his art. He has been an artist for about ten years now, never limiting himself to any one particular field. He has created large scale sculptures, murals, many forms of ceramics, and was even a tattoo artist for a while in his early 20's. Jess graduated from The University of South Dakota in 2005 with a Bachelors of Fine Art with an emphasis in 3-d art.

“I see it as my job to not only create great works of art, but also to help educate and inform the public as to the processes behind creating art, and the relevance art still holds in our society today”.

Past events attended/hosted by Jess include Aberdeen Arts in the Park, Aberdeen Winterfest, Yankton River Boat Days, Sioux Falls Washington Pavilion Holiday Show and Lathom Park Art Fair in Sioux City.

Jess Elofson
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About the Artist

Christopher Gotto

Christopher Gotto uses recycled and reclaimed lumber to create custom cabinets, benches and furniture. He is new to Nature Calls.

Christopher Gotto
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About the Artist

Vanessa Wodtke

Windy Acres Natural Farm Products

Vanessa Wodtke uses only natural plant oils and botanicals. There are no petro-chemicals or by-products used in her soaps or products. All are achieved with essential oils. She is new to Nature Calls.

Her source of inspiration is her family.

“What we use on our skin should be just as healthy as what we put in our bodies. It makes our souls happy!”

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