

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | August 2016

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In the centenary year of the National Parks Service, *Silver River* features artworks that address environmentalism and human impact on the current state of the Mississippi River.



Luke Ericson, *Throwing Stones, Mississippi River, Minneapolis, Minnesota*, 2003, pigmented inkjet print.

MINNEAPOLIS – The Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota presents *Silver River* (August 13, 2016 through February 12, 2017), a survey of the changing landscape and health of the Mississippi River. Rivers have always been an important source for life. They have an abundance of fresh water, are essential in commerce and industry for mercantile passages and hydropower, and have provided artistic inspiration for centuries. Due to the sheer length of the river, it took nearly two hundred years for America to catch up to the negative environmental consequences of the industrialization of the Great River. Maya Lin's sculpture and

namesake of the exhibition, *Silver River – Mississippi* (2007), serves as an entry point of conversation for Minnesota-based artists' thoughts on the current state of the Upper Mississippi River. Many of the contemporary works display the impurities and damming of this polluted river, while reflecting on the Mississippi River's role in American history as the shining silvery light of opportunity, stimulating artists from the nineteenth century to today.

As the National Parks Service celebrates its centenary anniversary, *Silver River* explores the lasting impact of industrialization on the only national park dedicated to the Mississippi River. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRA) stretches across five counties in the Minneapolis – St. Paul metropolitan area. The sculpture *River of Iron: Mississippi Iron Pour*, by University of Minnesota assistant professor of art Tamsie Ringler, explores the endangerment of Mississippi River. The twenty-by-twenty foot wide sculpture, laid out on the gallery floor, is a map of the entire watershed. Originally the sculpture was poured outside the Weisman Art Museum on the banks of the Upper Mississippi River as part of the Northern Spark Arts Festival in 2015. Ringler started from the Gulf of Mexico and poured the map backwards to signify the distress of the River, much like when a U. S. flag is flown upside down to signify the distress of the country. Other artists featured in the exhibit include Mary Abbott, Alfred Thompson Bricher, Henry Bosse, S. Chatwood Burton, Edwin M. Dawes, Jim Denomie, Luke Ericson, Chris Faust, Gary Hallman, George

Morrison, and Jonathan Wells.

The Mississippi River has been a lifeline for the Twin Cities since the foundation of Minneapolis and St. Paul nearly two centuries ago. It is the major source of drinking water for the Twin Cities and still plays an important role in transportation in the United States. While earlier depictions of the Mississippi may reflect a more romanticized notion of the river, contemporary artists have not run away from controversy surrounding the Mississippi. Instead, they have chosen the current problematic state of the river as their fountainhead of artistic inspiration. By placing contemporary perspectives in context with earlier depictions of the river, we can begin to appreciate the nuances and cultural importance the Upper Mississippi River has had, and will continue to have, on our community and our nation.

Silver River was curated by the 2015 – 2016 E. Gerald and Lisa O'Brien Curatorial Fellow, Kate Heller.



River of Iron at the Weisman Art Museum during Northern Spark 2015. Image by Heidi Bohnenkamp.

RELATED PROGRAMMING

ANTHROPOCENIC MIDDEN SURVEY: Mississippi & River Cleanup

Saturday, August 13, 2016 | 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

What can garbage in the Upper Mississippi River tell us about human social systems? What role do individuals play in the health of our nation's great river? The museum's student group, WAM Collective, have teamed up with University of Minnesota adjunct professor and

teaching artist, Sean Connaughty. Together Connaughty and the Collective have organized two river cleanup days, Saturday, August 13 and Saturday, September 3, where they are collecting, researching, and classifying refuse found on the East and West Banks of the Twin Cities campus. The Collective is working with the Office of Sustainability at the U of M as well as many other local organizations dedicated to the health of the Mississippi River.

The project will culminate in a large scale public installation utilizing materials collected from the river and be displayed on WAM's front plaza during Open Streets on October 1, 2016. The sculpture, along with other reuse projects presented during Open Streets at the University of Minnesota, highlight the importance of our everyday, individual actions in preserving our natural resources.

Open Streets is cosponsored by the City of Minneapolis and is a celebration of our neighborhoods encouraging residents to think about active transportation, healthy living, and caring for our streets as public spaces. Sign up to participate in a river cleanup day at Z.UMN.EDU/WAMTRASH.

ABOUT WAM

Since its origin in 1934, the Weisman Art Museum has been a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota. Today, education remains central to the museum's mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation, linking the University and the community. The Weisman Art Museum is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Admission to exhibition galleries is always free.

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