



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Visual Art

THE ART OF WATER

ART EXHIBIT AND TALKS TO FOCUS ON WATER AND ITS PRESERVATION

words by sawyer hoff

OUR NEED FOR WATER IS THE MOST BASIC THING THAT HUMANS HAVE IN COMMON, AND PRESERVING IT IS OF MASSIVE IMPORTANCE. To celebrate water

and discuss its preservation, the Waldemar Ager Association in conjunction with the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library will be hosting an art exhibit, along with four powerful and distinct programs discussing how water affects us all.

The exhibit, titled "Art of Water," showcases the work of six different artists, all ranging in their preferred mediums but with the same focus: water. Explore art from locals Barb and Andy Shafer (watercolor and acrylic paintings), Mary Elworthy (watercolor paintings), Susan Phelps Pearson (acrylic paintings and assemblages made from beer cans and plastic milk bottles), Maureen Skroski (pastel artist), Bruce Warren (photographer), and Hmong Paj Ntaub (story cloths) brought in by the Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association.

The art will be on display from Jan. 8-Feb. 26. An artists' reception at 6pm Thursday, Jan. 11, will offer the public a chance to learn more about each artist and the mediums showcased. The program was made possible by the contributions of the Waldemar Ager Association, the Eau Claire Community Foundation, the UW-Eau Claire English

Department, and the Chippewa Valley Writers Guild.

The idea for this water-themed exhibit and subsequent talks

came from Waldemar Ager Association Board Member Doug Pearson, whose wife had an art show in Hopkins, Minnesota. He met an artist there who was also having an art show featuring his paintings of the Arctic North Waters of Norway. Since Ager was an immigrant from Norway who strived to

preserve Norwegian culture in the U.S. in the early 20th century, Pearson asked the artist if he would participate in an exhibit and give a talk about his art. The artist agreed, which got the ball rolling on this project.

Due to complications – the largest being the original artist eventually backing out – the exhibit was almost canceled until Pearson read an article by Synne Borgen, a Norwegian and New York-based writer who completed a residency exploring the waters of Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago between Norway and the North Pole. Knowing that Borgen's story would be crucial to the message of the exhibit, Pearson is bringing her in to speak at one of the program's four discussions.

The first talk will be held on Monday, Jan. 29, and will feature Sean Barnett, a professor in the

UWEC Geography Department who will be showing a map and video tour of the defining features that make up the Chippewa River. After that, Eau Claire Writer-in-Residence Ken Szymanski will read from his Volume One feature story, *Three Rivers, Two Kayaks, and One Mission*, which described his kayak trip down the Eau Claire and Chippewa rivers to the Mississippi.

The next talk will be on Thursday, Feb. 8, which will include presenter Sarah Vitale, who is a part of The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin, focused on ensuring Wisconsin's water systems are healthy and sustainable. This will be followed by Ingrid Lyons, executive director of the campaign to Save the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

On Tuesday, Feb. 20, Synne Borgen will travel into town and share her experiences from her residency in Norway, including a 10-minute video of the territory.

The last program will be on Thursday, Feb. 22, featuring True Vue, executive director of the ECAHMAA, as she describes the art of Paj Ntaub (story cloths), which were developed in the refu-

gee camps of Thailand. Paj Ntaub became a way of telling stories about Hmong culture and their escape across the Mekong River. Lastly, Wayne Valliere, a member of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, will be showing the cultural and artistic importance of birchbark canoes, which he handcrafts.

All talks will be held in the

Riverview Room (room 306) of the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library and will take place from 6-7:30pm. There is no fee or registration requirement for any of the events, and everyone is invited to learn more about the impact water and its preserva-

tion have on the community and the whole world.

"(The talks are) really about water as a commodity, a fact of geography, and a resource that has all kinds of values for a community," Pearson said. "Obviously, we need water in our lives and I hope the four talks will inspire citizens locally to be inspired to care for our water systems and to enjoy the art that will be focused on it."

Learn more about the "Art of Water" art exhibit and the four talks at ecpubliclibrary.info.

JAN 8-
FEB 26

"ART OF WATER" EXHIBIT

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, Eau Claire
• FREE



SYNNE BORGEN

COLTER JACKSON, VIA THE SUN