

Nancy Thompson Thesis Exhibition
Saturday January 19th 6-8pm
Pioneer Room, 3rd floor
Memorial Union
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

Ode to the Whiterock Conservancy

Nancy Thompson

“Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.”
Wassily Kandinsky

The Whiterock Conservancy is a 5000 acre reserve in the Middle Raccoon River Valley a few miles south and east of Coon Rapids, Iowa. Surrounded by an area that has been converted almost entirely to cropland, the Garst family has protected and preserved this island of bluffs, woodland, wildlife, native prairies, and wetlands for generations to come. They have also opened it to ecologists, environmentalists, biologists, and the general public for environmental education, low impact public recreation, research and modeling of ecologically and economically sustainable methods of land management. This diverse area is a place of great inspiration to me and it is my hope that the work that I have done in expressing it's beauty will help to promote and preserve it for future generations.

During the time of the European Impressionist Painters whose paintings evoked a shared interest in the landscape, musical composers were also writing music about the landscape. Just as art can express beauty and idea through a combination of form, color, texture, rhythm, variety, intensity, etc., so too does music seek to express beauty and concept through the same means. The more I have studied music and expressed myself through it, the more it seemed like a natural combination in this exhibition. While the visual arts exist outside of time, the musical art exists in real time and can only be perceived when performed. The viewers or the listeners bring to the interaction of either visual art or musical art the experiences of their own lives at that particular moment in

time and that interaction has the potential to change them in subtle ways. This is one of the true values of art, both for artist/composer and the viewer/listener.

The music that is playing during my reception are selections that reflect the overall tone of the pieces that I have created for this exhibition. My works come from a place within me that finds happiness and satisfaction in settings that are away from the crowds of people and the monuments to their ingenuity that they create. These places are full of color and light and live as an integral part of the natural world that has been here before humans arrived and will continue after we have vanished. The musical works that I have chosen reflect this love of color and light, and use tonal sounds that are positive and constant. They were created by composers who share my love of the natural world. As Claude Debussy, one of the composers to whom I refer once wrote:

“There is nothing more musical than a sunset. He who feels what he sees will find no more beautiful example of development in all that book which, alas, musicians read too little - the book of Nature.”

The use of tone as color and form in expressing their musical landscapes are like the way in which I, as a visual artist, use color and texture to bring the visual world to life. I use color to create form, and I see the subtle changes of color over a surface as transitions that are much like a musical passage. It has an intangible reaction upon us, and holds an immediate and sensuous appeal.