

stewardship notes

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Kansas Land Trust

In full air

By Laurie Ward

The work of the Kansas Land Trust—preserving natural and open areas in Kansas—is being carried out day-by-day in parallel fashion by a subset of landscape artists who paint *en plein air*, in full air, outside. In order to do their work, these artists literally drop themselves into the precise types of places that KLT is protecting and holding safe.

For the most part, plein air artists complete paintings in their entirety outdoors, on-site. Why produce art this way? Why leave the comfort and convenience of a studio for woods, prairies, rivers, overlooks, and country roadsides? Why trade a controlled climate for extremes in cold and heat and all kinds of weather conditions? Five Kansas pleinairists offer answers to these questions—different voices, an ancient and enduring universality.

Earth, sky, and water are never-ending sources of inspiration, but the artists say that painting outside in the motion of the wind—with the accompanying sights, sounds, smells, and sensations—evokes a feeling of interconnectedness, provides a heightened sense of perception, and brings about general well-being.

A resulting painting is an intermediate object, preserving a particular place and transferring the qualities of



After the Deluge II, 18" x 24" pastel by John Hulsey

its creation into the hearts and minds of viewers, who in turn can stop to notice, stepping into the same awareness as the artist.

The five artists featured were born or have lived in other parts of the country, they share a love for the out-of-doors and the experience of shifting light, and they all express a profound gratitude for the generous landscape of Kansas.

Lisa Grossman was raised in rural, Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania, with surrounding fields as her personal

playground. She moved in 1988 to Kansas City, Missouri, and to Lawrence in 1996. "The Flint Hills was the door to my career to working with space and horizon," she said. "The entirety of the Kansas River became my second awakening. Since then, I have come to appreciate areas closer to home. I'm drawn to the flatter places, the broad horizontals—the flood plains and the river valley. I am interested in light, color, and space; details, evidence of humans, even vegetation

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mission statement

“The Kansas Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that protects and preserves land of ecological, scenic, historic, agricultural, or recreational significance in Kansas.” As a land trust, the organization uses a variety of long-term land protection mechanisms but primarily accepts conservation easements from willing landowners. Conservation easements are legal agreements by which landowners voluntarily restrict the type and amount of use permitted on their property. The Kansas Land Trust (KLT) is tax-exempt as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations of easements or land to KLT for conservation purposes may have potential tax benefits for donors. KLT is funded by individual contributors, private foundations, corporations, and government agencies.

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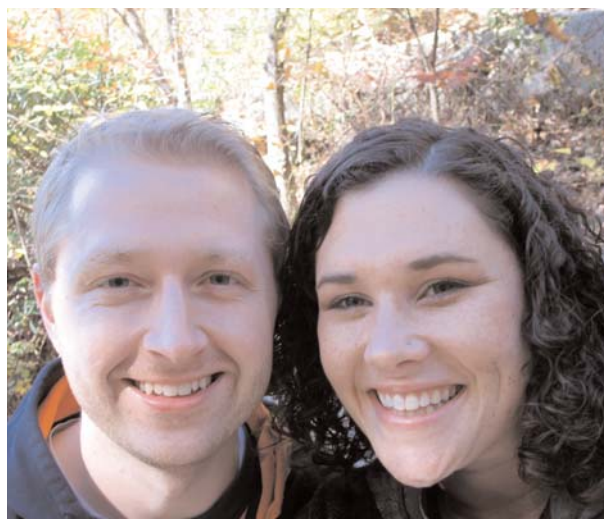
Greetings! I am happy and humbled to be addressing you as the Kansas Land Trust's new Executive Director. I look forward to working with you in continuing KLT's long-term success as well as charting the organization in new, innovative directions.

Growing up in Olathe on the edge of suburban development's push into the countryside—and having deep family farm roots in Michigan—developed my great concern and drive for protecting and preserving our ecological and agricultural heritage. Of course, these are only my own particular reasons for pursuing conservation work—we each have our own motivations and inspirations.

A little about me: I am a graduate of the University of Kansas with a bachelor's degree in history. My undergraduate honors thesis focused on the Ogallala Aquifer in western Kansas. I most recently served as Congresswoman Nancy Boyda's District Director. From 2001 to 2003, I was executive director of the Kaw Valley Heritage Alliance, an early off-shoot of KLT, dedicated to protection and promotion of the Kansas River watershed. In the intervening years, I worked for nonprofits and in business development in Washington, D.C. My wife, Sarah, a seventh-generation Kansan, and I have since settled in Topeka.

In keeping with KLT's mission, completing easement transactions, following up on landowner inquiries, and reaching out to potential partners will be my immediate priority. Naturally, I also have many ideas for organizational development and outreach that I hope to implement, with the involvement of the Board and membership, in the coming months.

To that end, I am interested in hearing from you—our members, partners, easement donors, and potential easement donors—as to your thoughts, concerns, and ideas for building upon and growing the success of KLT.

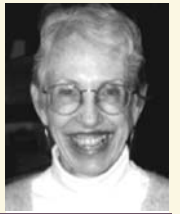


Jason and Sarah Carkhuff Fizell

I plan to convene forums this summer and fall and hope you can participate. In the meantime, please call (785) 749-3297 or email me at jfizell@klt.org with any suggestions, questions, or if you would like to offer your assistance in any way.

The legacy we hand down to our children and grandchildren depends on our success. Working together, we can preserve and restore more natural, beautiful Kansas land for our families, friends, and future generations to enjoy. I am truly excited to be joining you in this defining cause.▲





by Elizabeth Schultz

Cimarron National Grassland, High Plains—Morton County

Before the 1930s, before the Dust Bowl, before the federal government began to acquire the lands which now constitute the Cimarron National Grassland, trees were not a part of their story. Despite its being common for those crossing this seemingly limitless space to compare it to the sea, water was also a scarcity. Although the Cimarron River does run through this grassland, and although during rains, this river can live up to its Spanish name—cimarron means wild—and in a raging fury drown children and cattle, the river most often was—and still is—a placid, sandy road. An artesian spring here, around which willows and cottonwoods now flourish, was regarded as an oasis by travelers on the Santa Fe Trail, and these days a nearby pump still brings up clear, cold water. But not until after 1932, when the U.S. Forest Service began acquiring the 108,175 acres presently comprising the Cimarron National Grassland in the interests of preventing future Dust Bowls, were these trees and those which now outline the nearly invisible river introduced.

We started our exploration of the grasslands along this trickle of a river, with its wide sandy banks and its thickets of green cottonwoods, tamarisks, and sandbar willows, one of three ecosystems identified by the Forest Service. We picked our way among sandburs, prickly pears, and cow pies to the river. Marked by cattails, kingfishers, and blue jays, with leopard frogs plopping and disappearing beneath duckweed as we approached, it resembled a pond more than a river. However, we knew that water was also running unseen several feet beneath the sand, nourishing the tree roots. And because of the trees, there was a congregation of birds—a kestrel swung out of the blue into a cottonwood to stare back at us; mourning doves lined up on its lower branches; a western kingbird, a Say's phoebe, and two cheeky lark sparrows also appeared closeby. The sand itself revealed the presence of other creatures—the quotation marks of a deer's precise tracks, a bird nest into which a turquoise thread had been carefully entwined resting among asters, and a rodent's miniscule bones, including its skull with two orange incisors in place like tiny seeds in pod.

We traveled, then, south of the river into another of the grasslands' ecosystems: the sand-sage prairie. Sand blown south from the ancient Cimarron River is responsible for the dunes characterizing this ecosystem. While some might describe it as lumpy, it is here that the landscape becomes a seascape, taking on the sea's undulating aspect, with

the dunes, usually rising no higher than forty feet, appearing as rolling waves. Covered intermittently with the yucca's spiky dark green and the sandhill sage's swishing, silvery green, on a mid-September morning, the prairie assumes the sea's shimmering colors. The roots of these plants as well as of diverse grasses—sand lovegrass, sand dropseed, sand bluestem, and little bluestem—work to prevent winds from causing the dunes to drift further south. The distinctive aroma of sage wafted in our open car windows, reminding us of its use by native peoples to cleanse minds, bodies, and souls.

On the flat uplands north of the river we came onto the third ecosystem of the Cimarron National Grassland: the shortgrass prairie or steppe. On this afternoon, wind had given way to the shrill of grasshoppers, and in this persistent hum, space opened up around us, surrounding us and stretching to the horizon where it eased into a pale blue sky. Difficult for farmers to cultivate, shortgrass prairies are grazed by cattle throughout western Kansas. As their characteristic grasses—buffalo grass and blue grama—are resistant to both drought and extended grazing, the Forest Service permits 5000 cattle on this land between May and November. Observing them as black dots in the distance, we imagined the buffalo herds the Santa Fe travelers might have seen as they passed across this land. Focusing closer in, among prickly pear and broom snakeweed, we noticed numerous holes in the hard packed sand along the road, and imagined horned lizards and hog-nose snakes settling in. Earlier in the morning, we had used binoculars to spy on a prairie dog and burrowing owl colony on the edge of the grasslands.

Leaving the steppe's flatness, we climbed up the Point of Rocks, a precipitous cliff and the highest site along the river. Possibly used by native people for scouting and hunting, the Coronado expedition noted its significance in 1541, and the Point of Rocks was a critical landmark on the Santa Fe Trail. As we stood on its edge with a panoramic view of the prairie unfolding below us, it was our masthead. As spectacular, finally, as was this view of the Cimarron National Grasslands, I also brought home from this high rocky outcropping memories of the pungent odor of a tiny wild marigold and a canyon wren's bright whistling, thinking of how in a healthy ecosystem the finite and infinite are always intertwined. ▀



often fall away.

"I need so much space. It breaks my heart to see land parceled and development encroaching. That's what's so great about the Flint Hills. It's one of the last few places where you can let your eye strain at the distance, and you can almost imagine a time before human intrusion. I think that's something we need—a sense of fragility or vulnerability. I don't want to lose another inch of the horizon. My heart wants to soar. If I could be a harrier, I would.

"More and more I try to connect what I'm doing to

The Kansas Landscape, like the entire earth, is part of us, and we are it. We cannot separate ourselves from this land and live.

—John Hulsey



Top: *Clouds from the Cold Front* © 2007
22' x 24" oil on canvas, by Lisa Grossman

Bottom: Lisa Grossman paints at sunset, overlooking Buck Creek in Jefferson County, April, 2008.



conservation efforts. I am always trying to figure out how to work in service to my awe. It is my hope that the open spaces will be there. I want my work to mean more, not just be pretty pictures. I am searching for how my work can speak on behalf of the environment. Each picture is me saying, 'Notice what's going on and what there might be to lose.'"

Paul Hotvedt grew up on a lake in central Wisconsin. He lived on the east coast and moved to Lawrence in 1994. "It wasn't until I came here that I started working outside. It was exhilarating. It might have been the wind. Eastern cities were stifling. Here, everything is open, windy, warm, growing. It was refreshing. I made my first Kansas painting when I was back here in 1993, during the flood. I was out near St. Marys and heard a sound. It was water draining in a typical, deep Kansas ditch. The sound of water made me stop and paint.

"When I think of land, I think in terms of walking, being aware of gravity and of scale, the atmospheric effects of being in that place—lots of memory triggers, association triggers. It's a two-way process; you get changed by it....I'm not trying to evoke visions of old but rather things bigger than us, simple things that leverage emotions and reactions.

"I often go back to the same places to paint, because of the seclusion that they offer. I think it's fair to say that the wilder places contain a variety of forms. That's certainly one instance where the Kansas Land Trust mission and my interest in making paintings overlap. Diversity is one of the land features we identify as being preservable. It's not a one-to-one correlation, but in concept and sometimes in practice, you'll find diversity of plant life goes along with interesting terrain. It's the lack of interruption and lack of monoculture and lack of built environment. It's not that I don't like buildings, but I like complex shapes, organic shapes. The more diversity of forms you have, the more potential you have for making compositions of different kinds. Buildings tend to be pretty predictable by nature."

John Hulsey was born in Wichita, lived in Kansas City and Lawrence, moved to New York in 1980 and back to Lawrence in 1990. "The Kansas landscape, like the entire earth, is part of us, and we are it. We cannot separate ourselves from this land and live," he said. "Kansas is magnificent. The landscape of the prairie does not give up its mysteries and beauties at first glance. There is a depth of beauty and a richness that requires many encounters and hours of contemplation in order to begin to understand it. The scale of the sky



and earth is so huge, it inspires awe and so reminds us how small we all are, yet a necessary part of the whole.

"I love beauty—am attracted to it, and believe that we humans need to be reminded of it constantly in order to be healthy. I believe that our souls have a longing for it, and nature is the purest form that we can tap into.

"KLT is doing an extremely important and necessary job in a sometimes indifferent climate....Now, the native ground is disappearing fast to the pressures of large-scale agri-industry, and KLT serves as an advocate for those [farming and ranching] families wishing to preserve some of their heritage for the future. KLT's work with these folks has been essential in helping to save the fast-disappearing prairie. As a landscape painter, I support the work of KLT as essential to all of my artistic passions and my own best interests as a person."

Ann Trusty moved from the Hudson Valley to Lawrence in 1990. "I find the landscape here to be quiet and meditative," she said. "The simplicity can be sharp or soft. It allows the sky to speak so powerfully.

"Painting en plein air is almost a meditative exercise. The long period of time spent observing and responding to the landscape is a gift to the artist. The stillness required has also allowed me to see many wonderful moments—and creatures....Being a visually oriented



6/21/05 *Solstice (Wild Grape)*, 13" x 13" oil on panel, by Paul Hotvedt.

person, the land provides infinite inspiration.... I paint out of reverence for nature. It is an honor.

"The changing landscape can be a disappointment for the landscape artist. I have favorite fields that have become housing developments, for example....The work of the land trust is ensuring that some of the most beautiful places survive for the artist to paint, of course!"

Jane Fortun spent her childhood and young adulthood mostly outdoors in Massachusetts and moved to the Lawrence area 17 years ago. She said, "When I moved here and went to the Flint Hills for the first time, I couldn't see the beauty, because it wasn't in-your-face beauty. The second time, I saw more. By the third time, I was hooked. It was so serene, the simplicity of endless hills, beautiful and open. Now, I don't go there too often. Basically, I paint in my own perimeter of where I live. One doesn't need to go far to see beautiful land and views. I love it all.

"When I paint, I am in the present with nature. It's a zen-like state....Every molecule in the universe is interconnected; everything is a big circle. It is so important for the soul to slow



Concurrence, 11" x 14" oil, by Ann Trusty

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down. Artists do take the time to see the landscape; they can play a small part in helping those who view their paintings to get out of thoughts and just be. The awe of vast open spaces makes me realize my own insignificance. My life is short; I'd better start doing the right thing.

"Year-by-year, this small earth gets paved over, big parcels of beautiful land divided up, whether here in the Midwest or on the east coast. We need to protect our one planet. Change will occur, but it is so important to preserve as best we can: try to keep common open spaces, some places which are never developed and are left as wildlife habitat. We must consider the children and grandchildren."



Buck Creek Springtime, oil on canvas, by Jane Fortun

The essences of places depicted in plein air painting can be found within the artists and art-lovers. Artists can assist with the cause of saving land by increasing appreciation, and in the end, they and those who share their vision may well be saved themselves.▲

Laurie Ward is a founding member and a past executive director of Kansas Land Trust.

To learn more about these artists and their art:

Jane Fortun

(785) 749-2641

Lisa Grossman

www.lawrenceartscenter.com
www.strecker-nelsongallery.com
www.thedolphingallery.com

Paul Hotvedt

www.paulhotvedt.com

John Hulsey

www.hulseytrustystudios.com

Ann Trusty

www.hulseytrustystudios.com



House and Senate pass Farm Bill, veto override likely

from the Land Trust Alliance, www.lta.org

On May 15th, the Senate voted to pass the Farm Bill by a wide margin of 81 to 15. The Land Trust Alliance is supporting the Farm Bill because it includes a two-year extension of the enhanced conservation easement tax incentive and increased funding for important conservation programs, including the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP).

The President is threatening to veto the Farm Bill for reasons unrelated to its conservation provisions. The law will not become effective until the House and Senate vote to override the veto with two-thirds majorities. Given initial votes of 318-106 (73 percent) in the House and 81-15 (84 percent) in the Senate, a veto override appears likely to succeed.

Kansas Senators Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback and Representatives Dennis Moore and Nancy Boyda voted for the Farm Bill. Reps. Jerry Moran and Todd Tiahrt voted against. Please thank those who voted yes and urge them to remain steadfast in their support.▲

what's new at klt

New Board Members

Burke Griggs



A native of Denver, Colorado, Burke earned his B.A. at Stanford, his Ph.D. at Yale, and then taught as professor of history at Boston College. His concerns about western water issues led him to change careers and become a lawyer. He practices water law and general litigation at Stevens & Brand, LLP in Lawrence, where he lives with his wife and three children.

Valerie Wright



Konza Prairie's first environmental educator and naturalist, Valerie came to K-State in 1979 and has held positions in the Department of Entomology and Biology. She has been president of the Kansas Native Plant Society and served on its board. Her master's and doctorate in entomology and plant pathology are from the University of Minnesota.

New Staff Member

Kevin Kobler, *Director of Finance*

An alumnus of Ft. Hays St. University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Accounting, Kevin has extensive experience in accounting and business management, taxation, information technology and teaching. His knowledge and expertise in the public and private sectors in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, make him a valuable addition to the KLT staff. Kevin joined KLT in February, 2008.

kansas land trust 2007 honor roll

We offer our sincere appreciation to these friends who contributed to the Kansas Land Trust between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2007 and sincerely apologize for failing to include these names in the annual report.

IN HONOR OF

Laurie Ward
from Ann Simpson

Sarah and Ray Dean
from Ann Simpson

Thank you

Larry Preston and Susan Marshall
of Weber Carpet

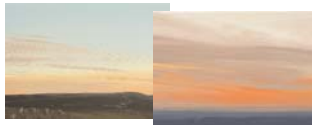
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Notecards by Lisa Grossman and Doug Guess



Lisa Grossman

Sample images

Pack of 6 \$10
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Doug Guess

Books



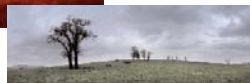
Homage to the Flint Hills: A Gathering of Art Inspired by the Tallgrass Prairie of Kansas

Walking the Prairie
by Doug Guess

Prints



Mark Feiden



Edward C. Robison III

Kansas Landscape Images from Home Vol II
by Mark Feiden and Edward C. Robison III



John Hulsey



Ann Trusty

T-shirts

Burgundy or green long sleeve t-shirts with the KLT logo

Please check our web site for a complete list of all merchandise KLT has to offer. An order form is available for your convenience on the web site.

www.klt.org/merchandise





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- My company will match this contribution.
- Tell me how to provide for the Kansas Land Trust in my estate plans.
- I have provided for the Kansas Land Trust in my estate plans.
- Contact me about buying land in need of protection.

If you wish to make your gift in memory of or in honor of someone special to you, kindly attach relevant information and address(es). KLT will be pleased to send notification of your gift.

Please mail this form with check payable to Kansas Land Trust. Our address is 16 East 13th Street, Lawrence, KS 66044-3502. Questions. Call KLT at 785-749-3297, email info@klt.org, or visit www.klt.org.

