

New Exhibition

Oh, Shenandoah: Landscapes of Diversity

Explore the history and beauty of the Shenandoah Valley through 52 plein air paintings by artist Andrei Kushnir.

On display through September 1, 2019
in the Susan and David Goode Gallery.



An Artist's Perspective

Interview with Andrei Kushnir



Why did you choose the Valley as your subject?

I painted the Valley from Skyline Drive for many years as an artist member of the Front Royal Blue Ridge Arts Council. The scenic views originally attracted me to the Valley. Then I met a former Valley resident, historian Jeffrey Everett, who suggested I seek out places, often equally picturesque, with cultural or historical associations. After a great deal of thought, and once I painted a few of them, I was hooked! Even after 263 paintings over 11 years, I have scarcely touched upon the visual treasures of the Shenandoah. I also discovered that, while the Valley was painted by many fine artists, no one had undertaken a project to depict the varied imagery of the entire Valley. So I

set out to capture it as it is in the early part of the 21st century, much as other artists have done with specific regions in their eras, such as Thomas Cole and the Catskill Mountains in New York, Monet and Normandy, Van Gogh and Arles, and Daniel Garber and the Delaware Valley.

How did you decide what sites to paint?

Apart from the scenic spots, small towns, and historic and cultural locales, I also painted places where I liked to eat and relax. Historians Jeff Everett and Warren Hofstra, and the publisher of *Oh, Shenandoah*, George F. Thompson, often guided me to interesting locations mainly known to local residents. I was looking for a

variety of landscape subject matter, unusual compositions, and sites that challenged me as an artist. Some works, such as the large *Red Banks* and the *South Fork*, Warren County paintings, needed many weeks of effort on site; other paintings, such as *Henrietta Furnace* (painted as raindrops fell) and *Mauck's Meeting House* (dusk approaching fast) had to be created in a matter of minutes, requiring me to make immediate decisions and use suggestive, loose brushwork.

What did you learn from the experience of painting the Valley?

I learned that time is fleeting (the Shenandoah County Alms House burned shortly after I painted there) and that I should not seek second chances—only additional opportunities. Also, that regrets are pointless, and to enjoy the moment.

What do you want viewers to take away from your paintings?

Visitors will be able to share my experience and impressions of the Great Valley. Every painting combines a process of observation, editing, and enthusiasm for the subject. I loved every moment of it, and I hope viewers will feel many of the same emotions that coursed through me.

Above: Andrei Kushnir painting *Grape Hyacinths of Wolf Gap Road* (photo by Kevin Sutherly); Previous page: *Middle of March in Middlebrook*, 2011, by Andrei Kushnir.

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