



**PICTURING**  
THE  
**PRAIRIE**  
TALLGRASS QC

FIGGE ART MUSEUM

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## PICTURING THE PRAIRIE TALLGRASS QC

The tallgrass prairie that once covered a huge swath of the United States was a wild, tough ecosystem accustomed to fire, flood and drought. Although almost entirely replaced by cultivated fields in the latter half of the 19th century, the prairie continues to fascinate naturalists, farmers, gardeners—and artists—who work to document, understand and preserve this unique family of plants, animals and insects.

*Picturing the Prairie* began as an exhibition bringing together a group of artists exploring the prairie as subject. It quickly expanded, at the suggestion of Joyce and Tony Singh, to be a collaboration of organizations, dubbed Tallgrass QC, working to raise awareness about prairie ecology in the Quad-Cities region. Tallgrass QC builds on a growing interest in the prairie ecosystem as we recognize its importance for water quality, species diversity, and quality of life.

We are grateful to our Tallgrass QC Partners—Nahant Marsh; WVIK, Quad Cities NPR; WQPT, Quad Cities PBS; and Jackson Elementary School—for taking this exhibition beyond the museum walls to include plantings, broadcasts and activities across the region during the summer. We envision this as the beginning of an ongoing, community-wide collaboration with new activities and partners for years to come. Special thanks to the Joyce and Tony Singh Family Foundation and the John Deere Foundation for their support, to Uncommon Ground for transforming the Bechtel Plaza in front of the museum into a prairie-scape, and to the City of Davenport for creating a “prairie plot” on Second Street, bringing additional meaning to the artworks on view.

And finally, we thank these six remarkable artists for their thoughtful and heartfelt responses to the prairie landscape, giving us new appreciation and helping us understand the amazing world around us.

TIM SCHIFFER *Executive Director, Figge Art Museum*



TERRY EVANS

*Field Museum, Great Blue Heron, 1941, (Prairie Specimens), 2000*

Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago



## TERRY EVANS

AMERICAN, B. 1944

*"The images are a counterpoint to the aerial surveys and to my earliest work, in which I studied the wild interwoven patterns of complexity in undisturbed prairie. This work is about human recognition of that complexity. These prints are a re-presenting, if you will, of the specimens. I want to hold them up to the viewer as if to say, 'Look here! Do you see the beauty here? Do you see also what else is here, the questions about mortality and loss and beauty?'"*

*From Prairie to Field: Photographs by Terry Evans. Chicago, The Field Museum, 2002*

A native of Kansas and current resident of Chicago, Terry Evans photographs the natural and man-made features of the Midwest landscape. For decades the prairie has been Evans' enduring passion. She has explored the ecosystem extensively, from the cabin of a single-engine plane as well as on foot. In a departure from outdoor shoots, she spent months in the storage areas of The Field Museum's herbarium and zoology collections. The carefully preserved prairie specimens represent the intersection of nature and humanity. Encounters between the two are a common theme in her work, raising questions about how we interact with the environment. Evans has a BFA from the University of Kansas. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the New York Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and The Field Museum.





TERRY EVANS

*Field Museum, Loggerhead Shrike, Various Dates, (Prairie Specimens), 2004*

Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago



TERRY EVANS

*Flora of Kansas, Green Milkweed, 1886, (Prairie Specimens), 1999*

Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago



JIN LEE  
*Spring 4, (Prairie Project), 2003*  
Archival pigment print  
Courtesy of the Artist



## JIN LEE

AMERICAN, B. 1961 KOREA

*“For the past ten years, I have been photographing the landscapes of Illinois to explore how we experience a place and the way it structures our thoughts and sense of belonging. *Prairie* is a photographic study of the rich diversity of Illinois’ native plants in different stages of their seasonal cycles. I wanted to make photographs of the prairie plants that are precise and accurate in the tradition of scientific illustrations and documentary photographs, but at the same time create a parallel dream-like world of images that can lead to a sense of discovery and wonder.”*

Jin Lee, a resident of Chicago, builds a relationship with her subjects through an intensive process of repeatedly photographing one location. Her past projects include the debris-strewn sidewalks of Chicago’s West Side and the ebbing waters of Lake Michigan. Her *Prairie* photographs capture variations in light and weather that continually transform the landscape. Lee relates her work to Zen and haiku, which promote being fully present in the moment. Lee has a BA from Wellesley College and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Madison Art Center, and the Museum of Contemporary Photography. She is a professor of art at Illinois State University.





JIN LEE  
*Summer 6, (Prairie Project), 2003*  
Archival pigment print  
Courtesy of the Artist



JIN LEE  
*Winter 2, (Prairie Project)*, 2003  
Archival pigment print  
Courtesy of the Artist



MARY MERKEL-HESS  
*Olin*, 2003  
Reed and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist



## MARY MERKEL-HESS

AMERICAN, B. 1949

*"I am a native Iowan and the landscape and environment of my childhood are still the greatest sources of inspiration. I love the grasses, the rolling hills, the magnificent colors of the skies. I am watchful of light and how it affects form and color. I look for inspiration in the natural world and then allow technique to mesh with these visual ideas to create something new. I enjoy all aspects of this process: the appreciation of the world around me that suggests ideas and the search for a method of construction that allows my ideas to take shape."*

Mary Merkel-Hess shifts her processes and techniques to follow the thread of inspiration. Her dynamic body of work includes sculptures crafted from paper, reeds and pigment. Inspired by visual elements from the Iowa landscape, the organic forms in her sculptures invite viewers to think about and interact with their environment in new ways. Merkel-Hess has a BA from Marquette University, a BFA from the University of Wisconsin, and an MA and MFA from the University of Iowa. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She lives in Iowa City, Iowa.





MARY MERKEL-HESS  
*Transparent Vessel*, 1996  
Paper board and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist



MARY MERKEL-HESS  
*Otho*, 2004  
Paper and paper cord  
Courtesy of the Artist



GEORGE OLSON  
*Two Silphiums*, 2013  
*Silphium laciniatum* and Hybrid  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist



## GEORGE OLSON

AMERICAN, B. 1936

*“The first focus is simply discovering the plant for myself and clarifying the plant. There is no better way to clarify anything than to make a detailed drawing of it. Then, through exhibitions and so forth, if I’ve made a few discoveries, maybe by chance I can pass on some of those discoveries to the viewer.”*

*“My artwork is just one prong of my prairie activities. I am also involved in education. I do publications, workshops and slide lectures with my artwork and sometimes that of other members of the American Society of Botanical Artists. And I have also been involved for 30 years with taking care of a couple of prairies. So when I am not in the studio, I am in the field.”*

For decades George Olson has devoted himself to capturing the grace of prairie grasses and wildflowers. His watercolors feature plants in various life stages, from fresh bud to withered blossom, revealing the elegance of the prairie’s seasonal cycle. His ability to balance accuracy with personal artistry results in harmonious images of native plants. Olson is a graduate of Augustana College and has an MFA from the University of Iowa. He was professor of art at the College of Wooster in Ohio from 1963 to 2000. Olson’s work is in the permanent collections of the British Museum of Natural History, the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. He and his wife, Pat, live in Woodhull, Illinois, where he tends two prairie lots.





GEORGE OLSON  
*Tall Coneflower, 2015*  
*Rudbeckia laciniata*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist



GEORGE OLSON  
*Blackberry (Winter)*, 2016  
*Rubus allegheniensis*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist



RANDY RICHMOND  
*11-1-2015 7:58 am, 2015*  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist



## RANDY RICHMOND

AMERICAN, B. 1962

*“Getting to know a location like Nahant Marsh requires an investment of time. Stopping by once would only produce a superficial relationship. Just like with human beings, it takes many conversations to get an idea of history, personality and common interests. My conversations with Nahant Marsh began over three years ago. I see what has become an ongoing photo project as a visual diary of my frequent conversations with the marsh.”*

*“Time imposes itself on every aspect of the photographic medium. The amount of time a light-sensitive surface is exposed determines the brightness and the amount of motion recorded. This technical certainty has led me to incorporate time as a cause-and-effect concept in most of my work. From long shutter-speed manipulations to mixing digital technology with 150-year-old photo processes, I have been continually inspired to find new ways to expand the static space of a photographic image.”*

Randy Richmond is a photographer skilled in the art of experimentation. By combining historical photographic processes and modern technology, he creates dynamic images. One of his recent projects is Nahant Marsh, a local nature preserve. The colors, light and animals shift by the hour, resulting in endless variations. Richmond makes large-scale negatives from digital images, which he prints on hand-coated Fabriano paper using techniques from the mid-1800s, such as cyanotype and Van Dyke Brown. Richmond attended the University of Iowa. His work is in the permanent collections of the Center for Fine Art Photography in Fort Collins, Colorado; Kishwaukee College in Malta, Illinois; Project Art of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics; and St. Ambrose University. He is an adjunct instructor of photography at St. Ambrose University.





RANDY RICHMOND  
3-22-2016 3:40 pm, 2016  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist



RANDY RICHMOND  
12-6-2015 3:21 pm, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist



RADIM SCHREIBER  
*Clover Moon*, 2012  
Digital print  
Courtesy of the Artist



## RADIM SCHREIBER

CZECH, B. 1978

*“When I walk through a quiet forest in the middle of the night full of fireflies, I experience a magical forest. When I see fireflies as a mere reflection of stars under the Milky Way, I feel connected to everything in the universe. They are communicating to me; I am listening.”*

*“Growing up in the Czech Republic, I hadn’t seen many fireflies before. It was very magical when I saw thousands of them in Iowa for the first time. For me, fireflies are the light in the dark. They show me the path to joy, hope, healing and a connection with nature. Through my photography I wish to share their magical beauty with others.”*

Radim Schreiber is dedicated to documenting insects in their natural environments. He has traveled the world to photograph various species. One of his recurring subjects is a familiar sign of summer nights for Midwesterners: fireflies. In *Firefly Experience*, Schreiber captures the glowing insects darting among prairie grasses in Lamson Woods State Preserve near his home in Fairfield, Iowa. He photographed the vibrant nightlife of the insects using state-of-the-art photography equipment. Schreiber’s award-winning firefly images have been featured by CBS, NPR, Iowa Public Television, The Weather Channel, the National Geographic Society, *Smithsonian* magazine, and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.





RADIM SCHREIBER  
*Sunset*, 2010  
Digital print  
Courtesy of the Artist



RADIM SCHREIBER  
*Fireflies*, 2014  
Digital print  
Courtesy of the Artist

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

*Picturing the Prairie: Tallgrass QC* • May 28–September 4, 2016

### TERRY EVANS

*Field Museum, Blue Racers,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2001*  
Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Boxes of Sparrow Bones,  
Cook County, IL, Various Dates,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2001*  
Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Great Blue Heron, 1941,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2000*  
Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Jack Rabbit, 1891,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2000*  
Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Loggerhead Shrike, Various Dates,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2004*  
Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Texas Spiny Softshell  
Turtle, 1945, (Prairie Specimens), 2001*  
Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Trumpeter Swan, 1916,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2001*  
Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Field Museum, Zebra Swallowtail Butterflies,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2002*  
Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Flora of Kansas, Anton Olson, Two Pages, 1886,  
(Prairie Specimens), 1999*

Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Flora of Kansas, Green Milkweed, 1886,  
(Prairie Specimens), 1999*

Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Smithsonian, Bouteloua, 1891,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2000*

Pigment print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

*Smithsonian, Muhlenbergia, 1862,  
(Prairie Specimens), 2000*

Iris ink print

Lent Courtesy of the Artist and the  
Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago

### JIN LEE

*Spring 4, (Prairie Project), 2003*

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the Artist

*Summer 6, (Prairie Project), 2003*

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the Artist

*Fall 1, (Prairie Project), 2003*

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the Artist

*Winter 2, (Prairie Project), 2003*

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the Artist

*Wind 2,3,4, (Wind Project), 2003*

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the Artist

## MARY MERKEL-HESS

*Carnarvon*, 2008  
Paper board and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Olin*, 2003  
Reed and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Otho*, 2004  
Paper and paper cord  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Seedhead Black*, 2003  
Kozo paper and bamboo  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Seedhead Brown*, 1991  
Kozo paper and bamboo  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Shell*, 2011  
Paper board and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Transparent Vessel*, 1996  
Paper board and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Umbel II*, 2004  
Paper board and gampi paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

## GEORGE OLSON

*Big Bluestem*, 2014  
*Andropogon gerardii*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Blackberry*, 2014  
*Rubus allegheniensis*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Blackberry*, 2016  
*Rubus allegheniensis (Winter)*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Blue Flag*, 2014  
*Iris virginica*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Blue Vervain*, 2013  
*Verbena hastata*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Butterfly Milkweed*, 2015  
*Asclepias tuberosa*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Common Milkweed*, 2014  
*Asclepias syriaca*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Compass Plant*, 2015  
*Silphium laciniatum*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Ground Cherry*, 2016  
*Physalis heterophylla*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Indian Grass*, 2015  
*Sorghastrum nutans*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Rattlesnake Master*, 2016  
*Eryngium yuccifolium*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Spiderwort*, 2014  
*Tradescantia ohiensis*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Tall Coneflower*, 2015  
*Rudbeckia laciniata*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Three Silphiums*, 2014  
*Silphium laciniatum, Silphium  
terebinthaceum and Hybrid*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

*Two Silphiums*, 2013  
*Silphium laciniatum and Hybrid*  
Watercolor and pencil on paper  
Courtesy of the Artist

**RANDY RICHMOND**

9-1-2015, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

9-13-2015 2, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

9-13-2015 3, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

9-13-2015 4, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

11-1-2015 7:58 am, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

12-6-2015 3:00 pm, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

12-6-2015 3:21 pm, 2015  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

3-22-2016 3:40 pm, 2016  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

4-13-2016 7:03 am, 2016  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

4-20-2016 7:33 am, 2016  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

4-23-2016 6:15 am, 2016  
Selenium toned Van Dyke Brown  
Courtesy of the Artist

**RADIM SCHREIBER**

*Firefly Experience*, 2015  
Video  
Courtesy of the Artist

Tallgrass QC is a collaboration that raises awareness  
about prairie ecology in the Quad Cities region.

*Generously sponsored by:*

**JOYCE AND TONY SINGH  
FAMILY FOUNDATION**



*Project Partners*



**Jackson  
Elementary  
School**



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Graduate Student in Museum Studies, Western Illinois University.

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# FIGGE

ART MUSEUM

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Davenport, Iowa

Randy Richmond

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