

KATIE MUSOLFF & ANDY FLETCHER

Old souls

At the core of the paintings of husband-and-wife artists Andy Fletcher and Katie Musolff is a connection to the natural world. From the farmlands spanning their home state of Wisconsin and beyond in Fletcher's landscapes to the close-up botanical-style watercolors by Musolff

that show off species nearby their home, the painters' individual subjects and techniques reflect upon a more classic time and place. Through March 12, the Tory Folliard Gallery will host its first exhibition for the couple, a show titled *Old Souls* that will feature brand-new works by each.

Fletcher's oil landscapes are all painted or derived from life, whether they are plein air works or pieces developed from studies and drawings he's done on site. He describes his way of working as similar to that of master artist Andrew Wyeth. Fletcher says, "I'm trying to get a feeling of place. I do drawings and take notes. I do studies...I don't work from photographs; it's mainly what I see from life."

Living near the Mississippi River in a town of around 770 people, Fletcher, who grew up in Milwaukee, finds inspiration from the places around the small city and within the surrounding areas. Many of his scenes feature farmhouses and expanses of land and sky, evoking the disappearing Americana that seems to be fewer and farther between.

"A lot of things I like to paint are places that are close to my hometown that are disappearing," Fletcher says. "I feel strongly about where our food comes from, and how it's done nowadays. I like to paint an older way of doing things and sustainability."

About an hour away from the artist's house was the Iowa landscape that inspired his painting *Frankville*, which shows a white barn with a time-weathered green roof sitting in a vast and open field. Another of his pieces in the show is *Edge of the Marsh* that to the left of the road has the Horicon Marsh, one of the largest freshwater cattail marshes in the country.

Musolff's paintings in the exhibition are from her new *River Journal Series* that highlights various birds, flora and fauna she has discovered since the couple's relocation. She explains, "[The works in the show are] from a series I started after moving to where we are now, which is right on the Mississippi River. It documents life here, and we're right on the edge of a nature conservancy. It's very fertile for painting the kind of things that I do."

Looking at one of Musolff's watercolors is reminiscent of botanical paintings that fill many textbooks and journals. "The correlation between that is those kinds





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- 1
Katie Musloff, *My Spring Collection*,
watercolor on paper, 23 x 31"
- 2
Andy Fletcher, *Edge of the Marsh*,
oil on canvas, 25 x 40"
- 3
Katie Musloff, *My Fall Collection*,
watercolor on paper, 22½ x 17"
- 4
Katie Musloff, *Collection in Red*,
watercolor on paper, 22½ x 15"
- 5
Andy Fletcher, *Frankville*,
oil on canvas, 30 x 48"

Musloff two springs to finish. The painting started when she accidentally pulled an entire daffodil bulb from the ground. "I laid it out on a big piece of paper. It sat alone for a while, and then I had to figure out what it was going to be," she describes. "They're the iconic springtime flower. It's the first thing that comes up. The painting is all about capturing that time."

Another work by Musloff on view will be *Collection in Red*, with a piece of sumac at center and red objects surrounding it. Her painting *My Fall Collection* is in a similar vein to *My Spring Collection*, highlighting plants gathered in the autumn months. ●

of paintings were made at a time when people were hungry and discovering new things about nature...[they were] combing the land around them and documenting the land around them," Musloff says. "When you move to a city, to a place like this, there is a sense of 'Wow, I don't know what this is.'" With these newfound discoveries,

Musloff felt the need to write down and document the findings in paintings. The items showcased in each work are often collected one at a time, and then they are painted from life piece by piece, with the artist arranging them onto her canvas individually. One such example is *My Spring Collection*, a multi-item work that took