



CREATING THIS ARTWORK WITH INTENTIONAL MATERIALS FROM THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE EMPHASIZES THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND NATURE.”

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Reconnecting With Nature Through Art

As a child, I loved to play outside. Being active out in nature was really important to my family. Although – it wasn't until years later, when I was emerging as a professional artist, that I began to connect deeply with the natural landscapes of my home. Taking breaks from studio work, I immersed myself in green spaces and walked the shorelines of the Mississippi River. As I looked to the water, she became a teacher of the cycles of life and change. This wisdom gave me the focus and strength to share my creative voice with the world.

I was inspired to find a pure expression of the beauty and awe I experienced with water. I dove into researching the history of the river and became a clean water advocate. But it was through the consistency of my presence at the water, slowing down to meet her, that revealed my creative path forward: I would use collected water and sediment from the river in my acrylic paintings. And so, my Water Series was born.

Carrying containers of respectfully collected water and sediment, I returned to my art studio and developed a pouring and brushing technique with these materials that I continue to use today. The raw sediment creates a textured, sandy surface. I dip my paintbrush in acrylic with the collected water not only to add layers of color, but to connect to the water's source. This connection flows onto the canvas, creating a painting that realizes our personal connection to water.

More recently, I've been drawn to the trees along the trails and shorelines that I've come to know. These tall beings possess a certain spirit and energy that has inspired my newest work: drawings with charcoal on paper, paintings with locally foraged black walnut dye, and found-bark installations. Using materials that literally come from the subject matter helps my art transcend mere representation, allowing nature to express itself through me.

Creating this artwork with intentional materials from the local landscape emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. Trees provide comfort, play, shade and oxygen, while water comprises most of the human body. We cannot live without either, and my artwork is an act of gratitude and acknowledgment to this truth.

Personally, I am most fulfilled when my art is valued by others. Working with families, individuals and businesses, I create custom commissions that tell the stories of their connection to a beloved body of water or natural space. Every project is unique, both in process and outcome – though they all come back to this: We all feel better when we're connected to Mother Earth.

To see Annie's artwork and learn more: anniehejny.com

