

State park artists in residency series features Helene Fischman

By *Charlie Warner*
Argus News Editor

The second in a series of artists in residency will be held at Beaver Creek Valley State Park Saturday, July 31.

Photographer and artist Helene Fischman will be leading a photography and poetry writing hike/workshop from 8 to 11 a.m. Saturday.

During this hike participants will capture the beauty of the landscape while also learning some simple poetry techniques to express this beauty in words as well as images. The class will then meet again at the park shelter building at 7 p.m. to view a slide show presentation of the class work. All ages and skill levels are welcome. Please bring your digital camera, water and snacks.

Fischman is a professional artist and teacher who has been an artist-in-residence at various National Parks in the United States as well as in Eastern Europe. Her work has been exhibited internationally and can be found in many private collections including the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oświęcim, Poland. She is based out of Oakland, Calif.

As an educator, Fischman has

worked in the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Community for 18 years. Her teaching objective is to help each student recognize the hidden beauty all around us.

Fischman's formal art training began at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she studied drawing and painting in her youth. She received her undergraduate degree from Boston University School of visual arts, and her master's degree from California State University, Hayward.

In a July 22 phone interview Fischman said she appreciated the out-of-doors as she was growing up in Rhode Island, but didn't immerse herself into nature photography until she moved to California.

"Because of the climate, people in California are outside most of the time," Fischman observed. "I recall trudging through the cold, with a winter coat on in May while attending college in Boston. I thought there was something wrong with that. So I moved to California."

Fischman had been focusing her energies and camera on "heavy urban settings" before she moved west. She said the California landscape was a nice contrast to the concrete.

"I've never been to Minnesota. My only contact with the state is Garrison Keillor," she said with a laugh. "But I understand Southeast Minnesota is beautiful and so green this time of year. We've been very dry in California, so I am looking forward to the greenery," Fischman added.

This the second straight year the state park located four miles west of Caledonia, has brought professional artists to Houston County. Each artist provides a program or workshop open to the public free of charge as part of their residence.

In 2009, Beaver Creek Valley State Park was the first state park in Minnesota to offer the Artist in Residence Program. State Park Manager Anne Selness brought the program to Houston County. The program is modeled after a program the National Parks Service uses.

For more information about either Artist in Residence Programs call the park at 507-724-2107.

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One of Helene Fischman's photos, entitled "Gulpha Creek."