

# Cedarburg Plein Air: Then and Now

## Selections from the Cedarburg Art Museum Collection

Selected artwork from the Cedarburg Art Museum Collection demonstrates how Cedarburg has been a haven for artists painting outdoors, or *en plein air*, for many years. This small exhibition shows artwork from a unique summer in 1927 Cedarburg, and then special, award-winning contemporary artworks from some 90 years later.

**How Cedarburg has become a magnet for *plein air* painters:** For the last 130 years, Cedarburg has been known as an artists' haven or destination for interesting landscape vistas for artists to paint. Bernhard Schneider, a German-born panorama painter who came to Milwaukee, visited Cedarburg often in the late 1880s to paint pastoral scenes before he settled permanently in the predominantly German-speaking village in 1893 to continue his artistic career. Later renowned American landscapist George Oberteuffer (1878-1940), who spent 16 years in France and then taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts by 1920, would come to Cedarburg to offer outdoor painting classes in the summers in the mid to late 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Edmund G. Schildknecht, born in 1899, who grew up in Milwaukee was one such young artist to study with Oberteuffer at the PAFA in 1920, in Paris in 1923, and in Cedarburg in the summer of 1927.<sup>2</sup>

A selection of eleven paintings from that 1927 summer is in the Cedarburg Art Museum Collection thanks to the thoughtfulness and persistence of Cedarburg residents, the late Carl and Rita Edquist. The Edquists were first introduced to Schildknecht's paintings in a traveling show at Milwaukee's Charles Allis Art Museum in 1975 when they recognized two watercolor paintings with Cedarburg's Columbia Mill (shown here) as the subject. They were especially interested in acquiring and saving these images for their community because the 1846 framework mill was being razed to make way for a new Ozaukee Bank building. By the early 1980s, Edquists had communicated with and visited Schildknecht twice in his Eastport, Maine home and found a way to purchase and bring home the artist's works from his 1927 summer in Cedarburg that had already been donated to the University of Maine.<sup>3</sup> While these works were initially part of the Edquists' Carlson Fine Arts Foundation, in later years the Schildknecht artwork became part of the Ozaukee Bank Artwork Collection. A portion of the Ozaukee Bank art collection later formed the Cedarburg Art Museum's initial collection to be shared with the community.



Edmund Schildknecht's 1927 summer in Cedarburg reveals his knowledge of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists' work encountered when he accompanied Oberteuffer and his wife on a stay in Paris for the summer of 1923. In recounting the influence of that trip with his mentor, Schildknecht mused that his palette became lighter and brighter afterwards.<sup>4</sup>



If we fast forward 90 years to Cedarburg in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we find that the Cedarburg Artists Guild has organized a plein air event for the past 19 years to attract about 150 artists to the community for outdoor painting for a week in June. The historic district, the rural areas, human activities, and everything in between are fair game for subject matter. We can thank Cedarburg resident and artist Sandra Pape for initiating the earliest Plein Air Event in Cedarburg in 2001, and various volunteers of the Cedarburg Artist Guild for keeping it going

over the years. Thanks also goes to the Ozaukee Bank for being the first sponsor of the fledgling *plein air* event, offering the Best of Show purchase award for all the early years. After Ozaukee Bank sold out to Harris Bank, the Ozaukee Bank Gift to the Future Fund has continued that sponsorship for many years since. The Cedarburg community is fortunate to have such patronage in our community so that future generations will be able to see today's award-winning paintings as a historical statement of our times. Enjoy seeing the artwork of "Paint Cedarburg's" recent prize-winners from 2016 through 2019 in this small show. One example is Antwan Ramar's *Photosymphony*, the award-winning oil painting from 2019, shown here. Other Best of Show winners from earlier years are on display at the Cedarburg Public Library as long-term loans for public enjoyment as well.

Notes:

1. Biographical information provided by North Shore Art League, Winnetka, Illinois in 2014 and "Oberteuffer, Noted Painter dies at 62." *The Milwaukee Journal*. 14 May 1940: 1. Web. news.google.com 18 Jan. 2014.
2. University of Maine Museum of Art, Educational Material, biographical info on the artist. Web. www.umma.umaine.edu/downloads/BioSchildknecht.pdf 27 March 2013.
3. Nelander, Betty. "Cedarburg art back home again," *News Graphic Pilot* [Cedarburg, WI] 9 Feb. 1983: 5. Print.
4. Schroth, Tom. "An Old Artist from Eastport Brightens Our Lives," *Maine Life*, July 1980: 49. Print.