

Susan Hale *Home & Away*

Known for bold brushwork and vibrant use of color, Susan Hale's paintings emit a sense of joy and optimism. "Color is magic to me," she says. Inspiration for this exhibition comes from her travels around the world and the beauty of her home state, Wisconsin. For Hale, charm and creativity are everywhere, but after traveling the world, she can assuredly say "there is no place like home!"

Home

"The Wisconsin countryside is a constant inspiration to me. It seems everywhere I look I see a painting -- sunrises on Lake Michigan, golden hay bales scattered in a farm field, popcorn clouds dancing in a cerulean blue sky," Hale reflects. After growing up in a rural area of Milwaukee and spending most of her life as an avid gardener in Ozaukee County, Hale learned to love the beauty of wildflowers, open fields, and farmland.

Cedarburg became Hale's home after she married. She was quickly woven into the artistic fabric of the community, becoming a founding and active member of the Cedarburg Artist Guild and Cedarburg Cultural Center soon after she arrived. In the early 2000s, she entered her first plein air, or painting outdoor, competition and won a prize. With that encouragement, Hale has since painted plein air with fervor.

Hale describes herself as a fair-weather plein air artist as she prefers to paint in her studio during Wisconsin's harsh winters from still lifes, photographs, sketches, and memory in her beautiful and insulated studio on Cedar Creek. During the warmer months, she is happy to join her artist friends to paint in the fields. To convey energy of the landscape and ongoing cycles of Nature, she favors oil paint for its thick, juicy qualities. The vivid colors, patterns, and texture are all completed by applying the thick paint to a toned canvas with bold brushwork. It's "like putting frosting on cake."



Away

Hale has traveled all over the world. The people and places she sees while exploring with her husband are documented with Prismacolor pencils in her sketchbook diaries which may be converted to paintings later. "The colors and noisy racket of India, the serene lotus fields in Cambodia, a quaint European village, the rolling fields and sheep in the English countryside, a Bedouin family in the Sahara Desert...all this had been great fodder for my art."

Many of Hale's artistic influences are also from abroad. Thick paint and gestural markings indicate her admiration for Dutch post-impressionist Vincent van Gogh, while her use of large, bold color planes is reminiscent of German expressionist Gabriele Münter. Currently, Hale is inspired by contemporary English painter David Hockney and suggests that her travels to Mexican colonial cities influence her love of color.

Susan Hale earned her BFA in 1974 from UW-Milwaukee where she was given the freedom to "break the rules" and experiment as an artist. This artistic freedom gave her the courage to explore various mediums and subjects, from weaving and fabric dolls to new age madonnas and illustration throughout her professional career. While oil paint is her favored medium, more recently Hale has begun to explore watercolor paints, many of which are premiering in this exhibition.

Hale's artwork has been featured in various national publications including *Midwest Living* and *Time-Life* books. She has exhibited at The Rockefeller Center in NYC and received the Sacajawea Artist Award from Professional Dimensions of Wisconsin for a painting that now hangs in Alverno College. Her work is also featured in various private and public collections including the State of Wisconsin, Northwestern Mutual, and the Griffiths Collection in Great Britain.