



NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY & MUSEUM

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A Sportsman *en plein air*: C.D. Clarke At National Sporting Library & Museum

MIDDLEBURG, VA – National Sporting Library & Museum (NSLM) is pleased to announce the opening of *A Sportsman en plein air: C. D. Clarke*, on view from September 12 to December 28, 2014. The traveling exhibition of twenty-one watercolors and oil paintings, curated by Claudia Pfeiffer, the NSLM's George L. Ohrstrom, Jr. Curator of Art, will proceed to Pebble Hill Plantation in Thomasville, Georgia, and be on view there from January 8 to April 30, 2015.

C.D. Clarke has come a long way since graduating from Syracuse University in 1981 with a B.F.A. in Painting and Illustration. While at college, he studied studio art at the tail end of the abstract expressionism movement. He already looked to the outdoors for subject matter, but influenced by his schooling, Clarke first produced oversized abstracted wildlife paintings. Even though he spent his last year with more traditional professors, he reminisces in retrospect, "Maybe I would have been better off going to one of the Old Master-type schools versus a contemporary one."

After completing college, Clarke ranged around to earn a living, taking on odd jobs riding on the back of a garbage truck,

planting trees, and waiting tables, but most of all he wanted to paint. "Plein-air watercolor was a way to keep any kind of art going, to go out the back door, and be

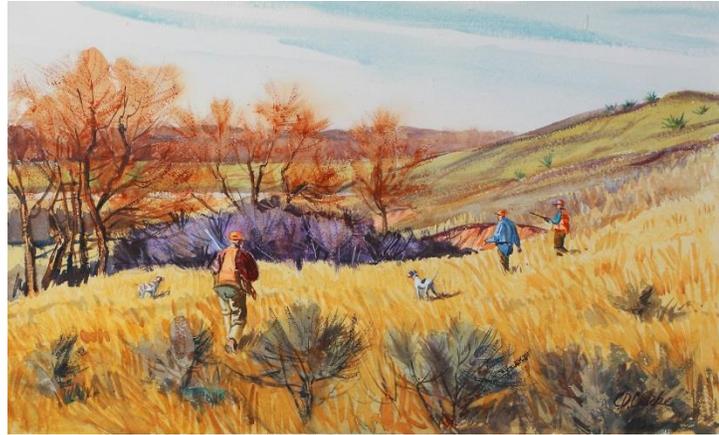


C.D. Clarke Fly Fishing on the Restigouche
River, Quebec, Canada
photograph © Matt Harris

— more —

painting right away,” he underlines.

Much like the life he leads, Clarke has his own distinctive, rugged painting style. In his compositions, the artist looks to a balance between draftsmanship and painterly looseness. Color values from light to dark are carefully planned, delicate washes applied, and confident lines, sometimes light, other times bold, are highlighted or underscored. His compositions have a timeless and untouched appeal, capturing the essence of his experience, mirroring the moment for others to recognize.



Plum Thicket Covey, 2011

17 x 27 inches

watercolor on paper

Collection of the Artist, © C.D. Clarke

Clarke is not good with dates, and looking to his paintings to establish a chronology is sometimes difficult. There is no doubt, however, that his almost thirty-year sporting art career began in 1986 when his submission, a still-life in watercolor of a black duck, aptly titled, *The Limit for Now*, was selected for publication in *Gray's Sporting Journal*. Since then, Clarke's work has been chosen for illustration in the noted field sport magazine several times a year, including assignments to accompany sporting writers Terry Wieland and James Babb to paint scenes for their articles. Clarke's work has also appeared in *Fly Rod & Reel*, *Field & Stream*, and *Sporting Classics*.

While fly fishing or wingshooting, Clarke is often armed with a paint box as well; to him the accoutrements are interchangeable. If a composition presents itself, he produces a field study, in either watercolor or oil, on the spot. His works, sometimes commissioned and other times, inspired, are grounded in experience; they mark the impression of a particular time and place.



Upper Foss Study, 2013

12 x 16 inches

oil on canvas

Collection of the Artist, © C.D. Clarke

Whether working in frigid conditions on a salmon fishing scene such as *Upper Foss Study* in Iceland, or on assignment for pheasant-shooting in gale-force winds in North Dakota for *Riders on the Storm*, it is an exercise in concentration, a focus that blocks out the physical discomfort of an awkward position or extremes of temperature.

Clarke has worked in watercolors for a decade longer than in oils. Although oil paint is a more difficult medium to work with in the field, it allows the artist to paint in conditions that are far less forgiving to watercolors, such as rain or snow. This crucial location work is the heart of the finished full-sized paintings. Clarke takes his field studies back to his studio and there applies

technical skill to transcribe the moment into the finished painting.

Cumulatively, Clarke has experienced and depicted the full gamut of field sports, from fresh and salt- water fly fishing, to upland game shooting and waterfowling. His imagery at its core is fueled by a lifelong passion for the subject and the sport. Clarke's work will surely inspire the next generation to follow in his footsteps as a sportsman *en plein air*.

NSLM Members at the Guardian Level and higher will have the opportunity to meet the artist C.D. Clarke on December 4, 2014 for a 6:00 pm reception followed by a 7:00 p.m. Gallery Talk. For more information, please visit www.nsl.org or contact NSLM at 540-687-6542.

The National Sporting Library & Museum is dedicated to preserving, promoting and sharing the literature, art and culture of equestrian, angling and field sports. Founded in 1954, NSLM holds thousands of books on sporting topics including hunting, angling, equestrianism and horseracing, among others. The Library collection dates from the 16th-21st centuries. The Museum houses exhibits of American and European animal and sporting fine art. Information is shared through exhibitions, lectures, seminars, publications and special events. The NSLM is open to researchers and the general public.

Admission: Adults \$10, Seniors (65 and older) \$8, Youth (13–18) \$8, Youth (12 & under) Free. Library admission is always free to the public. Museum admission is free on Wednesdays and the final Sunday of each month. Museum admission is always free to NSLM Members.

Hours: Wednesday - Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m

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