

LUCY

An egret enjoying a mid-morning snack. A steamboat churning up the river in an historic race. A near collision of boats on a foggy morning. The river comes to life, both past and present, with the stroke of Gary Lucy's brush. Whether working in his floating river studio, the River Rover, or in his home studio on the Missouri riverfront in Washington, Missouri, Gary Lucy captures the beauty and ruggedness of nature and river life.



Growing up in the Missouri bootheel, Lucy never envisioned a life in art. Starting college at Southeast Missouri State University in 1967, Lucy's goal

was to get his CPA with a degree in marketing and advertising. A career in business seemed a logical and sensible choice. However, Lucy's career path changed direction after an invitation to take a drawing class with a friend. "It's kind of interesting how one little event can change your life," Lucy said. Though he took the drawing class as a means to give his mind a break, a grown-up kind of recess, Lucy discovered a love and aptitude for the work and began researching a change in his major. In the end, Lucy decided that teaching art would be the best for him, allowing him to pursue his interests and still pay his bills.



After graduation, Lucy taught elementary art for one year in the Washington, Missouri School District, but the desire to



earn a living as a full time artist pulled at him. During his senior year of college, as president of the art club, Lucy arranged for a club meeting at the home of a metal sculptor who had recently moved into the area. Passing through the artist's carport on the way to his studio, Lucy noticed a

Corvette sitting next to a pickup truck. During the course of the evening, Lucy had the opportunity to ask the artist, "Do you truly make your living as an artist, and do you make enough money to pay for that Corvette?" The artist's answer was a simple yes. It was a moment of epiphany for Lucy. At that moment he knew if that artist could make a living solely off his art, he could too. After only one year of teaching, Lucy was ready to try his hand as a professional artist.

One of the first questions Lucy had to ask himself as he started forth on his new venture was "How can I say what I want to say and still make a living doing it?" During his college years, Lucy was very con-

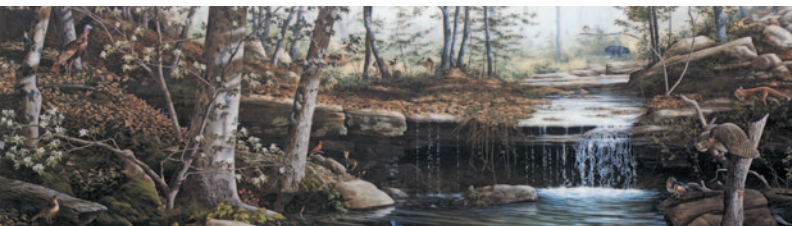
cerned with the environment. He participated in the first Earth Day at college and did a few "radical" pieces depicting the destruction of nature. However, Lucy realized that such pieces were not likely to sell. So, he adjusted his focus. Instead of focusing on the damage being done to the environment, he turned to painting the beauty of nature before it is touched. "Art is a five syllable word - communication," Lucy said. "I went from negative to positive."

Lucy immersed himself in the study of wildlife - feeding habits, mating habits, migration. He wanted every detail of his paintings as accurate as possible.



In 1973, Lucy received his first taste of national exposure by winning second place in the Federal Duck Stamp Competition, and in 1977, he again received national exposure by placing third in the National Wild Turkey Federation stamp design competition. Only a few years later, in 1982, he placed first in the Missouri Duck Stamp Competition for his painting "Bufflehead Ducks". In 1977, Lucy was also commissioned to paint his first mural, "Missouri Wildlife," for the West Plains Bank in West Plains, Missouri.

Lucy enjoyed the work as it allowed him to focus on one piece over a period of time. A second mural



“Missouri Wildlife II” followed the first in 1979, this time for the Washington, Missouri library.

In 1980 and '85, Lucy painted the “Missouri Trilogy” and the “Songbirds of Missouri” for the cover of Southwestern Bell’s phonebooks. Between the two, his work appeared on 17 million phonebooks in the state of Missouri.

Lucy’s original painting “Missouri Trilogy” was donated by Southwestern Bell to the State of Missouri and now hangs in the governor’s office in Jefferson City.

The phonebook covers were something of a final chapter for Lucy’s years devoted to wildlife painting. The market for wildlife art was fading. “There are only so many ways you can paint a duck,” Lucy said. It was time for a new direction.

With the help of a friend, who advised Lucy to work more with the human figure, and half a dozen books from the library, Lucy discovered new inspiration - the history of the rivers. At first, Lucy was unsure how his customers would respond, but the change to historic interpretation created broader horizons and his popularity increased. In 1991, Lucy’s work “Inland Waterways: The Way West” was exhibited at the old courthouse in downtown St. Louis with over 35,000 visitors and featured on PBS-Jim Lehrer News Hour. In 1998, Lucy received the honor of displaying his work at the State Historical Society of Missouri



alongside famous Missouri artists George Caleb Bingham and Thomas Hart Benton.

The year 2004 was the culmination of 20 years of loving work and painstaking research for Lucy. Coinciding with the 200th anniversary celebration of the Louisiana Purchase, Lucy returned to the old courthouse in downtown

St. Louis with 82 original paintings for his exhibit “Inland Waterways: The Highways of Our Heritage.” Included in the exhibit were eight paintings of the journey of Lewis and Clark that have been reprinted over 225 million times worldwide.





From 2004 to 2007, Lucy's next project was a mural "Inland Waterways: The Highways of Our Heritage" for Southeast Missouri State University for the Holland School of Visual and Performing Arts. Lucy worked on the mural in pieces in his studio with his own engineered system of pulleys. The back of his easel sports the date 9/11/07 and his signature from the day he finished the mural.

Since 2007, Lucy has finished paintings for the Bank of Washington, AEP River Operations, Caruthersville High School, and Mercy Hospital. Lucy also received a second commission from Southeast Missouri State University for "Portal to the Future," a painting capturing the vision of the university. He has expanded his Christmas collection with the additions of "Midnight Mass" and "Madonna and Child," and plein aire has become a more prevalent part of Lucy's work, fueled by inspiration from his time and observations along the Missouri River.

At the approach of the 175th anniversary of Washington, Missouri, Lucy was commissioned by Edward Jones to paint "Washington, Missouri Landing," a depiction of the arrival of the first twelve German families in 1833. Having launched his

career in Washington over forty years ago and with great support from the community, Lucy felt honored to have the opportunity to contribute to the town's local history.

Today Gary Lucy continues to pursue his art up and down the river and into the pages of the past. The River Rover, a 35 foot houseboat converted into a studio, makes a great escape for him to paint, read, write about current works, and simply enjoy the river. His faithful dog, Petie, keeps him company along the way.



Gary Lucy resides in Washington, Missouri above the gallery managed by his wife, Sandy.

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G A L L E R Y

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