

NEWS RELEASE

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Intimate Waterscapes—Up-close and Wet in an Urban Creek, Photographs by Julius Kassovic, on View through August 1 at Adkins Arboretum

On view through August 1 at the Adkins Arboretum Visitor’s Center, Julius Kassovic’s stunning close-up water photographs were created not by using Photoshopped effects but with the aid of three basic items: his camera, a pair of knee-high waterproof boots, and a shower stool. Kassovic puts on the boots, wades into Sligo Creek near his home in Silver Spring and, sitting on the shower stool, leans down with his camera just inches above the flowing water.

There will be a reception on Saturday, June 21 from 3 to 5 p.m. to meet the artist and see his mesmerizing close-up waterscapes. With their gemlike colors and intimate vantage point, these digital photographs capture overlapping worlds of moving water, shadowed depths and intricate reflections of trees and sky, along with colorful floating leaves and occasional bits of litter.



“Skylight” is one of Julius Kassovic’s photographs on view at Adkins Arboretum through August 1.

It all started one autumn eight years ago when the self-taught photographer was walking across a bridge over Sligo Creek.

“I had my film camera with me,” he said, “and I looked over the edge of the bridge at all these colorful fall reflections, so I took some pictures. When I got it developed about a month later, I looked at it and thought, ‘Dang! I wonder if I could do this on purpose!’”

Ever since, Kassovic has been photographing Sligo Creek in a new way, searching out moments of startling beauty, such as in “Skylight,” in which a single oak leaf floats amid shimmering patterns of gold and brilliant sky blue.

“It was evening,” Kassovic explained, “and the light was coming in sideways and illuminated a huge maple tree with golden leaves. When I got way, way down close to the creek, the reflection of that golden light was on the water. If I’d been two inches up, it would be gone. You really have to get up close.”

After studying anthropology at University of California, Berkeley, Kassovic used his photos to illustrate lectures and publications for his work in ethnographic research and with the Peace Corps. During those years, he developed the sensitivity to nuance and what lies beyond surface impressions that is so evident in his current photos.

Sligo Creek runs through the heavily populated suburbs of Washington, D.C., so it’s not surprising that Kassovic finds a lot of trash in its waters. In recent years, he has been allowing the trash to creep into his photos.

“I was trying to avoid this for several years,” he said. “But finally I realized this is part of the creek. It’s part of the reality.”

It’s distressing to see a plastic bottle left in the creek or a shopping cart half covered by leaves lying in the current, but Kassovic doesn’t shoot photos that are just about garbage. With an artist’s eye, he treats the litter as part of the composition. The brilliant blue label of a water bottle sets off the russet, yellow and light green of fallen leaves, while the slanting reflections of trees are mirrored upside-down by the angles of an orange leaf and a discarded razor blade.

With or without trash, Kassovic’s photos are unforgettable. Trees seem to grow down from the sky, backgrounds dance in front of foregrounds, and leaves float in luminous seas of textured color. Sligo may be just another urban creek, but Kassovic finds magic in its waters.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through August 1 at the Arboretum Visitor’s Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

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*Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum offers educational programs for all ages about nature and gardening. Through its **Campaign to Build a Green Legacy**, it will build the **W. Flaccus and Ruth B. Stifel Center at Adkins***

Arboretum and a “green” entranceway to broaden educational offerings and research initiatives promoting best practices in conservation and land stewardship. For additional information about Arboretum programs, visit www.adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

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