

# *Painting the Arkansas Parks*





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Compiled, designed, and edited by John Lasater.

ABOVE  
Detail of *Down on the Bayou* by Gil Adams.

### ONLINE CATALOG:

View online for a limited time!  
Paintings are available for purchase.  
Scan code below.



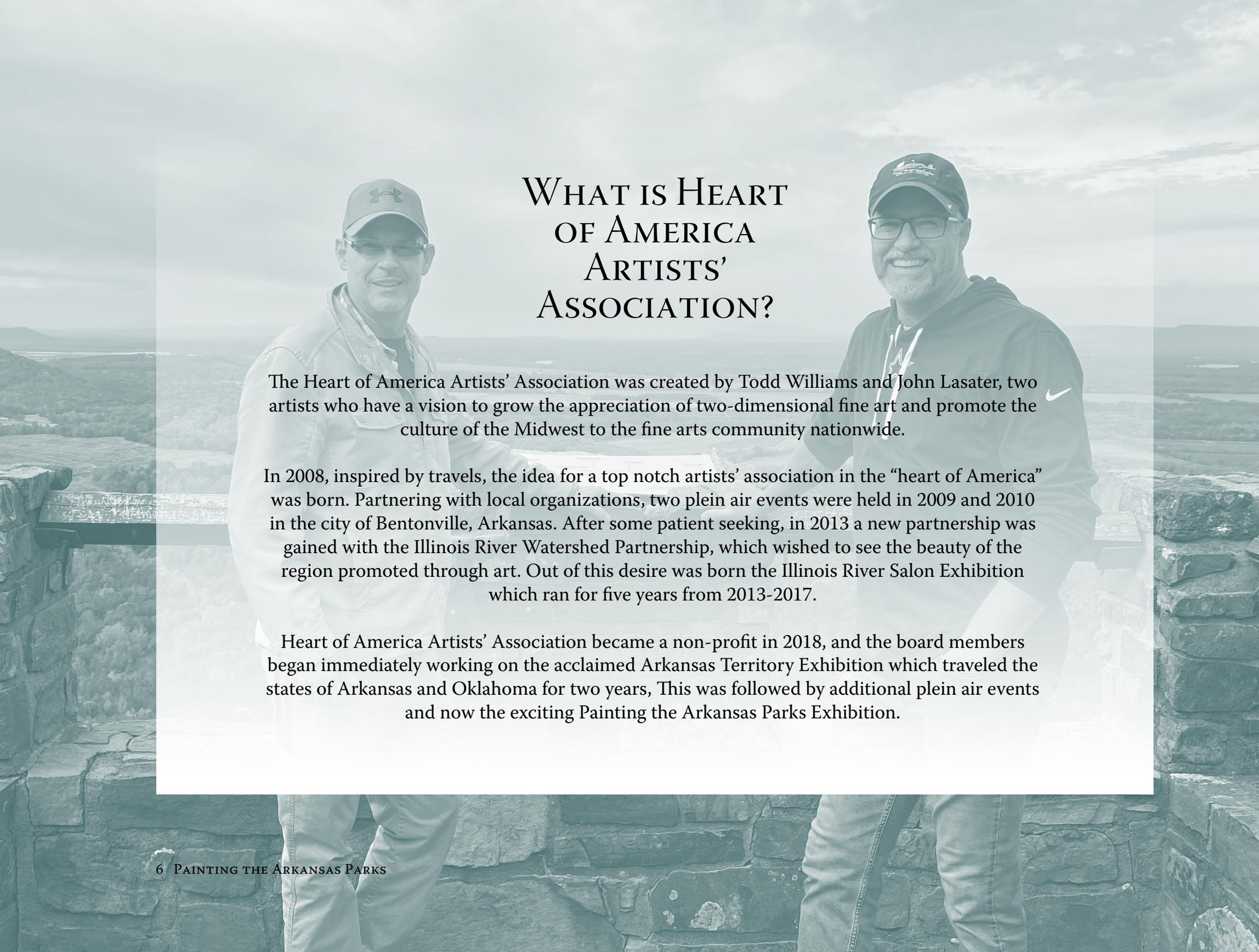
### ONLINE SURVEY:

We value your opinion! Scan code below to fill out a very short survey.



A stylized map of the state of Arkansas is centered on the page. The map is filled with four distinct colors: a brownish-orange at the top, a teal in the middle, a green on the right side, and a red at the bottom. Overlaid on this map is the text "Painting the Arkansas Parks" in a white, hand-drawn, brush-stroke font. The word "Painting" is on the top line, "the" is smaller and positioned between "Painting" and "Arkansas", "Arkansas" is on the second line, and "Parks" is on the third line. The background of the entire image is a dark, muted teal color with faint, out-of-focus silhouettes of trees and a large tree trunk in the center.

Painting  
the  
Arkansas  
Parks

A photograph of two men standing on a stone wall overlooking a landscape. The man on the left is wearing a grey jacket, a grey baseball cap with an Under Armour logo, and glasses. The man on the right is wearing a dark hoodie, a dark baseball cap, and glasses. They are both smiling. The background shows a vast landscape with hills and a river under a cloudy sky.

## WHAT IS HEART OF AMERICA ARTISTS' ASSOCIATION?

The Heart of America Artists' Association was created by Todd Williams and John Lasater, two artists who have a vision to grow the appreciation of two-dimensional fine art and promote the culture of the Midwest to the fine arts community nationwide.

In 2008, inspired by travels, the idea for a top notch artists' association in the "heart of America" was born. Partnering with local organizations, two plein air events were held in 2009 and 2010 in the city of Bentonville, Arkansas. After some patient seeking, in 2013 a new partnership was gained with the Illinois River Watershed Partnership, which wished to see the beauty of the region promoted through art. Out of this desire was born the Illinois River Salon Exhibition which ran for five years from 2013-2017.

Heart of America Artists' Association became a non-profit in 2018, and the board members began immediately working on the acclaimed Arkansas Territory Exhibition which traveled the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma for two years, This was followed by additional plein air events and now the exciting Painting the Arkansas Parks Exhibition.



## OUR VISION

Our vision is to be a renowned association of American artists who create two-dimensional works, with exhibitions and education available primarily to Arkansas and surrounding states.

## OUR MISSION & PURPOSE

Our mission is to create and conduct exhibitions of exceptional paintings and drawings by our members, and to provide educational opportunities to artists of all skill levels, for the purpose of 1) encouraging creativity, 2) building relationships within the art community, and 3) improving the state of art appreciation and patronage in Arkansas and surrounding states.

# INTRODUCTION *by Julie Gowing Hayes, President of Heart of America Artists' Association*

As our Board planned a new major project, we wanted to stay true to our mission: creating exceptional exhibitions of our members' work while sharing the beauty of Arkansas's landscape. Inspired by the success of our earlier Bicentennial traveling exhibition (despite a brief COVID interruption), we launched an ambitious three-year journey in March 2022.

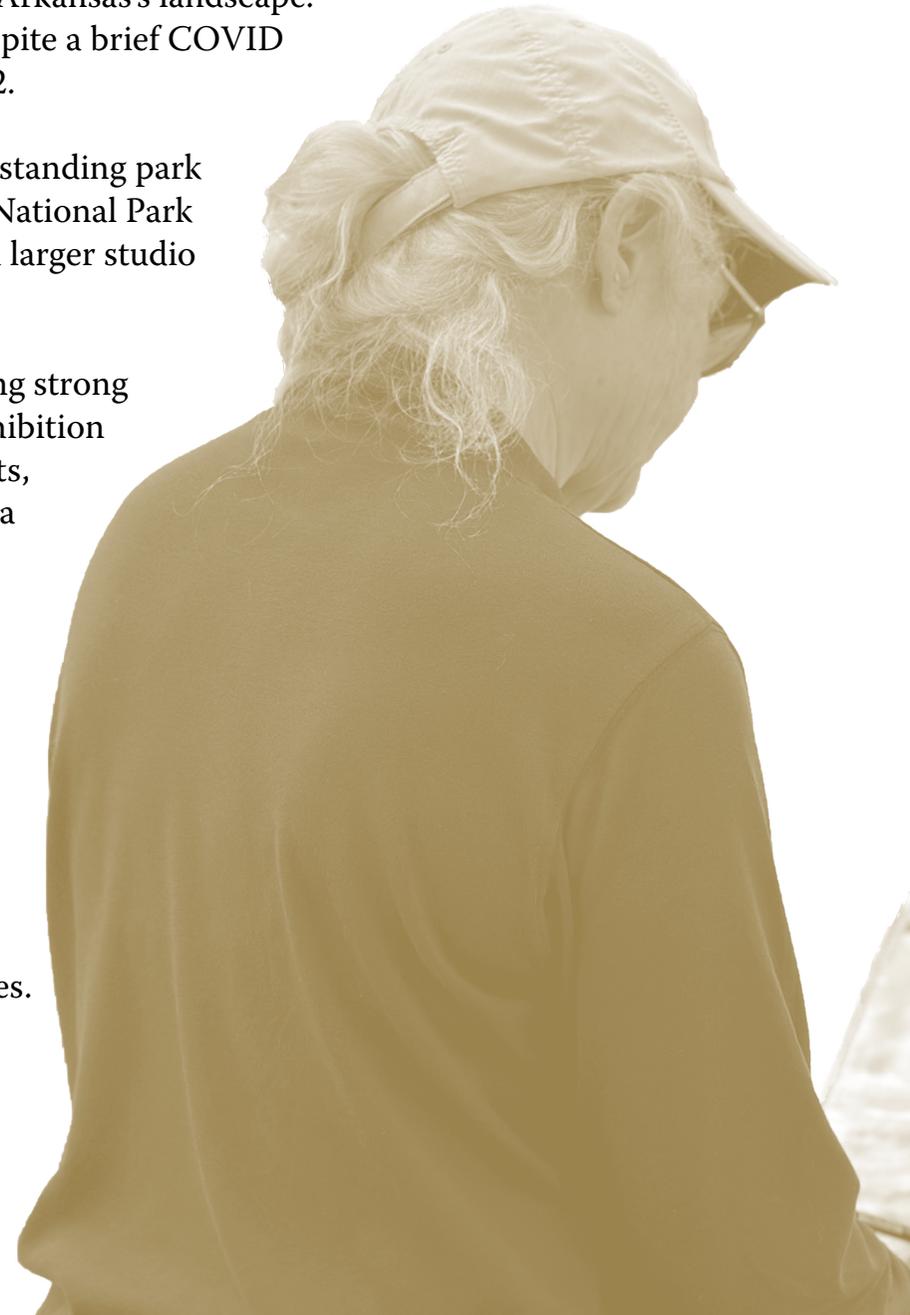
The plan was simple but exciting: host a plein air painting event in one outstanding park from each region of the state—five Arkansas state parks plus Hot Springs National Park and the Buffalo National River—then invite participating artists to create a larger studio painting based on their favorite on-site piece.

Our Executive Director and co-founder Todd Williams led the way, building strong relationships with the Department of Parks, park superintendents, and exhibition venues, and handling countless details. Recruiting artists, scheduling events, finding on-site managers, and promoting everything on social media took a true team effort.

Nearly 70 different artists joined at least one of the seven events, braving heat, cold, wind, rain, bugs, and the occasional snake to paint outdoors.

This book presents 25 of the resulting studio paintings, paired with their plein air studies and the artists' own reflections. Many thanks to every participating artist, our generous sponsors, and to co-founder John Lasater, who patiently and beautifully designed this book.

We hope you enjoy these windows into Arkansas's extraordinary landscapes.



## FOREWORD *by Secretary Shea Lewis, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism*

For more than a century, Arkansas State Parks have preserved our beloved outdoors from the towering pines, the lakes and rivers, the remarkable mountain overlooks and the sense of peace that only comes from time spent in nature. These places tell the story of Arkansas. They connect us to the land, to each other and to generations who came before us with a shared vision to protect and explore the beauty of The Natural State.

Painting the Arkansas Parks captures that spirit. These works of art reflect not only the landscapes themselves, but also the emotions they inspire—awe, serenity, curiosity and pride. Each painting reminds us that our parks are living treasures, shaped by both nature and the people who have cared for them for over one hundred years.

What began in 1923 as a small, ambitious idea to preserve special places for public enjoyment has grown into a system of more than 50 state parks that welcome millions of visitors each year. From the historic lodges and Civilian Conservation Corps craftsmanship to the trails, rivers and vistas that continue to draw explorers from around the world, our parks remain a cornerstone of Arkansas' identity.

This collection is a tribute not only to the natural beauty that defines our state, but to the legacy of stewardship that continues to guide us forward. As you turn each page, I hope you are reminded of your own favorite park—the place where you've found inspiration, adventure or a quiet moment of connection.

May these paintings serve as both a celebration and an invitation to continue exploring, protecting and cherishing the Arkansas State Parks that have shaped The Natural State for more than a century and will continue to do so for generations to come.



LEFT  
Artist Cynthia Schanink at work in Washington State Park in 2024.



*Buffalo National River*





Detail of *November on the Buffalo River* by Theresa Grillo Laird

# BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER

America's first national river, established in 1972, the Buffalo flows undammed for 135 miles through the Ozark Mountains to the White River. It shifts from rapids to serene pools amid towering bluffs, offering paddling, hiking, and cultural sites like the historic Boxley Grist Mill.



## HISTORY

Designated in 1972 as the nation's inaugural national river, the Buffalo preserves one of the few undammed waterways in the lower 48 states, spanning 135 miles of pristine Ozark terrain. It safeguards cultural landmarks, such as the Boxley Grist Mill, evoking 19th-century rural life amid the rugged landscape.

## FUN FACTS

1. First national river in America.
2. 135 undammed miles, rare in the lower 48.
3. Blends rapids, pools, and massive bluffs.
4. Prime for night sky viewing.
5. Abundant fishing across river and tributaries.

RIGHT

W.P.A. Postcard from Buffalo River.

OPPOSITE

Artists at the Buffalo National River Paintout in 2024.





RIGHT

Jason Sacran. *Along the Buffalo*. Oil. 20 x 30 in.

“For this exhibition I painted the Buffalo National River near Jasper, Arkansas — America’s first national river and one of the few remaining free-flowing streams in the lower 48. Though the river and its towering bluffs are famous, it was the wild forest interior that captivated me.”



LEFT

Jason Sacran. *Along the Buffalo (Study)*. Oil. 8 x 12 in.

“While hiking down to the water, I set up beneath a massive sycamore with fellow painter Pamela Ledin (she took one side of the tree, I took the other — her work is also in the show). I was drawn to the morning sunlight spilling through the canopy and the dramatic root system at the base, all wrapped in crisp autumn air and quiet just before the rain. A sliver of the river peeks through on the left. For me, this scene captures the true spirit of the Buffalo.”



