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## American Artists: Craig Albright

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## Craig Albright

<https://www.craigalbrightart.com>

Craig Albright was born in Sioux City, Iowa in 1963. He received a B.F.A. in Drawing at the University of Iowa in 1991, and an M.F.A. in Painting from Indiana University-Bloomington in 1997. He has taught painting and drawing at Indiana University and DePauw University. His works are in the permanent collection of the Figge Art Museum, Davenport, IA, the Iowa City Public Library and numerous private collections across the United States.

### **A Sense of Place: Iowa Landscapes**

The midwest is considered ‘flyover country.’ A flat boring place of no interest. People often equate Iowa with the relatively flat plains of north central Illinois and eastern Nebraska. Situated between these two states, Iowa’s east and west borders are created by the two great rivers of the central plains -- the Mississippi and the Missouri. From the windblown soils of the Loess Hills area in western Iowa where I grew up, to limestone bluffs that stand over the Mississippi, Iowa has a diverse range of unique terrain shaped by glacial activity and modern farming.

Growing up in the midwest, I have always been inspired by the pastoral landscapes, gentle rolling hills, and wooded groves of rural Iowa. It is a slow rhythm that unfolds under ever changing skies and weather. The agriculture that dominates this land overlays a distinct geometric patterning to the easy flowing terrain. From the sky it looks like a patchwork quilt. On the ground, it becomes a sea of corn and soy beans spreading out like rolling waves.

As I kid, I remember road trips driving across the state and being mesmerized by the optical illusion created by the rows of corn zipping by and undulating up and down with the hills. Like a stop motion animation, a flickering effect as each row of corn acts as a shutter of pulsing green light and shadow. Perspectival lines created by the corn rows converge on a distant barn or farmhouse. Although becoming less common, you can still find many century-old barns, some leaning precariously, like an ancient elephant listing as it nears death.

Weather propels the dynamics of Iowa’s landscape. The climate is a range of extremes, and each season plays a tug of war in transitioning to the next. It may be 70° one day and 15° a day later. Months of snowy whiteness followed by emerging greens expand to the deep jungle-like hazy atmosphere of summer. Fall explodes with golden ochres and flaming reds only to succumb to white once again. Each season carries its own unique palette to tease the painter’s eye.

Sundown in rural Iowa is a transcendent experience that often belies the true subject of my paintings. I refer to it as the “magic hour,” when the colors of the sky and ground lose their stark contrasts and merge together in muted intensity. There is a nearly audible hum as the evening air descends on the fields, and deep greens and blues vibrate and shimmer against the glowing tones of the sunset. It is a harmony that is easily felt, yet difficult to capture. Whether my paintings are derived from photographic reference, observation, invention, or some combination, it is this harmony, this vibration, that I strive to convey.

HWY 1 # 2, Oil on Canvas, 16"x16"



This painting was inspired from a drive with my daughter in late Spring. The fields were greening and there were intermittent showers moving through the area. The sun poked out occasionally illuminating the green fields and nearby storms. At this moment, the sun cast a long shadow from our car (the dark area at the bottom of the painting) and provided me with a compelling composition that was also filled with the atmosphere of impending rain.

Sand Lake, Oil on Panel, 8"x10"



Sand Lake is a recreation area south of Iowa City -- a former quarry that now supports prairie restoration and wildlife. It is a popular spot where my family often goes for bike rides. A trail that circles the entire lake offers many wonderful views of both flora and fauna.

Spring Cloud # 2, Oil on Panel 16"x16"



Spring Cloud is a purely invented composition, a loose study of the range of colors and atmosphere that is common during Spring melt-off and the beginning of plant growth.

Waterworks # 6, Oil on Panel, 24"x24"



Iowa City recently built a new water processing plant just north of town that provides our community with fresh water derived from the alluvial aquifer of the Iowa River and supplemented by deep wells in the Silurian aquifer. As part of the water plant's design, the area has extensive biking/walking trails, prairie restoration areas, and wildlife support. My daughter and I spent frequent days during the pandemic riding the trails and finding subjects for paintings.

Cedar River, Sutliff Bridge, Oil on Panel, 12"x12"



This is a view from the old Sutliff Bridge looking towards the new Sutliff bridge. Built in 1897, it stood for over a century until massive flooding in 2008 collapsed part of it. Although it serves only pedestrians, the bridge was rebuilt and restored four years later. It is a popular destination for bicyclists and area locals to stop to grab a beer and a pork tenderloin at nearby Baxa's Sutliff Store and Tavern. The bridge is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Waterworks #1, Oil on Panel, 12"x12"



Another painting from the Waterworks Prairie Park. Trying to capture the magic hour at sundown when ground and sky begin to merge with subtle glowing tones that are nearly audible.



Baker Ave (F28) #1, Oil on Panel, 12"x24"



Baker Ave (F28) #2, Oil on Panel, 12"x24"



These Baker Avenue paintings are based on an expansive river valley near the Cedar River. The soil is rich and deep black. The fields are in a constant state of transition. Clover, hay, and soybeans keep the colors shifting with the backdrop of a hardwood forest lining the river banks.

### **Professional Experience**

Associate Professor of Art, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana - 1997

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1995-1997

### **Education**

M.F.A. Painting - 1997 Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

B.F.A. Drawing - 1991 University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

### **Exhibitions**

2021 August 2021 Exhibit, Sager Reeves Gallery, Columbia, MO

2021 Wandering: Iowa Landscapes, (Solo), Hudson River Gallery, Coralville, IA

2020 Sager Braudis Small Works Show, Sager Braudis Gallery, Columbia, MO

2020 Recent Work (Solo), Zamora's Garden Markets Gallery, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, IA

2019 Evening Air (Solo), Hudson River Gallery, Coralville, IA

2019 Sager Braudis Small Works Show, Sager Braudis Gallery, Columbia, MO

2018 February 2018 Exhibit, Sager Braudis Gallery, Columbia, MO

2017 Community of Artists 2017, Octagon Center for the Arts, Ames, IA

2001 Personal Sightings, Blanden Memorial Art Museum, Fort Dodge, IA

1999 Between Space: The Geometry of Air (Solo), Summit Street Gallery, Iowa City, IA

1997 M.F.A. Thesis Show, Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, IN

1997 Group Show, Sofa Gallery, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

1996 Group Show, Sofa Gallery, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

1994 Poudre Valley Arts League National Juried Exhibition, Ft. Collins, CO

1992 Iowa Artists 1992, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA

1991 Quad Cities Regional Showcase, Davenport Museum of Art, Davenport, IA

1990 National Juried Art Show, Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA

1990 Quad Cities Regional Showcase, Davenport Museum of Art, Davenport, IA

### **Public Art Collections**

Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa

Iowa City Public Library, Iowa City, Iowa