

ARTIST STATEMENT

Zumbro Crossings

The Zumbro River snakes through the landscape sprinkled with small towns and rural farmsteads. Life is full of cultural crossings in the artifacts that remain of a vanishing agriculturally supported society that is also faced with increased floods and soil conservation issues. I believe people tend to habitually take too much for granted, and do not take the time to see the bigger picture. Through my art I wish to encourage a dialog about the changes in the landscape and how humankind has played a role in the past and present to foster positive imprints upon the land for future generations.

I am driven to photographically illustrate how this imprint has come about. The inspiration is born out of immersion in an environment that has and continues to shape my existence. Four generations of my ancestors farmed the land in the Zumbro watershed. Today, I am a five decade farmer, instilled with a deep conviction to be a caretaker of this earth. The camera is my tool to give back to the land. I believe knowledge of the past and present, along with an open-mindedness to see the broader picture inspires positive change.

Original architecture in the Zumbro River watershed was once a symbol of pioneer prosperity and well-groomed uniformity, however with time these structures deteriorated. Today, fragments of village blocks, windmills, fences, and groves of trees dot the landscape.

Photographically, I train my eye to get in touch with the rhythms of nature around me and the intensity of light to carve out landscapes that typically get missed. The intensity of light and color spawns mood and metaphors in the work. It is energy: human, cosmic, or environmental in nature. The quality of light generates a feeling of nostalgia or, at times, in contrast singles warning. Often, referring to an ancient rhyme, red sky at night, shepherd's delight, red sky at morning, shepherd take warning. This timeless juxtaposition addresses a fragile environment where time does not stand still.

Statistics indicate floods were rare before the 1950s, followed by floods occurring about every 7 years. Rainfall increased 20% over 50 years, and the flow increased 40%. Today, a major flood hits about every 4 years.

Pioneer prosperity of the 1800s transformed the Zumbro River Valley from prairies to farms to villages. The 20th and 21st centuries ushered in economic, social, demographic, and environmental changes as the realities of an increasingly urban society paved the way, while farming procedures changed to meet world supply and demand. In that time the river changed too, from a meandering flow to an aggressive channel cutter, sedimentation and pollution transporter. After over 200 years of evolution, it's time to slow the flow by forward thinking about future imprints upon the earth.