

Meet Tom Stewart - Muralist and MAS Member



Tom Stewart's 10' x 24' trading scene installed at the new Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Interpretive Center in Newtown, North Dakota

Who I Am and What I Do

I was born in St. Paul and graduated with a B.S. in Forestry from the University of Minnesota and a B.F.A. in Painting from the University of Alaska Anchorage. I have painted numerous public art commissions in Alaska, taught in the Alaska Artist in Schools Program, and taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Alaska. On my return to Minnesota in the early 2000's I found work as a mural painter for Split Rock Studios in Arden Hills. My interior mural work can be seen in visitor centers and natural history museums across the United States. My most notable works are at the Denali National Park Visitor Center, Alaska; Janet Huckabee Nature Center, Ft. Smith,



Arkansas; South Carolina State Museum, Columbus, South Carolina; Good Earth State Park, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Tettegouche State Park Visitor Center, Finland, Minnesota. Most recently I've completed murals at the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Interpretive Center, Newtown, North Dakota; and the Zona Cocina Restaurant at MSP International Airport.

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Photo (left) courtesy of White Bear Center for the Arts

Letter from the President

By Dan Wendt (MAS Board President)

The letter from the MAS President is a vehicle to inform the MAS general membership of recent Board of Directors activities. The following is a brief recap of the events, discussions, and decisions that transpired during the past quarter and future plans.

MAS has responded and adapted to the pandemic with virtual meetings and cancelled in-person events. Our Board has continued to meet monthly by Zoom meeting. We had an online Annual Meeting in October with an excellent panel discussion on the making of the *Bound by Earth* documentary. As a result of our online Annual Meeting we had two new volunteers offer to serve on the Board. In November we welcomed Justin Olson and Dr. Michael Michlovic to the Board. Justin is an archaeologist with the 106 Group who graduated from St. Cloud State with a Master's Degree in Cultural Resource Management. Dr. Michlovic is a Professor Emeritus from Moorhead State University and has had a long and impactful career in Minnesota. We are all getting used to the challenges of online meetings including the mute and unmute process. We have learned that online meetings allow greater accessibility for those who are travelling or have long commutes.

A key activity and ongoing discussion for the Board has been to connect as a Board around our mission. The MAS Bylaws have a nominal statement of purpose including: the preservation and study of archaeological and cultural resources by providing opportunities for research, education, and publication. The Board has affirmed this focus but are looking to better express why we share our energy advocating for Minnesota's archaeological heritage. Related to the discussion of the MAS mission has been discussion of a logo that communicates our mission and values. We have decided to retire the Thunderbird logo as it borrowed an important cultural symbol and used it out of context to represent our organization. One clear theme from our mission and values discussion has been our intent to respect all descendent communities. We hope that this is a step toward being more inclusive of the rich cultural heritage of all Minnesotans.

We plan to send out a second volume of the *Minnesota Archaeologist* in early 2021. Volume 77 (originally due 2018) of the *Minnesota Archaeologist* is currently in press. The copyright publication date is 2020 to reflect the actual publication date and clarify for citations. Thank you for your patience. We are working hard to catch up. Thank you to our authors who provide the content that makes the journal possible. Please consider publishing with us. We will need additional content to catch up with our publishing schedule. We are improving our publishing process to better serve this key purpose for MAS. One key need will be for volunteers to serve as peer reviewers. If you are interested email us at editor@mnarchsociety.org. In your email list your name, contact information, and your specialties.

MAS Board

We request nominations for the 2021 Hill Lewis Award (please see following page for details).

We are looking forward to a virtual Council for Minnesota Archaeology meeting in February. Please follow our website and Facebook page for the schedule.

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| ◆ Dan Wendt, President | ◆ Anna Morrow, Membership |
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- Danielle Kiesow, *Minnesota Archaeologist* Editor

Call for Nominations: MAS 2021 Hill-Lewis Award

The Hill-Lewis Award is given annually to a living avocational archaeologist who has made outstanding contributions to Minnesota archaeology, by the Minnesota Archaeological Society. The MAS Board is excited to again seek nominations for the 2021 Hill-Lewis Award. Please forward your nomination to Dan Wendt, MAS President at Wendt001@gmail.com. The 2021 submission deadline is March 1st.

Nominees for the award should have made important contributions to our knowledge of Minnesota archaeology (prehistoric or historic) through original research or publication, collaboration with professional archaeologists, site stewardship, site preservation, public outreach, or exceptional K-12 teaching. Nominees do not have to be members of the Minnesota Archaeological Society. Nominators should submit a nomination letter detailing the nominee and their accomplishments, as well as at least one letter of support for the nomination.

In 1881, A.J. Hill, a civil engineer and T.H. Lewis, a surveyor, initiated the Northwestern Archaeological Survey to collect and preserve information on prehistoric earthworks throughout the Upper Midwest. For the following 15 years, Hill and Lewis gathered data on more than 14,000 mounds and amassed an archival record that preserved these data for future generations. Although neither Hill nor Lewis was formally trained in archaeology, they set standards of commitment and excellence that still inspires us today. The Hill-Lewis Award will be awarded at the MAS Annual Meeting.

The Hill - Lewis Award epitomizes the MAS goals of increasing public involvement in archaeology and in promoting the stewardship of the unique and irreplaceable archaeological record of Minnesota.



Our **2018** recipient was **David Peterson**, who has made significant contributions to Minnesota archaeology. He conducted a 14-year study of iron trade axes across the upper Mississippi River drainage and Lake Superior drainage. The

database contains measurements, technical characteristics, maker's marks and photographs of over 1000 trade axes. David's work has been published in Volume 68 of the *Minnesota Archaeologist* (Peterson 2009).



Our **2019** recipient, **Rod Johnson**, was involved in MAS for more than 30 years and for the past 25 years had served on our board of directors in several positions including President, Vice President and Treasurer. Starting in 1982 he was a dedicated volunteer for the

Institute for Minnesota Archaeology and later the Science Museum of Minnesota and Minnesota State Historical Society. Minnesota learned about the ancient art of flint knapping from Rod through his public outreach and willingness to support events throughout the state.



Our **2020** recipient was **Anna Morrow**, a longtime volunteer at the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, a cornerstone of the MAS board for decades, and a chronicler of

the history of the MAS through articles in the *Minnesota Archaeologist*. Anna's efforts contributed to the success of many projects and organizations focused on Minnesota archaeology.



Share your thoughts on Minnesota archaeology and find out what is happening right now across the state and region on our page.

Tom Stewart - Muralist *(continued)*



Tom Stewart's 4'x16' Bog Walk scene, Baxter Elementary School, Anchorage, Alaska.

Currently I work as a freelance artist. Besides painting large murals, I also paint smaller works in the studio and plein air. In a recent exhibit of my plein air paintings, *HISTORIC VIEWS OF THE MISSISSIPPI: A Comparison of Paintings from the 1800's to Today*, I revisited and painted historic views that were made famous by earlier artists. My paintings were exhibited side by side with reproductions of the historic paintings (courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society). Henry Lewis' 1848 painting "Falls of St. Anthony" was one of the paintings I compared my present-day painting with. This exhibit was made possible by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts board. My smaller works have been shown at the White Bear Center for the Arts, White Bear Lake, Minnesota; the Landmark Center, St. Paul, Minnesota; the Phipps Art Center, Hudson, Wisconsin; and the Minnesota State Fair.

How I Got Started

Three events that led to an art career were: seeing the Audubon prints at an early age, taking a class at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and studying the diorama murals at the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum. At the Bell Museum I was attracted to the realism of the paintings, especially those painted by Frances Lee Jacques. I was fascinated in the way that the paintings connected to the flora and fauna on the ground form and how everything was identifiable. For me, the dioramas were art and science in a box. My exposure to the outdoors while working for various forestry agencies encouraged me paint big landscapes with identifiable plants and animals. I wanted the viewer to feel like they could walk into the painting. My career change from forester to artist came while working in Alaska for the US Forest Service. A big state with big landscapes. It was here that I began painting public art commissions, mostly flora and fauna of Alaska. An identification key usually came with

the artwork. In between these larger works, I illustrated fossils for the Paleontology Department at the University of Alaska, illustrated and painted posters (Alaska Dinosaur and Ice Age Mammals) for Alaska Geographic Magazine, and drew field sketches for a dinosaur dig. I even drew reconstructions of accident scenes for a personal injury law firm. My interest to paint big and to paint for a larger audience led me back to Minnesota. Here I found more opportunities to grow and to work as a commercial artist.

About Murals and Mural Painting

I paint murals to be exhibited as part of a diorama or to stand on their own. My murals are painted with acrylic paints on canvas in a large studio space. Here the canvas is stapled to the wall, primed, and then painted. When the artwork is finished, it is rolled up on a PVC tube and shipped to the destination. There it is fastened to the wall like wallpaper. My largest mural, with the help of other painters, was 21'(H) x 78'(L). It was installed at the Denali National Park Visitor Center in Alaska. Perspective and scale are the important elements for my murals. Normally the horizon line across the painting is at average eye level, around 64". Heights and widths of all objects, people, plants, houses, mountains, etc., correspond to the horizon line. Being aware of perspective and scale, as well as color, gives a mural painting a great sense of depth, dimension, and realism. This is especially true in a diorama mural where painted objects need to match up to the three-dimensional objects placed in front of it.

One of the more enjoyable parts of a mural project is the research. When I visit a location which will be the setting for a mural, I sketch and photograph the landscape and other objects which are important to the theme and will provide context.

Tom Stewart - Muralist *(continued)*

I also meet with those involved with the project. Seeing the landscape and other components first hand, I create the right atmosphere and better understand how to draw and paint with more dimension. I also have the opportunity to note and include any particular features that stand out in the landscape. For many museum and visitor centers, my murals are often a composite of the most memorable views, this creates a very dynamic affect. The Denali mural is a good example this. For the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara mural I visited the earth lodge village sites in North Dakota, met with some of the tribal historians, and visited museums and interpretive centers. When travel is not possible, I sketch and photograph from local outdoor sources for plants and animals. For historical items, I visit local museums and libraries. I use live models to portray most of my human figures and rent costumes that look authentic. Collections from the University of Minnesota and the Bell Museum have been a significant source of visual information for my work.

site. Another project was my recent mural for the new Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Interpretive Center in Newtown, North Dakota. This mural depicts a trading scene among the three tribes during the late 18th to early 19th century time period. Researching and painting these projects has given me much incentive to find similar work that recreates historic scenes with different cultures.

Finally, another goal is to research the evolution of designs and styles of art in early cultures: how marks made by human hands evolved to art that told a story and how these marks evolved into art which has the illusion of three dimensionality. I am interested to know if this evolution in art developed individually in cultures or did it develop from contact with other cultures, or both?

I am always open to questions or comments. You can contact me at tom@testewart.com.

Direction and Goals for Future Work.

I have a great interest in early cultures around the world: their dress, dwellings, art, tools, and spiritual beliefs. One of my goals in art is to paint or illustrate recreations of historical scenes and events. In recent years I have been able to design and paint several murals which depicted scenes of Native American life. With the help of another painter, we created three large murals for the Good Earth State Park Visitor Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This state park is dedicated to a large Oneota village located on this



Tom Stewart's 9' x 16' Blood Run Village trading scene installed at Good Earth State Park in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

MAS Logo Change *by Mara Taft, Board Member*

After important reflection, the MAS board has voted to discontinue use of the Thunderbird logo. The Thunderbird is a sacred symbol to many Indigenous groups who call Minnesota home, and the use of the Thunderbird as a logo for our organization is disrespectful to the people who made it. The specific Thunderbird that our logo is based on was on a 1,000 year old ceramic vessel which was removed from an important Native village site in Red Wing, MN by a former MAS member in 1957. In an effort to better reflect our values, we have begun the process of choosing a new logo for MAS, and will no longer use the Thunderbird logo.

Council for Minnesota Archaeology Symposium Call for Sessions, Papers, and Posters



Photographs courtesy of the MNHS Archaeology Department

Where: Virtual, Online (Zoom)*

*The conference will be primarily “live” with some pre-recorded components. Additional details to come.

When: February 26-27, 2021

The Council for Minnesota Archaeology is announcing a call for sessions, papers or posters for its biennial symposium, to be held virtually on February 26-27, 2021. The symposium is open to all researchers at any stage of their career, whether academic, students, CRM or community archaeologists, to present recent research on any aspect of Minnesota or Upper Midwest archaeology.

Paper and poster abstract submissions should not exceed 200 words, with papers not to exceed 15 minutes in length. Posters will be presented between sessions and available online. Individual abstracts can be submitted to either: Bruce Koenen (bruce.koenen@state.mn.us), Amy Ollila (amy.ollila@mnhs.org), and/or Jennifer Rankin (jennifer.rankin@mnhs.org), no later than **January 31, 2021**

Send any session requests and inquires, conference format (including pre-recording options) and presentation questions to Jennifer Rankin (jennifer.rankin@mnhs.org), Program Chair.

Student Paper Prize: There will be a student paper prize award of \$250 if a sufficient number of student submissions are received.

Council for Minnesota Archaeology – An organization dedicated to promoting archaeological research and interpretation in Minnesota.

The Anthropocene by Bob Suchanek (former MAS Board Member)

Time

Archaeologists and geologists think about and work with things and events of the past. For geologists the past time scales can be vast (millions of years) while archaeologists focus on time scales relevant to human activities (hundreds or thousands of years). Epochs are intervals in layered time units that have been mostly of interest to geologists; however, disciplinary interests merge when the most recent epochs are considered. During the last 200,000 years people have contributed to the record in the rocks.

The Pleistocene (“most new”) epoch is the “Ice Age”. This 2.58-million-year epoch featured 11 glacial advances and retreats. The first Pleistocene layers are represented on the southern slope of Monte San Nicola near Gela, Sicily. *Homo sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis* appeared in the upper Pleistocene. The Holocene (“entirely new”) epoch began a little less than 12,000 years ago. The first layer in this series is represented in a drill core from a Greenland ice borehole. The epoch began with a short (3 year) transition from the Pleistocene cold to the relatively stable warmth of the Holocene. *Homo sapiens* spread across the globe and in some regions began to develop agriculture.

The Anthropocene

The Anthropocene (“human new”) was popularized by the atmospheric scientist and Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen in 2000. Its addition to the Geological Time Scale has been proposed by the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) associated with the International Commission on Stratigraphy. The AWG was formed to “denote the present geological time interval, in which many conditions on the Earth are profoundly altered by human impact. This impact has intensified significantly since the onset of industrialization, taking us out of the Earth System state typical of the Holocene Epoch that post-dates the last glaciation.”

In May of 2019 the AWG voted on two questions:

- ⇒ Should the Anthropocene be treated as a formal chrono-stratigraphic unit defined by a GSSP (Global Stratotype Section Point, i.e. a “golden spike” marker)?
- ⇒ Should the primary guide for the base of the Anthropocene be one of the stratigraphic signals around the mid-twentieth century of the Common Era?

The vote was 29 to 4 in the affirmative for both questions.

The Golden Spike

The base of each geological time interval is a figurative “golden spike”. Most are recorded as a location defined by latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates as well as stratigraphic position; some are defined by age determination. There are many GSSP possibilities for defining the start of the Anthropocene. For example, evidence of human impact can be found in accumulations of heavy metals, sulfates, plastics, persistent organic pollutants, and radioactive isotopes. Specific locations under consideration include coral reefs, marine anoxic basins, peat bogs, snow/ice layers, caves and trees. Given the intensification of human activity beginning in the 20th century, the AWG has concluded that “the primary marker for the Holocene-Anthropocene boundary should be selected and identified in strata with a mid-20th century age.

A New Epoch?

Once the AWG has finished its work (including the determination of an optimal “golden spike”) their proposal for the new epoch will be submitted to their parent body, the Subcommittee on Quaternary Stratigraphy for approval. This may happen in 2021. From there the proposal will be taken to the International Commission on Stratigraphy and finally to the International Union of Geological Sciences.

Acceptance of the new epoch is not a given; maybe a new epoch just isn’t justified scientifically. The British geologist Jan Zalasiewicz, one of the first to propose the adoption of the Anthropocene Epoch, has pointed out that “one can’t predict whether our recommendations will be accepted. They are not always accepted for recommendations of ‘normal’ ancient strata.” Geologist Philip Gibbard asks “Are the conditions really that different? We’ve been influencing the natural environment since we started growing in numbers...I would say we’re still in the Holocene.”

Whether or not the Anthropocene becomes the name of a new geological epoch, it has become a term that captures the extraordinary present that will leave its mark on the future “distant past”. Archaeologists and geologists will have plenty to work with, regardless.



Golden spike in Australia marking end of Ediacaran period (Wikipedia)

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Contact Anna Morrow
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