

Lisa Grossman

Slow Winding statement, 2017

Haw/Contemporary

You cannot see the great sweeping bends of the Kansas River from the ground. For years it was only an intriguing blur as I drove over one of the bridges that span it. When I moved to Lawrence from Kansas City in 1996, I began exploring the river's edges—riparian trails and the few riverside painting sites that afforded a longer view.

In 2002, after catching an unforgettable glimpse of the Kansas River or Kaw, on a flight back to Kansas City, I began flying the 173-mile length of the Kaw with some pilot friends to photograph it. A little elevation revealed the Kaw's stunning beauty, its wide arcs stretching across the horizon. I flew at dusk and sometimes dawn to capture the contrasts of the dark floodplains with the river's reflected light.

For twenty-some years my primary work has been prairie-based, primarily *plein air*, (on location), anchored by the horizon and leaning sunward, with keen attentiveness to shifts in light, color, and weather. The Kaw is the longest prairie-based river system in the world and so these prairie river paintings, studio works using my aerial footage, continue those investigations with an emphasis on flux and flow. I seek to convey the ceaseless sweep and thrust of carving river currents through sand, the turnings of day and season, and even the movement of the plane circling and crossing over, tracing the meanderings of the river.

This river challenges me to engage deeply with place in a visceral and personal way. As I've hiked and biked the river trails, explored its sandbars, kayaked its length, and investigated it from the air, the Kaw's windings continually lure me into a process of discovery. I learn much from science colleagues and have served on the board of Friends of the Kaw for years, but feel my best advocacy for the river is through my work. It's immensely satisfying to put this place on the map, visually, and give viewers a sense of connection to our watershed and the importance of a healthy river to our communities.