

"Mother Lake"
Bryanna Manning

Mother Lake

BRYANNA MANNING

**May 22 -
September 4, 2026**



SAUGATUCK
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

About the Exhibition

Words from Bryanna

Mother Lake is a body of work rooted in rhythm and presence. Living near Lake Michigan, I have spent many hours walking along its shore. And day after day, I walk knowing what will meet me there: the water moving in and out, the sand shifting beneath my feet, and sky everywhere. Each visit looks different—the light shifts, the water is still or crashing, and clouds gather or break—but the things that matter remain. These constants are what ground me.

CONCEPT

The concept of the *Mother Lake* has been a central thread in my work for several years. I understand Lake Michigan as a nurturing, living body of water—vast and all-encompassing, yet deeply intimate for those who experience it. Its waters and shores carry both immense sorrow and great joy. It is always changing, yet constant. Day in and day out, its rhythm acts as an anchor along the western coast, steady and reliable. It gives and gives—to our land and to us. It is power and beauty. It is the Mother Lake.

The paintings in this exhibition follow the physical and emotional progression of stepping out to the lakeshore. The work moves from the shelter of the woods, through the openness of the dunes, and finally to the shore and surf. Viewers are invited to experience the work in the same way that I experience the landscape: moving from the intimate woods to the vast expanse of the dunes, water, and sky.

INSPIRATION

This body of work draws inspiration from the wild places that have shaped me most: the shores of Saugatuck and West Olive, and the northern shorelines of Charlevoix and Petoskey. These places are sites of joy, memory, safety, and wildness. They serve not as specific portraits, but as emotional anchors—sites of memory, refuge, and return.

Many times in my life, returning to the rhythm of the lake has helped pull me from the abstract and into the present. Wave after wave, breath after breath, it is a place that is constantly changing, yet always the same. I know for certain that there will be another wave. There will be another sunset. The clouds will move on.



About the Artist

Bryanna Manning is a West Michigan–based painter inspired by the natural world and the Great Lakes. Living in the woods near Lake Michigan, and drawing inspiration from her family cottage in Northern Michigan, she seeks to capture the magic of childhood summers spent at the shore—capturing the sense that anything is possible, that the natural world is good, and that beauty surrounds us.

Her work is influenced by modern impressionism, featuring loose brushwork, vibrant color, and a strong sense of light. Bryanna builds texture through paint, medium, and the interplay of line, shape, and color, creating layered surfaces that invite close observation.

Through her paintings, she hopes to evoke the feeling of cherished places and time spent outside with loved ones. Bryanna's landscapes celebrate the joy, freedom, and wonder of nature, reminding us that the places we love will be there for us, again and again.



An abstract painting featuring thick, layered brushstrokes in various shades of blue, green, and brown. The colors are applied in broad, expressive strokes, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is dynamic and textured.

“Through repeated brushstrokes, layered textures, and familiar forms, I echo what I experience in nature: it is good. It is good. It is good. And through every wave, every shifting sky, and every remembered horizon, I return to that truth and trust that it remains.”

— BRYANNA MANNING



Bryanna's Favorite...

COLORS

Forest green, yellow ochre, light peach, Prussian blue.

FOODS

I love going out for breakfast. Strong coffee with cream, fresh fruit, any egg dish, and potatoes.

SEASONS

Early summer, late summer...really all of summer.

ARTISTS

Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, Pierre Bonnard, Georgia O'Keeffe, Richard Diebenkorn, Emily Carr

Bryanna is currently...

READING

I am always in a couple of books, usually listening to one and reading the other on my Kindle. I love fiction and getting lost in a story. Currently, I'm reading *My Friends* by Fredrik Backman. I also am working my way through the Bible this year, and I return time and again to poems by Mary Oliver for inspiration.

LISTENING TO

I love to listen to music while I paint, with my top being Caamp, Maggie Rogers, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Olivia Dean, and Bon Iver.

WATCHING

At the end of the night, my husband and I like to unwind with some stove-popped popcorn and HGTV. We lead a very full life with our big family, so the certainty of the before and after of a renovation is a nice way to finish the day.

DAYDREAMING ABOUT

The next trip, a future house project, and always what I want to grow in the garden.

Something you might be surprised to know about Bryanna

My husband, Jake, and I have five kids between the ages of 8 and 11. Between our three adoptive and two biological kids, we essentially have two sets of "twins." I also played (well, I would occasionally run the bases) college softball.





Key Concepts

- **GREAT LAKES LANDSCAPE**
- **OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATURAL WORLD**
- **MEMORY**
- **STILLNESS & PRESENCE**
- **BELONGING**
- **CHILDHOOD & NOSTALGIA**
- **FLOW STATE**

Vocabulary + Terminology

EN PLEIN AIR

the French term en plein air means out of doors and refers to the practice of painting entire finished pictures out of doors.

MODERN IMPRESSIONISM

loose painting and brushwork to achieve an effect focusing on light.

COLOR HARMONY

the use of placing intentional colors to create an aesthetically pleasing mood.

COMPOSITION

the deliberate arrangement of visual elements in an artwork

REFUGE

a safe place or shelter

BRUSHWORK

the characteristic work of an artist created using a brush

FLOW STATE

a mental state of optimum experience where a person is fully absorbed in an activity.

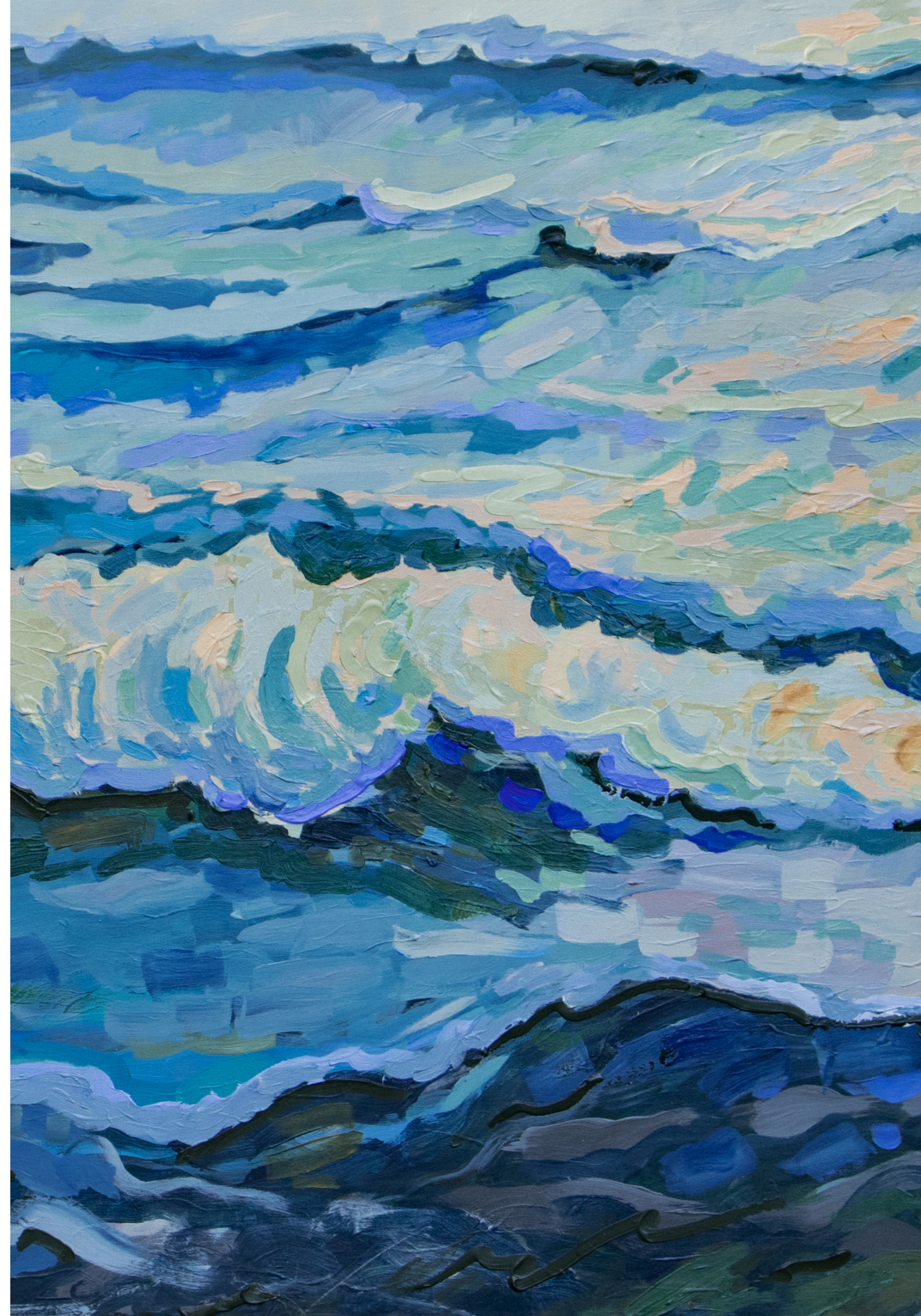


Before Viewing

Bryanna's paintings evoke a sense of nostalgia and familiarity, inviting viewers back to long summer afternoons on the shore, quiet moments watching waves, and childhood memories of running through wooded dunes. Like the comfort of a familiar home-cooked meal, her work is meant to feel grounding and recognizable, offering a visual space where viewers can reconnect with their own experiences of nature and time spent outdoors.

Authenticity is central to her practice. Each painting is shaped by direct, personal encounters with the places she depicts. She spends extensive time along the lakeshore and in surrounding natural areas, sketching and observing, and absorbing the subtleties of the natural world that later surface in her work. Texture, layering, and physical gesture become a way of translating those experiences into paint, creating surfaces and marks as varied as the environments that inspire them.

Ultimately, Bryanna's work is about presence and return: a return to stillness, to attention, and to the restorative power of the natural world. Her paintings invite the viewer to slow down, be present, and rediscover the sense of belonging to something much bigger than ourselves.





While Viewing

As you move through the exhibition, you will notice that like a walk to the beach, you slowly make your way from paintings of the cover of leaves and trees to the expansive landscapes of the open water and horizon. The artist is intentionally trying to create a feeling of natural progression of scenery as you approach the lakeshore.

Notice how you feel in the space. Do you feel a sense of calm? Nostalgia or familiarity? By creating this sense of place, the artist is inviting the viewer to experience the lakeshore as she experiences it, creating a shared sense of knowing and belonging to the natural spaces we occupy. Like the lakeshore, art can mean and evoke many things to many different people, but it remains a constant space for reflection, memory-making, and change, as every day, every hour looks different than the one before it.

Reflect on your experiences near the water. Maybe it's a daily practice, maybe it's a special occasion—what does it mean to you to visit the lakeshore or places in nature that hold memories for you?

Look For: The Hideaway



This work is based on one of the artist's favorite places along Lake Michigan: Antrim Creek Natural Area. This painting is from a late summer evening at Antrim Creek when the artist was there with her family. While they were off playing a game of touch football on the beach, Bryanna lost track of time, wandering the dunes and capturing photos and videos. For the artist, looking at this painting evokes a feeling of feeling the warmth of the sun, and hearing the echo of her family's laughter and voices in the background.



When you look at this painting, what feelings or memories come to mind? What sounds or moods do you associate with this time of day by the water?

Look For: Tansy, Milkweed, & Thistle



In this series of three paintings, the artist is highlighting the strongest of Michigan's native wildflowers: Lake Huron Tansy, Pitcher's Thistle, and Milkweed. Before Bryanna started painting, she was inspired by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and Arcadia Dunes. The artist wanted to create three paintings to honor these strong resilient blooms that grow even in unfavorable conditions, to allow the viewer to see both the beauty and strength they hold, and remind us they are vital and worth conserving.



What plant life do you look for along the lakeshore? What is important to you to preserve for years to come?

Look For: Mother Lake



As the namesake of this show, this painting is derived from a concept the artist was first drawn to four years ago. The nurturing impact that Lake Michigan has on the land and creatures that depend on it. It encompasses the vastness, the strength, and the beauty of the shore– its dependability and its generosity. It cares for and mothers the life that makes our state flourish. This work, and others, seek to capture a different side of our “Mother” Lake.



Consider how Lake Michigan has impacted your community. How does it help you to thrive? If you don't live in a community near the water, what natural spaces support your well-being?

After Viewing

Inspired by what you've seen? On the remaining pages you'll find additional ways to engage with *Mother Lake* at Saugatuck Center for the Arts. If you would like to dive deeper in your own artistic practice or are curious to learn more about what informs the artist's work, check out these resources below!

ARTIST INSPIRATION

Excerpt from *The Sun* by Mary Oliver

"Such wild love—
do you think there is anywhere,
in any language,
a word billowing enough
for the pleasure

that fills you,
as the sun reaches out,
as it warms you

as you stand there,
empty-handed"

ARTICLES ABOUT THE ARTIST

Check Out *Bryanna Manning's Story* by Voyage Michigan
voyagemichigan.com/interview/check-out-bryanna-mannings-story/

Meet *Bryanna Manning* by Canvas Rebel
canvasrebel.com/meet-bryanna-manning/





Educational Programming

GROUP FIELD TRIPS

Grades K-12/Adult | Single Visit to SCA | 45 - 90 minutes

Includes tour & hands-on activity

Key Concepts & Ideas: Great Lakes landscape, our relationship to the natural world, memory, stillness & presence, belonging, childhood & nostalgia, flow state

[Complete our Field Trip Inquiry Form](#)

YOUTH SUMMER PROGRAMMING

Paint-a-Thon | June 30-July 1

AM Session: 9:00 - 11:30 am | Ages 5-7 | \$120

PM Session: 1:30 - 4:30 pm | Ages 8-11 | \$135

Paint-a-Thon returns with two unique sessions. Join us for two-days of joyful exploration with art's most beloved medium. With the instruction of our featured summer exhibition artist, Bryanna Manning, campers will create paintings outdoors—*en plein air*—inspired by the flow of the lakeshore and our wild wonderful world. Explore different media and techniques using watercolor, tempera, and paint sticks, and more! From collaborative creations, to miniature masterpieces and more, every art project provides a new opportunity to experiment with paint! A daily healthy snack is provided.



Related Programming

A CELEBRATION OF MOTHER LAKE

Saturday, June 6 | 6:00 - 9:00 pm | All Ages | Free

Join us for the official opening of Mother Lake. Meet Bryanna Manning and enjoy hands-on art-making activities inspired by our summer exhibitions. Enjoy lively music from the Shrock Bros, bites from local food trucks, and stroll through the gallery as we welcome the summer season.

CENTER (ON) | FEATURING BRYANNA MANNING

Friday, June 26 | 10:00 - 11:00 am | All Ages

Free for Members, \$10 public

Ever wonder what really drives an artist's work? Get the inside story at Center (On), SCA's monthly series featuring intimate conversations with creatives connected to the SCA. Every fourth Friday from February to November, members can cozy up for a free, hour-long deep dive into the creative process. Hear Bryanna speak about the stories and studio sessions behind Mother Lake and life as an artist painting the lakeshore in West Michigan.



Additional Programming

GATHER IN THE GALLERY WITH BRYANNA MANNING **July 15 | 6 - 9 pm | 21+ | \$130 | SOLD OUT**

Join us for an unparalleled dining experience in the gallery at the SCA creatively curated to celebrate Bryanna Manning and her exhibition, Mother Lake. Co-created by esteemed chef and level 3 Sommelier, and former SCA Creative Fellow, Mindy Trafman, this intimate dinner experience thoughtfully weaves together the wonders of both visual and culinary arts.

The menu is consciously crafted to reflect the artist's current work and themes with fresh and inventive dishes and drinks. Dinners include **5-courses** of unique and seasonal flavors and are perfectly paired with hand-selected wines.

During dinner, guests will enjoy sharing stories directly with a professional artist and other guests. Conversations will be sparked and influenced by the topics covered in Bryanna's work, and are sure to delightfully accompany your meal.

PLEIN AIR WATERCOLOR LANDSCAPES **September 2 | 5:30 - 8 pm | \$65**

Paint watercolor landscapes at the lakeshore with Holland artist, Bryanna Manning. Learn basic watercolor techniques, color harmonies, and observational drawing & painting skills. Leave with all the skills and inspiration you need to continue painting all summer long!

Thank You to Our Mother Lake Sponsors



Vickie & Dan Bischoff

David Geen & Bill Underdown

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John Cannarsa & Tim Straker



All Mother Lake art
works are for sale on
Bryanna's storefront



400 Culver St, Saugatuck, MI 49453
@saugatuck_arts | sc4a.org

The background of the right side of the page is a large, abstract painting with thick, textured brushstrokes in various colors including blue, orange, green, and white. A dark green rectangular box is overlaid on the top left of this artwork, containing white text. A red graphic element, consisting of several parallel, nested lines forming a partial hexagonal shape, is overlaid on the bottom left of the artwork.

www.bryannamanning.com
[@bryannamanningart](https://www.instagram.com/bryannamanningart)