

History on Canvas (Lynn artist recognized for painting America's 19th century landscape)
By Jill Casey
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LYNN -- American history has become the stitching on a finely tailored shirt, sewn so well into the seams it's easy to overlook the work that went in to creating it.

That's the view of Jeff Fioravanti, an artist who says Americans have either forgotten or take for granted the sacrifices, labor, tragedy and triumphs of our history.

Rather than ranting on talk radio about true patriotism, Fioravanti has taken his appreciation of the country to the canvas, to try and remind people of the beauty of the American landscape.

"In a lot of respects, our lives are going too fast. We've lost touch with who we are and what makes this country great," Fioravanti said. "The fact is that being proud to be an American is more than some words on a \$25 T-shirt or a bumper sticker on an SUV."

These sentiments and a love of 19th century history inspired a series of pastel Impressionistic paintings that illustrate the places where Fioravanti says, "ordinary people did extraordinary things, and by doing so, helped shape a nation."

"My tagline is that I paint the soul of America," he said.

One of those paintings, "Antietam National Military Park: The Awful Things I have to Chronicle," was recently awarded a distinguished prize at the Pastel Painters of Maine International Juried Exhibition, where 60 painters from around the world showed their work.

The winning painting will be on display at Heartwood College of Art in Kennebunk, Maine, until June 25.

Antietam National Military Park was the site of the bloodiest day in U.S. history. The Civil War battle took place on September 17, 1862, and although historians widely debate who won, the battle is largely believed to have been a tactical victory for the north.

The painting has the same blues and yellows Van Gogh used in his works and none of the things that would invoke the bloodiest day in history. In fact, it's quite the opposite; it's serene.

"My paintings are not about war, but about peace and hope," said Fioravanti. "They're not there to glorify war... They are painted to say, yes, this is a lovely place, but something dramatic happened here."

In addition to Antietam National Military Park, Fioravanti also paints Manassas and Gettysburg national parks. When he's not painting historical scenes, he's tapping into the beauty of his backyard.

Lynn Woods, Breakheart Reservation and Marblehead Harbor are also scenes the Lynn artist has painted.

Fioravanti's works can be viewed online at www.fioravanti-fineart.com.