SPOTLIGHT ON THE ARTS ECOLOGY LECTURE
Falling in Love with Grasslands: Paintings from Prairie to Páramo
Speaker: Philip Juras, BFA '90, MLA '97
7:00-8:00 p.m., Thursday Nov. 2, 2017
Odum School of Ecology Auditorium
Free and open to all
Reception precedes talk at 6:15 p.m.
Book signing follows at 8:00 p.m.

Although they are ecologically rich, aesthetically gorgeous, and often tightly linked to human history, grasslands, especially in the southeastern United States, have been largely lost and forgotten while the plant and animal species that depend on them have become increasingly rare. As a Georgia artist and nature lover who grew up in a region where there is enough rainfall to turn most any patch of dirt into a forest in only a few decades, falling in love with the wild beauty of grasslands has been a revelation for Philip Juras.

Philip will present a visual tour of landscape paintings that document his journey of grassland discovery. Drawing on early descriptions of the presettlement landscape by chroniclers such as William Bartram and his own studies and adventures in southern nature, Philip’s grassland route traverses high mountain balds, grassy Piedmont barrens, historic Alabama prairies, and the once vast savannas of the coastal plain. Then, from the colorful seaside meadows of the Georgia coast, Philip’s exploration continues beyond the Southeast to the lush tall grass prairies of the Midwest and the gorgeous high elevation páramo of the Andes. Through all of these settings his paintings celebrate the rich aesthetic qualities of grasslands while also highlighting that these are threatened ecosystems deserving of our attention.

About the speaker
Philip Juras’s paintings are an expression of his desire to both experience and understand the natural world. His love for nature and art began during his childhood in Augusta, Georgia, eventually leading him to receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1990 and a Master of Landscape Architecture in 1997, both from the University of Georgia. His MLA thesis examined pre-settlement grasslands that once flourished in the southeast, a subject that continues to inspire his artwork. Philip’s work explores the rich aesthetics of a wide range of ecologically intact natural environments. His ongoing projects include Georgia’s barrier islands, fire adapted landscapes of the Southeast, tall grass prairie restoration in Illinois, and the páramo and cloud forests of the Colombian Andes. To depict these subjects Philip combines direct observation with study of the natural science and history of the place. The sensory impressions conveyed by his paintings invite the viewer to step through the picture plane and experience the natural phenomena in the landscape beyond.

In 2011 Philip’s exhibition, The Southern Frontier, Landscapes Inspired by Bartram’s Travels, opened at the Telfair Academy in Savannah, Georgia. With is its corresponding award-winning exhibition book, it explored the southern wilderness as William Bartram documented it in the 1770s. His recent exhibition, The Wild Treasury of Nature, A Portrait of Little St. Simons Island,
opened in 2016 at the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia. The exhibition and accompanying book examined the natural environments of one of the most ecologically intact barrier islands on the East Coast.

All are welcome to attend a reception at 6:15 p.m. in the atrium of the ecology building and the regular business meeting of the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society immediately preceding the talk. A book signing will follow the presentation, with books available for purchase.

Sponsored by the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society, the University of Georgia Press and the Odum School of Ecology as part of Odum 50/10: Celebrating Fifty Years of Ecology at the University of Georgia and the University of Georgia Spotlight on the Arts.

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