

BILLYO O'DONNELL

Billyo O'Donnell and his eight siblings spent their childhood on a small family farm west of St. Louis along the Missouri River. Two large landowners with over 14,000 acres surrounded this homestead where the prairie softly turns into hills as it nears the Missouri River.

At the age of eighteen, he experienced an epiphany after an accident, which led him to pursue his love of painting. While earning his degree, he met Peggy, the love of his life. He earned his BFA in Sculpture and was hired as an illustrator at Maritz Motivation where he worked for 13 years receiving many national and international awards for his paintings.

In 1995, he was invited to participate in the San Juan Capistrano Mission Paint Out as one of five guest artists from across America. He has gone on to receive many of the highest awards at many of America's most prestigious Plein Air Invitationals. In 2012 he received the highest award an artist may obtain in the State of Missouri - the "2012 Independent Artist Award" - given by the Missouri Arts Council. In 2014, the 35 members of the Plein Air Painters of America (PAPA) voted Billyo into the prominent organization. In 2018, he was one of four artists selected to teach and paint on location in China for one month by the Shengxinyu Art Institute.

Billyo takes the greatest pride in creating the 115 original oil paintings for the book, *Painting Missouri: The Counties en Plein Air*, authored by Karen Glines - a seven-year project. Today, Peggy and Billyo live west of St. Louis in a 200-year-old log cabin that was once his grandmother's.