**Gymnasium Whitehall,**

**Artist Studio and Exhibition Space,**

**Opening June 2024**

**Gymnasium Whitehall**, a renovated 6000 square foot historic gymnasium in Whitehall, Montana, will open June 21st, 2024 as the home of **Gary Snyder Fine Art MT** and studio of artist **Ben Miller**. **Gymnasium Whitehall** will serve as a vibrant visual arts site in an expanding contemporary cultural community in the Bozeman, MT region.

The opening exhibition will be *Endangered Rivers – Fly Cast Paintings by Ben Miller.* Over twenty paintings, ranging in size from 3 x 4 feet to 6 x 12 feet, will be installed in the central gallery space. Included will be works completed in partnership with the Gallatin River Task Force, Friends of the Hackensack River, Hudson River Keepers, Friends of the Chicago River, and more, serving Miller’s commitment to river conservation.

Ben Miller is a Montana-based painter best known for his *Endangered River* series. He received a BFA in art from Washington State University in Seattle and spent 12 years teaching art before moving to Bozeman, Montana in 2016.

Miller began his *Endangered Rivers* series out of his deep passion for raising the awareness and importance of river preservation. The *Endangered Rivers paintings*, like the rivers themselves, are complex layers of color and transparency. Each work is created in reverse, with marks, each made by the cast of a fly rod, made on the back of a plexiglass panel. When turned around, the first strikes of paint represent surface reflections and whitewater rills. These highlights are then backed by successive color layers of deeper and darker forms. Miller’s stated goal for these works is to mark down the truth of a river.

**Gary Snyder Fine Art MT** is the continuation of art galleries owned and run by New York City gallerist Gary Snyder.

Snyder opened his first New York gallery in 1991 and quickly established himself as an authority in the field of modern American art. In galleries in Soho, Midtown, and Chelsea, Snyder explored a wide range of American art from the 1920s through the 1960s.

Snyder has guided clients to build collections, including the J. Donald Nichols collection of American abstract art of the 1930s and 1940s, the Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Zissu collection of Abstract Expressionism (which sold at Sotheby's), and other important collections ranging from early American modernism through Minimalism, Pop and Hard Edge painting of the 1960s.

Snyder moved to Bozeman, Montana in 2018. In early summer of 2019, he was intrigued by an artist painting along the Gallatin River in Big Sky, Montana. He described that moment as follows:

Along the river, I saw a fly fisherman casting his rod. But something was off. There was no one back, two back and then a cast of the fly into the water. The rod kept going back and forth, back and forth, perhaps a dozen times. And the angler was too far from the bank.

I drew closer and saw a metal A-frame easel propping up a 3 x 4 foot piece of plexiglass set about 20 feet in front of the fisherman. Each cast of the rod was followed by a “thud” of contact when the end of the line hit the plexiglass, leaving paint marks that, as they gradually merged, took on the qualities of the reflecting surface of the river beside him.

This was, I realized, someone painting the river; not in the traditional manner of paint, paintbrush and canvas, but by a controlled casting of a fly rod. Each “thwack” on the plexiglass left a specific mark, created by dozens of what the artist would later tell me were fly brushes, made of yarn, sometimes thread, pipe cleaners, leather, feathers; some long, and some in loops.

Over the course of about six hours, the artist would cast over two thousand times, with rapt attention to the river. When finished, there was one further revelation - the actual finished painting was the reverse of the paint-covered polycarbonate. Turned around, the first strikes of the day are “on top” of the painting and the last hits form the backdrop.

The paintings occupied a paradoxical space of both abstraction and representation. But the more I looked, the more I saw the river, sparkling, moving powerfully, caught in time – it was like no river I had ever seen, which made me realize I had never looked long at a river.

*“Endangered Rivers – Fly Cast Paintings by Ben Miller”* will be accompanied by a catalogue with over thirty color plates, and essays by art historian Henry Adams, local fly fisherman and guide Dave Corcoran, young philosopher Michael Dzitko, and galleries Gary Snyder.

**Gymnasium Whitehall** will be open to the public Friday, Saturday and Sunday from noon until 6PM and by appointment.

For more information please go to the following websites:

[www.benmillerartist.com](http://www.benmillerartist.com)

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