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University of NOTRE DAME

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Portage Path: Returning to Our History Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame January 31 to April 3, 2016

NOTRE DAME, IN—November 9, 2015—The Snite Museum of Art commissioned artist Kay Westhues to document some aspect of the local area as part of South Bend’s 150th anniversary. She selected the St. Joseph River to Kankakee River portage. This four-to five-mile-walking trail was the only overland segment of an ancient water route between the Great Lakes region and the Gulf of Mexico. Native Americans first utilized the portage and then French explorers and fur traders used it to travel from Detroit to New Orleans. While now largely forgotten, the portage was a primary reason why a city grew at the “south bend” of the St. Joseph River.

Artist Kay Westhues describes her project, “as there was no actual trail to photograph, I decided to suggest the idea of a pathway in each of the images. They were taken in the approximate area of the original route, and I did not try to conceal the human-made changes that have taken place along it. The St. Joseph River and some of its branches still reflect the pastoral beauty once acclaimed in descriptions of the area by eighteenth-century writers; other tributaries have been channeled underground. The 500,000-acre Grand Kankakee Marsh was drained in the nineteenth century, turning the Kankakee River into a large drainage ditch; an ethanol plant now makes use of its headwaters”



Kay Westhues, (American b.1961), *Footpath to Portage Landing*, 2015

Archival pigment photograph. 30 x 20 inches. Acquired with funds provided by the Humana Foundation Endowment for American Art, 2015.049

For additional images contact Gina Costa at gcosta@nd.edu or 574-631-4720.

Public exhibition reception: Friday, February 12, 2016 from 5-8 PM.

Free admission.

Kay will be featured for the March 17th 3rd Thursdays@ the Snite at which she will speak about the history of the path and its documentation. 3rd Thursdays are free and open to all. 5-7:30 p.m.

The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame

The Snite Museum of Art is located on the campus of the University of Notre Dame, near South Bend, Indiana. Museum hours are 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday; and noon–5:00 pm Saturday and Sunday. Admission is free. Museum information is available at 574-631-5466 or at the Museum's website: <http://sniteartmuseum.nd.edu>. Driving directions and parking information are available at <http://nd.edu/visitors/directions/>.

The Snite Museum of Art provides opportunities to enjoy, respond to, learn from, and be inspired by original works of art. As a department of the University of Notre Dame, the museum supports teaching and research, creates and shares knowledge, celebrates diversity through the visual arts, serves the local community, and explores spiritual dimensions of art.

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