

**LIFE**

**Mangum paintings honor the Blue Ridge Parkway's 75th year**

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By **DAWN DECWIKIEL-KANE**  
Staff Writer

GREENSBORO — Step into William Mangum's art gallery and onto the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Gallery walls display its colorful vistas, its tumbling waterfalls and meandering rivers.

View its spring awakenings, summer greenery, deep autumn hues and snow-covered landscapes.

Long known for his paintings of North Carolina scenes, Mangum has focused his brushes on the national parkway this year to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

Since January, he has created 52 paintings inspired by the scenic highway and its surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains.

The 469-mile road runs from Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina to Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. Its construction provided jobs during the Great Depression.



Jerry Wolford (News & Record)

Artist William Mangum has created 52 paintings inspired by the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway and the surrounding mountains. On the easel is "Majestic Byway."

**Want to go?**

**What:** "Blue Ridge Inspiration" exhibition opening receptions

**When:** Opening reception 6-8 p.m. Thursday . Call 379-9200 to request an invitation. Public meet-an-artist opening 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Exhibition continues through June 12.

**Where:** William Mangum Fine Art Gallery, 2166 Lawndale Drive, Greensboro

**Admission:** Free

**Etc.:** A portion of sales proceeds will benefit the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation.

**Information:** 379-9200 or [www.williammangum.com](http://www.williammangum.com)

**Want to know more?**

Visit [www.blueridgeparkway75.org](http://www.blueridgeparkway75.org) for more information on the Blue Ridge Parkway's 75th anniversary.

"As you drive the parkway, what's so amazing is that it's almost like looking at a canvas," Mangum says, surrounded by paintings in his gallery studio. "Your windshield is framing the scene."

His scenes will be displayed starting with an invitation-only opening reception on Thursday at the gallery. A public meet-the-artist opening follows on Friday and Saturday. The exhibition runs through June 12.

Mangum has become known for the holiday Honor Cards he creates each year to raise money for homeless ministries.

This exhibition, too, will benefit a cause: the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, which raises money for special projects and programs.

The foundation will receive a portion of proceeds from paintings sold on opening weekend. Painting prices range from \$850 to \$7,500.

Mangum also will donate all proceeds from the sale of small prints created from three of the paintings. The prints, offered for a \$5 minimum donation each throughout the exhibition, depict Dry Falls near Highlands, Grandfather Mountain and the famous Linn Cove Viaduct that winds around it.

The money likely will go to the foundation's education program for children, which reaches more than 30,000 youngsters a year in 29 counties along the parkway, executive director Houck Medford said.

The parkway has inspired the artistry of painters as well as photographers, writers and musicians.

"Bill Mangum is one of those best examples," Medford said. His works "simply start a flow of memories of favorite places and favorite times."

Mangum, 57, has painted myriad mountain scenes during his 32 years as an artist.

"But I have never dedicated myself to this extent," he says.

Mangum made many two-hour drives to the parkway, even in snow. He also drew on his archive of photographs, sketches and memories.

Those who drive the parkway will recognize several scenes. For others, Mangum ventured to locales up to 30 miles away.

He translates them on paper using watercolor, gouache and acrylics, then adds finishing highlights with pastels and Italian wax pencil.

But don't look for exact replicas of every scene. His style combines realism and Impressionism.

"Often when people look at my paintings, they assume that is exactly what I saw," Mangum says. "But there is a lot of artistic license taken in creating the piece."

He points out the painting "Mountain Chapel," which depicts a white church in a field seen around a bend in the road.

"This was a road that was quite inviting, but I didn't like the character of the chapel," he says. "So I made this one up."

He re-created "Asheville Lights," a view from the Governor's Western Residence, from photographs but mostly from his mind's eye, based on a visit a few years ago.

"That evening there was a sunset, and those trees were silhouetted against the sky and the lights of the city were flickering down in the valley," he recalls. "I never forgot that view."

In addition to displaying new paintings, this exhibition will feature more than 20 limited-edition prints of his past work.

The parkway paintings have inspired Mangum to contemplate making them part of a seventh book of his art.

They also let him give back to the road that gave him so much subject matter.

"I want to share it with folks and let them know about this amazing gift that we have here in the state," he says. "It's such an oasis for the soul."

Contact Dawn DeCwikiel-Kane at 373-5204 or [dawn.kane@news-record.com](mailto:dawn.kane@news-record.com)

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