

ARTS & CULTURE

Joanne Aono's feast for the senses

These highly detailed drawings reward the viewer who moves in closer.

by **Parker Yamasaki**
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An installation view of "Prairie Passage"
Credit: Courtesy Geneva Center for the Arts

“**W**e plant in phases because we know that not everything will grow,” says Joanne Aono, the artist and holistic farmer whose installation, “Prairie Passage,” is on view at the Geneva Center for the Arts. Aono speaks in accidental metaphors, offering anecdotes and descriptions that could be about her farm or her art, but are probably about both.

The conceit of the show is a natural crack in the floor, which Aono imagined as the Fox River, a passageway that historically carried food for people and animals in the region. On either side of the symbolic river are colorful sketches of edible plants that once grew on the banks, each plant on a hanging sheet of light agricultural cloth.



Aono draws plants on hanging sheets of light agricultural cloth.
Courtesy Geneva Center for the Arts

The effect of colored pencil on gossamer cloth is faint. These highly detailed drawings reward the viewer who moves in closer, and then a little closer, and then a little closer. “I’ve been told my art is hard to photograph,” Aono says, quietly proud of the comment. Passage also means change, as in *the passage of time*, and there is an inescapable acknowledgement that the crops—wild strawberries, cabbages, okra—that were once cultivated along the river have been replaced by roads and playgrounds and basketball courts. The faint lines and smooth shifts add to the drawings’ ghost-like qualities. But the show isn’t about loss—it’s about looking, and the deliberate choice to slow down and narrow in on the stem, the leaf, and the seed.

📍 “Prairie Passage”

Through 2/9: Tue-Thu noon-3 PM, Sat noon-3 PM, Geneva Center for the Arts, 321 Stevens, Suite Q, Geneva, 630-345-6762, genevaartscenter.org

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