

Alberto Rey

ARTIST AND FLY FISHERMAN ALBERTO REY was born in Agramonte, Cuba, a small farming town an hour and a half outside of Havana named for revolutionary Ignacio Agramonte. Rey and his family later moved to Mexico City (where they were granted political asylum), then Miami, then to a coal mining town in Western Pennsylvania. Eventually, Rey's academic studies found him in the University at Buffalo's graduate program, where he received an MFA in painting and drawing. He began teaching at SUNY Fredonia, where he became a distinguished professor, and lived in Dunkirk. This is where his introduction to fly fishing took place. Rey became an Orvis Endorsed Fly Fishing Guide and now helps others learn the artist's favorite sport and method of meditation.

Rey's painting *Brown Trout, Willowemoc River, Catskills, New York*

PAINTER IN THE STREAM

BY NANCY J. PARISI

In 1998, Rey co-founded what is now called Children of the Stream, an interdisciplinary nonprofit teaching kids fly fishing and conservation. The group meets weekly and is open to kids and adults in his community; Rey provides all the necessary gear. “I found out that there were salmon running up the Canadaway stream from Lake Erie,” Rey recalls. “I was getting ready for tenure, so I put fishing on the back burner. But, once I got tenure, I started researching fly fishing, reading everything that I could get my hands on, and talking to other fishermen at the college. There is a neighbor down the street who taught me how to tie flies.

“For a while in grad school, my work was pretty much about being Cuban looking at American pop culture—and my identity in that mix,” Rey continues. “And when I got involved in fly fishing, I became interested in the culture and history of it, wanting to know why it is so popular. It gets people into nature and there is a conservation element to it: protecting, not killing. Most fly fishermen catch and release, so our aim is not to kill anything, because the fish you catch today won’t be there tomorrow.”

Rey’s advice to beginning fly fishermen is straightforward: “The easiest thing to do would be to go to the Orvis store in Buffalo, which has free beginner classes. And you can read about it. If you’re going to buy equipment, just buy what you need for a trip: fly rod and reel, and a few flies. Get the bottom of the line. In the spring and summer, just wade in your sneakers, and then, as the temperature gets colder, you will need waders and boots.”

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Rey has fished worldwide and documented much of it through his paintings. Visit albertorey.com to learn more about his art, writing, fly fishing activities, and more.

PHOTOS BY NANCY J. PARISI