

Tile exhibition pays homage to J. Alden Weir

By [Kendra Baker](#) on May 26, 2017 in [Lead News](#), [Social News](#) · [0 Comments](#)



Weir Farm National Historic Site at 735 Nod Hill Road opened its 2017 season with Photo Ceramics by Xiomáro: An Homage to J. Alden Weir and the Tile

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Club, a free exhibition of photographs fused on black ceramic tiles by the park's visiting artist Xiomáro.

The collection of 22 photo ceramics will be on display at Weir Farm's visitor center and museum store until Oct. 31.

Weir Farm features the eccentric home and studio of J. Alden Weir, the father of American Impressionist painting.

In 1877, Weir formed the Tile Club with Winslow Homer, William Merritt Chase, and other iconic artists to create hand-crafted decorative tiles — a Gilded Era craze sparked by displays at the 1876 Centennial celebration in Philadelphia.

Internationally-recognized artist, writer, and speaker Xiomáro, who has been Weir Farm's visiting artist since 2012, applied a modern twist to the idea.

Rather than painting on eight-inch square crème-white tiles as Weir did, Xiomáro used his brush to apply adhesives and finishes to fuse photographic prints he created onto four-, six-, and 12-inch black, square ceramic tiles.

The photo ceramics feature luminous surfaces and individualized antiqued textures from stippled brushwork.

"There was a lot of trial and error in working with the finishes," Xiomáro told The Bulletin.

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“I tried many different brushes and application techniques to get the surface texture I wanted.”

Xiomáro said he started the collection two weeks prior to the exhibit and finished it “a few days beforehand.”

“It went fast because I had spent two months doing a lot of experimenting with adhesives, finishes, brushes, tiles and other materials,” he said.



Xiomáro

For the collection, Xiomáro said, he used “actual museum-quality photographic prints.” The prints were rectangular and required him to find “a new composition with the existing composition” so that they would look good after he hand-cut them into squares to fit the ceramic tiles.

“Gluing them down took a lot of care to avoid scratching or scuffing the photograph, and without leaving any air pockets between the print and the tile,” he said.

After that, Xiomáro said, he applied several coats of the finish by “stippling or pouncing the brush over the prints.”

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The photographs featured on the tiles were taken at Weir Farm in 2011, when Xiomáro photographed the house and studio prior to restoration.

“After they were fully restored, I was commissioned again in 2014 to photograph them in their furnished state,” said Xiomáro, who created the photo ceramic tiles at his New York studio.

He said each tiles took about an hour-and-a-half to make and required “a lot of downtime waiting for things to dry or cure, setting up and cleaning up work spaces, and working slowly to avoid damaging prints or cutting fingers.”



Photo ceramic tiles with freshly applied sealant drying outside Xiomáro's New York studio.

Themes

The solo exhibit presents four themes as an homage to Weir and the Tile Club — “Stepping Back in Time,” “Decorative Treatments,” “Long Island,” and “Connecticut.”

For the “Stepping Back in Time” and “Decorative Treatments” themes, Xiomáro used photographs Weir Farm commissioned him to create, as well as images from when he began as the park’s artist-in-residence.

These two themes give an overview of the park’s historic buildings and grounds, as well as close-up views of stained glass, wallpaper designs, and other artful details from Weir’s house and studio.

For the “Long Island” and “Connecticut” themes, Xiomáro borrowed photographs from his Fire Island National Seashore collection to commemorate the Tile Club’s three famous excursions to Long Island, which helped popularize plein air painting and the Impressionist style.

Xiomáro used photographs from his collection of the New England Scenic Trail — a 215-mile hiking route that starts at Guilford, goes through the state, and ends at the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border.

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Photo Ceramics by Xiomáro viewing hours at Weir Farm are 10 to 4, Wednesday through Sunday.

For more information on Photo Ceramics by Xiomáro, call 203-834-1896 or visit nps.gov/wefa.

To learn more about Xiomáro and receive a free e-book on Weir Farm, visit xiomaro.com.

