

TO LIVE IN A HOLY PLACE

MIXING ART & POETRY 'NO SMALL THING' AT GEORGE MARSHALL

Poetry is its own art form. I've been writing poetry since high school. I draw inspiration from many sources that speak to me. The turtle in peril crossing the road. My 15-year-old dog at the end of her journey. Spaghetti at midnight.

Similarly, Kate Rasche, the director for The George Marshall Store Gallery in York, Maine, also draws inspiration from that which is around her. And this time it happens to be poetry.

Rasche, a local York girl and trained artist herself, perfectly married the subject of the poem, "Spring Tide" with the theme for her current show, "No Small Thing." She said that "No Small Thing" is a love letter to the Maine landscape. During the deepest part of winter, as she impatiently waited for warmer weather, she happened across the poem by poet, educator and environmentalist Nancy Nielsen. The poem speaks to the deliberate pace and path of nature, of accepting our relative inability to shape its course, and concludes with embracing those which interrupts life and finding beauty therein.

So, Rasche wanted to create a show that reflects that sentiment and celebrates a little bit of what makes Maine so magical.

"Spring Tide" by Nancy Nielsen (1930-2016)

*When we came home, the sea said, "Wait."
We waited.
That's the way it is here;
sometimes the wind says, "Shiver,"
and we shiver;
sometimes I make a shopping list,
but if the snow says, "Stay,"
we clean the cupboard and make soup.
When we came home, and found the tide
over the road and into the alders,
I didn't mind. The water rose quietly,
and when it ebbed and we passed,
we went quietly.
That's the way it is here, sometimes,
and then we remember that it is no small thing,
to live in a holy place.*



The setting of her gallery enhances the ambiance of the exhibition. Spread throughout a small, historic building on the York River with a lobster shack behind it and a towering evergreen housing the resident eagle family, the pieces are mounted on sparkling white walls where the sun and natural light bounce around the room and makes you want to smile. And you do!

The six artists in this show express their love of beauty in the landscape in their own form — whatever the material



REVIEW

NO SMALL THING

GEORGE MARSHALL STORE GALLERY

140 LINDSAY ROAD
YORK, MAINE

THROUGH JULY 30

TOP: (L) John Bowdren, *Barn Swallow*, cast bronze with patina; (R) Camille Davidson, *Late Summer Air*, cold wax and oil on panel, 18" x 18".

BOTTOM: Site specific installation by Christina Watka.

or process they choose. Camille Davidson and Sarah Faragher record the changing seasons in luminous and tranquil paintings of their surroundings.

Davidson paints from a tree house studio nestled in the woods of central Maine. Faragher often favors the rocky shorelines of MidCoast or the scraggy distant mountain gradations.

Davidson's work often expresses her love of Maine's changing light during the seasons. Her encaustic work blends abstraction with representational art. Her work, "Deep Summer," epitomizes the changing season of late summer — the beginning of grasses

turning golden, yet not willing to let go of the early-summer-green vibrancy. And yet if you don't see that, you can certainly appreciate it from a more ethereal perspective with texture of the brush strokes and the masterfully blended colors on the canvas.

Faragher's pieces are memoirs of her experiences with nature. Rasche feels her works somewhat take on the stylized look of Rockwell Kent. I can see that. Faragher said that through her painting, she can recognize transcendent moments in nature, honor the integrity of natural forms, and describe where her heart lives. Her piece, "Half Moon," makes one exhale, caught in a wink of calm. It's a smooth-edged landscape — artfully executed in thirds — top blue sky, middle coral waning day and lower silhouetted landmass. But the crowning glory? The ah-ha? It's the half-moon subtly hanging in the sky.

Rocks anyone? Definitely a part of the Maine landscape, but who would expect these rocks



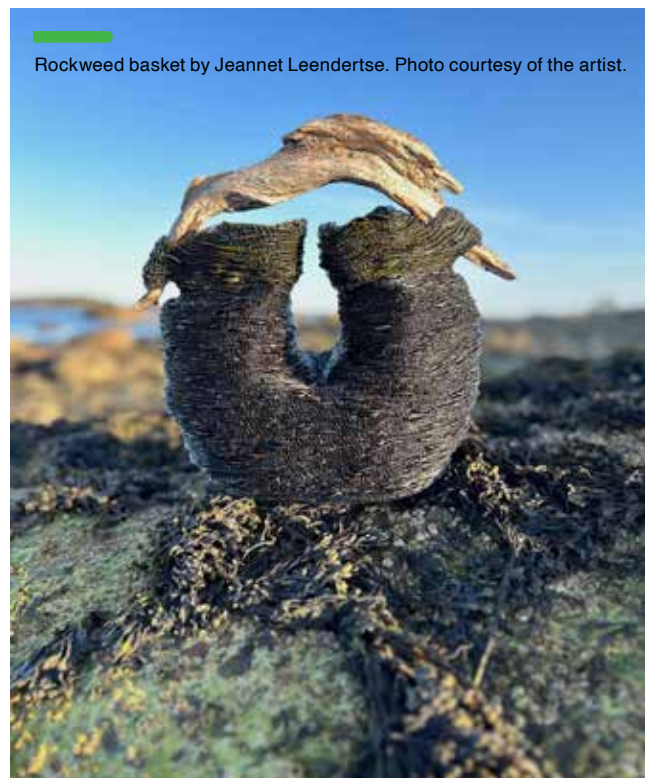
(Top) Sarah Faragher, *Half moon, 5:30 a.m., July, Stockton Springs, Maine, 2022*, oil on panel, 12" x 9"; (bottom) Christina Watka, *Small, Significant Things, 2022*, hand-bound collection of essays in letterpress with collection of cast bronze objects.

to look and feel like the real thing? They do! Julia Michael uses unglazed ceramic to mimic tumbled sea stones. In groupings they make a statement — most of which is awe because they truly are easily mistaken for an actual rock.

The rocks make an attractive vignette paired with Jeannet Leendertse's "Rockweed Baskets." Drawing upon her Dutch childhood roots in the Netherlands, and later moving to the Blue Hill area of Maine, both of which are well endowed with rockweed. The hardy weed provides a habitat for countless marine creatures, cleans the ocean, and protects the shoreline from erosion — all of which makes Leendertse happy. She takes the natural material to a new level and creates baskets by sewing the weed together using linen and wax, or sometimes horsehair, and often finishing it with a driftwood handle. All of which, at some point, can be thrown back into the sea from whence it came.

John Bowdren's sculptures and Christina Watka's large-scale, site-specific installations are joyful, interacting with light and the vibrant environment surrounding them.

Rockweed basket by Jeannet Leendertse. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Bowdren's works are often kinetic alewives, barn swallows or swifts made from various materials. Sometimes it's palladium leaf over mahogany, or gold leaf over burnt wood or bronze on bronze. In the larger gallery room, a composite of five of the winged creatures — mostly swifts — are on vertical poles on base platforms or standing on four-foot tall display tables, with all conveying an attitude of movement. The lighting enriches the experience with the shadows it throws on the walls behind.

And Christina Watka? Well, her work makes you feel like when you're five and run into your grandma's living room with the sun pouring through the bay window, and it unexpectedly strikes the prism hanging there, and you "ooohhhh" in delight. Watka's medium? Often mica, Lucite and ceramic — surfaces that catch the sun and reflect it around a room causing a dazzling show of teal, pinks and blues. Her work is informed by large systems in nature — maybe moving herds or flocks. She does lots of commission work for site-specific spaces.

The show will delight your heart, stimulate your artistic longings and feed your desire for the beauty and simplicity of Maine's inspiring landscapes. And maybe, just maybe, it'll give you pause to appreciate that in life, there is no small thing.

Linda Sutherland



JOYCE J. SCOTT: MESSAGES

JUNE 24 - NOVEMBER 5, 2023



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Featured Image: Story Stole, 2021



Grassy Dunes, acrylic on canvas, 20"x20"

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