



PHILIP FREY

COURTHOUSE GALLERY  
FINEART

# PHILIP FREY

## Coming into Focus

JUNE 19–JULY 13, 2019

Introduction by Karin Wilkes

Essay by Mark E. Messer



*Solar and Azure*, 2019, oil on canvas, 12 x 12 inches

COVER *Fisherman's Palette*, 2019, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

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My recent body of work centers around my long-held interest in Maine's working harbors, in particular, Lubec's iconic fish houses. Experimentation with unexpected colors, assertive shapes, and multifarious and fearless brushstrokes have always been the aspiration of my work. All three amalgamated with this show to reveal the latent qualities of oil paint: luscious and plain; crisp and blurred; opaque and transparent; vivid and muted. These elements coalesced to bring the potential interplay between place, experience, and creative agency into focus.

— Philip Frey, 2019



*The Influence of Color*, 2019, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches



*Fisherman's Palette*, 2019, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



*Ode to Rothko and Picasso*, 2019, oil on canvas, 40 x 60 inches

## INTRODUCTION



*Coastal Interval*, 2019, oil on canvas, 12 x 16 inches

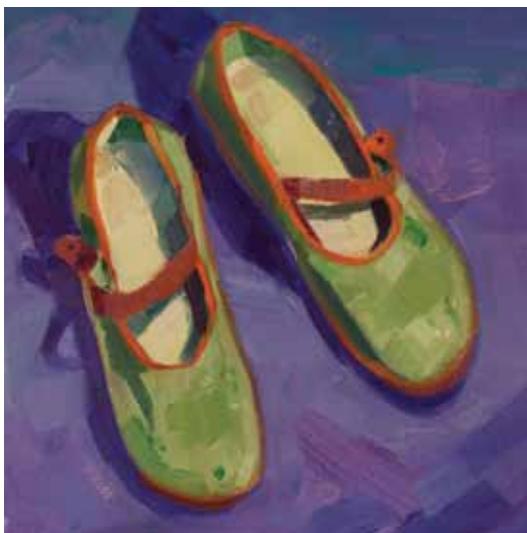
*Coming Into Focus*, our seventh solo show for Philip Frey, who has been with us since the beginning, centers around Lubec's iconic fish houses. Frey painted these abandoned canneries and smokehouses with vigor. His palette boasts intense colors—teal coiled ropes, violet bait barrels, emerald piers, and cadmium yellow buoys—all patched together with the broad, flat strokes of his distinguished brushwork. Combined with multi-layered, intricate compositions, Frey breathed new life into these vanishing relics of Maine's once lively working waterfronts.

Although Frey has been honing his craft for years, two recent events boosted his newfound confidence: A solo show at the University of Maine Museum of Art in 2016, and the launch of *Philip Frey: Here and Now* (Marshall Wilkes 2018), a book on his career by Daniel Kany and Carl Little.

*Coming Into Focus* is personal and universal. Frey's steadfast focus offers familiar scenes, yet his wild colors unleashed powerful paintings that challenge our imagination.



*Coastal Ornaments*, 2019, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



*Judith Leighton's Shoes, 2019, oil on canvas, 12 x 12*

Judith Leighton's shoes are comfortable, practical, and bear the signs of wear. She was a talented artist and preeminent Blue Hill gallerist, who championed Maine artists and set the benchmark for a successful gallery. No one can truly walk in another's shoes, nor fill them. Even so, one painter can pay homage to another, by looking closely and recording what they see. I am delighted to attempt such a gesture to honor Judith Leighton and her legacy.

— Philip Frey 2019

Frey's show happens to coincide with our second solo show for Judith Leighton, the iconic gallerist, artist, and a competitor whom I deeply admired. In preparation for Leighton's show, her good friend Steve Wright loaned me her book *The Art Spirit* by Robert Henri, and a pair of her shoes, thinking the shoes might add some whimsy to the catalog. These were her gallery shoes, and Leighton liked them so much, she owned two pairs.

I found her book helpful in writing my essay for her catalog, but her shoes were a conundrum—until I decided that a painting of them would make a lovely tribute. I asked Philip Frey to do the honors.

Color is a focus for Frey and Leighton, and both artists are known for the richness of their palettes. His oil paintings and her dry pastels are radiant, and their shows promise to awaken the senses.

— Karin Wilkes, Director,  
Courthouse Gallery



*Interval of Light, 2019, oil on canvas, 7 x 11 inches*



*Burst of Color, 2019, oil on panel, 12 x 16 inches*



*Primrose Dream*, 2019, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



*The Shapes Between*, 2019, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

# PHILIP FREY

by Mark E. Messer

## MOVEMENT AND MOMENTS



*The Gloaming (study)*, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches

For the thirty-plus years Philip Frey and I have been friends, we have shared a love of playful experimentation, whether engaged in wordplay, collaborative doodling, or culinary invention. This trait makes him a fun friend, and it serves him well as an artist.

The works in this show are bold examples of Philip's playful nature and his continued masterful use of color, light, and brushstroke to capture moments and movement.

*Piers and Peaks* is a strong example of Philip's dynamic use of color and light to express a moment on canvas. The cool colors that dominate the painting—lilac, turquoise, and mauve—and the angles of the shadows practically scream early evening. The hazy light suggests dust hanging in the air at the end of the day. In his early career, Philip showed that he



*Pink and Peaks*, 2018, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



*Noble Facades Speak of Spring (study)*, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches



*Thickness of Water*, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches

is capable of accurately reproducing the colors of his subjects. But the hues in *Piers and Peaks* say more about the artist's joyful perception of light than about how anyone else might have seen those buildings, the earth, and that sky, none of which are the real subjects of this painting. The real subjects of *Piers and Peaks* are that hazy light, the artist's mind, and a moment, late in the day in Lubec, that Phil captured so well.

In *Silently Waiting*, a painting of a fishing vessel on the Portland waterfront, Phil's choice of brushstrokes and use of color and light create both movement and moment. Philip used broad strokes to loosely block in the structures in the background rather than capture them in detail. The difficulty of fixing my gaze on these structures gives me the impression that I'm moving, perhaps standing on a float rocking gently from the wake of another vessel in the harbor. Philip's use of irregular brushstrokes in the water and on surfaces where the almost prismatic light is reflected intensifies this impression. As for color and light, the golden glow in the boat, the yellow sky, and the shadows suggest early afternoon, perhaps 2 p.m., the



*Silently Waiting*, 2019, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



*Ode to Winter*, 2019, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

end of a workday and a good time to visit J's Oyster Bar for a pint, some oysters, and clever wordplay.

As you explore this show, take note of Philip's experimentation with color, brushstroke, and light, and the movement and moments they create that make these paintings such a pleasure to behold.



*Hue and Facet*, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches



*Coastal Ornaments (study)*, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches

*Mark E. Messer is the Communications Director at George Stevens Academy in Blue Hill, Maine. He studied how people learn languages at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He knows just enough about a lot of things to get into trouble.*



*The Gloom, 2019, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches*



*Noble Facades Speak of Spring, 2019, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches*



*Somewhere in the Middle*, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches



*Cubes of Color*, 2019, oil on canvas, 9 x 12 inches



*Magnitude of Space*, 2019, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches



*Spring Tulip Bloom, 2019, oil on panel, 12 x 16 inches*



*Above, Below and Inbetween, 2019, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches*



*Through and Through, 2019, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches*



*Pillars and Posts, 2019, oil on canvas, 11 x 14 inches*



*Indigo and Violet, 2019, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 inches*



*Amid the Expanse*, 2019, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches



*Peak Experience*, 2019, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches

# PHILIP FREY



BORN 1967, Portland, Maine

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2009, '11, '13, '14, '16, '18, '19  
Edgewater Gallery, Middlebury, VT, 2018  
Carver Hill Gallery, Rockland, ME, 2017  
University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, ME 2016  
Maine Art Gallery, Kennebunk, ME, 2015  
Gleason Fine Art, Boothbay Harbor, ME 2012

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2006–2019  
Greenhut Galleries, Portland, ME, 2001–2004, '14, '16, '17, '18  
Maine Art Gallery, Kennebunk, ME, 2008–2018  
Edgewater Gallery, Middlebury, VT, 2017  
Thos. Moser, Freeport, ME 2008, 2016, '17  
Penobscot Marine Museum, (juried), Searsport, ME 2004, 2016  
Gleason Fine Art, Boothbay Harbor, ME 2010–2016  
Bert Gallery, Providence, RI, 2014  
University of Maine, Lord Hall Gallery, Orono, ME 2010  
The Firehouse Gallery, Damariscotta, ME 2003–2009  
Shaw Jewelry, Northeast Harbor, ME 2001–2008  
Élan Fine Art, (juried) Rockport, ME 2007  
George Marshall Store Gallery, ME 2006  
Target Gallery, (juried), Alexandria, VA 2003  
Clark House Gallery, Bangor, ME 1998, '99, 2000, '01  
Argosy Gallery, Bar Harbor, ME 1997, 98, '99, 2000

McGrath Dunham Gallery, Castine, ME 1996, '97, 98, '99, 2000  
Between the Muse Gallery, Rockland, ME 1997  
Spring Street Gallery, Belfast, ME, 1997  
June Fitzpatrick Gallery, Portland, ME 1996  
Frick Gallery, Belfast, ME 1994

## SELECTED CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

Acorn Capitol Management, PA  
Company C, NH  
Dick Wolf Films, Dick Wolf, CA

## AWARDS

Castine Plein Air Festival, First Place Award, Castine, Maine 2014  
Heliker-LaHotan Foundation Residency, Great Cranberry Island 2012  
Good Idea Grant, Maine Arts Commission 2004

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kany, Daniel, and Carl Little. *Philip Frey: Here and Now*. Marshall Wilkes, 2018.  
Little, Carl, and David Little. *Paintings of Portland*. Down East Books, 2018.  
Little, Carl, and David Little. *Art of Acadia*. Down East Books, 2016.  
Kany, Daniel. "Greenhut's Biennial 'Portland Show' Sets a Standard." *Portland Press Herald*, 2016.  
Burnham, Emily. "Finding Solace in Landscape." *Bangor Daily News*, 2016  
Kingham, George. "Regionalism and Contemporary Artists in Maine: Opportunities and Challenges." *Maine Policy Review* 24.1, 2015.  
Kadour, Ric Kasini. "Philip Frey: Lavish Attention," exhibition catalog. Maine Art Gallery. 2015.  
*Gettysburg Review*, Fall 2012.  
Little, Carl. "Philip Frey: In the Moment." *Art New England*, 2014  
Kany, Daniel. "The Cultural Space of Painting," exhibition catalog. Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, 2014.  
Little, Carl. "Fresh Ways," exhibition catalog. Courthouse Gallery Fine Art. 2011.  
McAvoy, Suzette, "The Canvas." *Maine Home+Design*, 2010.  
*Maine Home+Design*, "One's to Watch." 2009.  
*Maine Home+Design*, "Extraordinary Artists Whose Work Reflects Maine's Timeless Mystique." 2008.  
Carl Little, and Arnold Skolnick. *Paintings of Maine: A New Collection*. Down East Books, 2006.  
Carl Little, and Arnold Skolnick. *The Art of Monhegan Island*. Down East Books, 2004.

## EDUCATION

BFA (Painting) Cum Laude, Syracuse University, NY 1990  
Columbus College of Art and Design, Columbus, OH 1986–1988



*Crimson Barns*, 2019, oil on panel, 12 x 16 inches

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