



ROBERT SHILLADY

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
FINE ART

ROBERT SHILLADY

Subversion of Reality

AUGUST 15–SEPTEMBER 16, 2012

Essay by Karin Wilkes



Katahdin from Ellis Brook, 2012 oil on rag mounted on panel, 8 x 10 inches

COVER *The End of Dada?* (detail), 2012, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 45 inches

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6 court street ellsworth, ME 04605 courthousegallery.com 207 667 6611



Big Brook Outlet, 2012, acrylic on rag mounted on panel, 8 x 10 inches



Black Brook, 2012, acrylic on linen, 20 x 24 inches

ROBERT SHILLADY **Subversion of Reality**



Herrick Bay Freshet
2010
acrylic on linen
20 x 24 inches

OPPOSITE

The Lobsterman
2006
acrylic on canvas
56 x 70 inches

Robert Shillady's paintings fluctuate between the crowded hubbub of summertime and the isolation of woodland, yet these stylized and obsessively detailed venues have much in common: both feature vast casts of characters, albeit one human and the other perennial. Additionally, all of Shillady's paintings, oil or acrylic, share the same hard edges, intense clarity, and bright, bold colors. As dichotomies often do, Shillady's opposing motifs create a symbiotic truth about life here in Maine, and he has received recognition for this ambitious work. In the past decade, two of his narrative paintings, *The Lobsterman* and *The Buidlers*, and one landscape, *Herrick Bay Freshet*, have been included in three Portland Museum of Art Biennials, a series of juried exhibitions featuring exceptional artists connected to the state.

Shillady's landscapes capture the density of the forest—tight, orderly, straight trunks rise above a chaotic battlefield of fallen branches and decomposing stumps. A self-proclaimed bushwhacker, Shillady roams the uninhabited woods behind his home or backpacks through the Maine North Woods looking for remote and complex scenes to paint. While working on landscapes such as *Black Brook*, Shillady develops the themes, compositions, and settings for his larger narrative paintings. These large-scale narratives often include his comical, sometimes poignant, commentary on summer people and locals alike. As always with Shillady's paintings, his signature red airplane can be found tucked like an insect in a pocket of sky, begging the question—is it ever possible to escape humanity? Shillady's answer is an emphatic “No!”





Churchill Ridge from High Bank
2012
acrylic on rag mounted on panel
8 x 10 inches

OPPOSITE
The End of Dada?
2012
acrylic on canvas
40 x 45 inches

Figures and trees combine in one of Shillady's most compelling new narrative paintings: *The End of Dada?*. Fraught with visual, literary, and performance art references to the Dada art movement, *The End of Dada?* is an ode to the group's elimination of logic and rationale and their embrace of absurd, amusing, and irrational forms of artistic expression.

There is much to be mined in *The End of Dada?*; some of the painting's references are subtle, such as the clouds which take their shape from Jean Arp sculptures, or the Francis Picabia influence on the boat rigging. Other inclusions are more apparent, such as Marcel Duchamp's urinal sculpture, *Fountain*, or the reference to Man Ray's famed photograph, *Violon d'Ingres*. Shillady has also incorporated more recent cultural icons which seem to implement the Dada manifesto, such as Keith Haring's red dog and Jasper John's beer cans. Shillady includes his own brand of Dadaesque buffoonery, offering up to his personal creation, *The Goatman*, in partial view behind a rock. An evocative composition, *The End of Dada?* insists on thoughtful consideration from viewers, perhaps even some research. The painting is challenging to understand without context, though, in true Dada style, it perhaps cannot be understood at all.

The Dada movement is nearing its hundredth birthday, and the question mark at the end of the painting's title implies that perhaps Shillady himself is not sure if it is alive or dead. But its influence can be felt in much of his work, in his willingness to overthrow realism in art, to perceive scenery not as it exists, but to subvert reality in favor of distortion, humor, and intuition.

—Karin Wilkes
Director, Courthouse Gallery

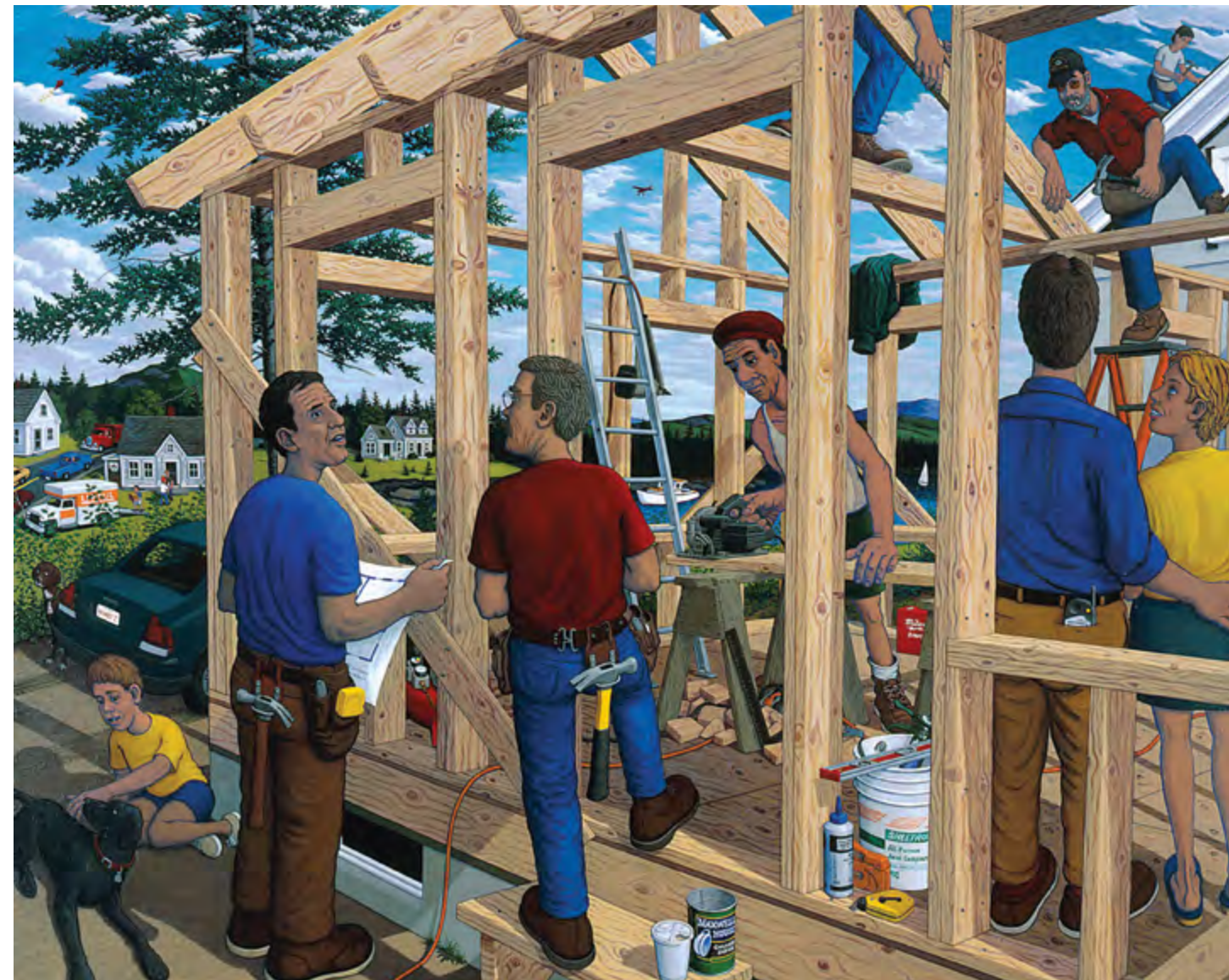




Eggemoggin Reach Regatta
2000
acrylic on Masonite
39 x 87 inches



Catboat on the Ways, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 34 x 36 inches



The Builders, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 56 x 70 inches



Union Street Blue Hill, 1997, acrylic on Masonite, 40 x 54 inches



Summer People, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 50 inches



The Woodcutter, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 74 inches



Herrick Bay East, 2000, oil on linen, 34 x 34 inches



Three Pines, 2006, oil on linen, 32 x 34 inches



Herrick Bay Cove, 2001, oil on canvas, 20 x 30 inches

ROBERT SHILLADY

BORN Boston, MA 1947

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2012
Hancock County Auditorium, Ellsworth, ME 1995, 2001
Art Intentions, Hanover, MA 1987
Huntingestmen Studio, Marston's Mills, MA 1982
Blue Wheel Gallery, West Barnstable, MA 1975

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2007–2012
Portland Museum of Art Biennial, Portland, ME 2005, 2007, 2010
Blum Gallery, COA, Church & State/Politics & Religion, Bar Harbor, ME 2006
State House, The Upper Coast: MDI To Belfast, Augusta, ME 2004
Penobscot Marine Museum, Curator: Carl Little Honorable Mention Searsport, ME 2004
Blum Gallery, College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME 2003, 2004
Bangor Symphony Orchestra, Musical Revelations, Purchase Prize, Bangor, ME 2003
Jurors: Bruce Brown, Chris Crosman, Wally Mason
Union of Maine Visual Artists Group Show 2002, 2003
Wendell Gilley Museum, Birds in Flight, Southwest Harbor, ME 2002
Washington CT Art Association, Sesquicentennial Exhibit, Washington, DC 2001
The Blaine House, Percent for Art: Maine's Public Art Legacy, Augusta, ME 1997
Deer Isle Art Association, Four-person show, Deer Isle, ME 1988
Maine Coast Artists, Eighth Annual Juried Exhibition, Rockport, ME 1986
Jurors: John S. Ames III, Bruce D. Hooton, Victoria Oscarsson
Mountain Ash Gallery, Summer Preview Show, Brooklin, ME 1985
Raid on the CIC, University of Rhode Island. Curator: Padric Meagher 1984
Hunterdon Art Center, 27th National Print Exhibition, Clinton, NJ 1983
Jurors: Robert Anderson, Ruth Leaf., Stefan Martin
Boston University Art Gallery, 35th Boston Printmakers National Exhibition, Boston, MA 1983
Juror: David Bumbeck
Art Complex Museum, New England Juried Show, Duxbury, MA 1983
Provincetown Art Association, 4th Annual Young Artists Show, Juried, Provincetown, MA 1982
Walkey Gallery, Summer Group Show, Invitational, Concord, MA 1982
Providence Art Club, Open Print Show, Juried, Providence, RI 1981
Cape Cod Art Association, Open Jury Show, Barnstable, MA 1981
DeCordova Museum, Boston Printmakers National Exhibition, Lincoln, MA 1980
Jurors: Gabor Peterdi and Frederick P. Walkey
Cape Cod Art Association, All New England Exhibition, Barnstable, MA 1980
Jurors: Roger Curtis, Allen Davidson, Marshall Joyce
Arts 350, Boston's Jubilee, Saks Fifth Avenue, Boston, MA 1980
Curator: Norma Trust Sherman

Cape Cod Art Association, All New England Exhibit, Barnstable, MA 1979
Jurors: Tom Dunlay, Marilyn Lehmann, Sidney Simon
Temple Beth Am, Arts '79, Framingham Center, MA 1979
DeCordova Museum, Patron's Choice, Artists Under 36, Lincoln, MA 1977
Jurors: Edith Tonelli, Frederick P. Walkey, Merrie Blocker
Jewish Community Center, 3-person show, part of city-wide event, Brookline, MA 1977
Visual Artists Union Gallery, Invitational, Boston, MA 1977
Cambridge Art Association, Juror: Davis Carroll, Cambridge, MA 1975
Blue Wheel Gallery, Young Artists Show, Invitational 1974
Cape Cod Arts Association, Open Jury Show, Cape Code, MA 1974

COMMISSIONS

Painting, Maine Percent for Art Program, Brooklin (ME) School 1995
Cover and Illustrations, *Bostonia Magazine*, Brookline, MA 1984
Illustrations, Bryant College, Smithfield, RI 1981

COLLECTIONS

The Brooklin School, Brooklin, ME
Bangor Symphony Orchestra
Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School, Deer Isle, ME
Mount Hermon School, Northampton, MA
The Gunnery School, Washington, CT

REVIEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

Carl Little, "Biennial Man," *The Ellsworth American*, March 29, 2007.
Carl Little, *Paintings of Maine: A New Collection*, Down East Books, October 2006.
Abigail Curtis, "Troubled Relations: Maine Artists Find Disconcerting Disconnect Between Religion and Politics in America," *Bangor Daily News*, March 11, 2006.
Carl Little, "Church, State Share Walls in COA Show," *The Ellsworth American*, March 9, 2006.
William Zimmer, "On Gallery's Walls: A Reunion," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2001.
Edgar Allen Beem, "The Visual Arts: Rites of Passage in Rockport," *Maine Times*, May 30, 1986.
Emmet Meara, "ME Coast Gallery's Juried Exhibit," *Bangor Daily News*, May 30, 1986.
Robert Taylor, "Printmaking Exhibit Conveys Point Deftly," *Boston Sunday Globe*, June 12, 1983.
Jackie Greene, "Sunshine Dairy Immortalized in Three-dimensional Art Work," *The Wellesley Townsman*, December 7, 1978.
Mary Lou Kelley, "Original Art in "Non-arty" Places," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 28, 1976.

EDUCATION

Boston University School of Fine Arts, BFA 1970
DeCordova Museum School, silkscreen studies with Anne Ballou, 1978



Winter, 2004, oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches



The Deeryard, 2007, oil on linen, 28 x 32 inches

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