



TOM CURRY

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
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TOM CURRY

Gradients of Light

JULY 10 – AUGUST 7, 2020

Essay by Carl Little



Mist, detail, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches
cover *King Tide*, detail, oil on panel, 48 x 57 inches

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“I stretched out my arms and laid my palms on the earth, and, yes, the rocking persisted. The rocking of the Island as it sailed through the sea and the night bearing into the future its freight of gulls and sparrow.”

— JM Coetzee

King Tide, oil on birch panel, 48 x 57 inches



TOM CURRY

Gradients of Light

by Carl Little

Since arriving in Maine in 1995, Tom Curry has established himself as a preeminent painter of place—no mean feat considering the state’s rich and ongoing history of landscape painting. Using brush and palette knife, Curry has created consistently brilliant images, many of them coastal. He is a master composer, arranging elements of his surroundings—clouds, water, rocks, islands—into radiant representations of a beloved world.

The painter was fortunate to settle in a part of Maine with bountiful material. In fact, Curry has rarely strayed far from Brooklin where he has maintained a studio in the town’s former schoolhouse on the Reach Road for going on twenty-five years. He speaks excitedly about some of his favorite spots, be it Cape Rosier or a spot near the Falls Bridge as you’re heading toward Blue Hill. He also

loves Stonington, returning nearly every year to paint the iconic views from above the town looking out to sea.

And then there’s Chatto Island. Over the years Curry has painted the island time and again, finding a kind of artistic-spiritual center in the spruce-topped islet that provides shelter for Center Harbor and, according to topo maps, rises twenty-six feet above Eggemoggin Reach. A short walk from his studio, the island beckons in all seasons—and has inspired paintings that have earned Curry a spot in the pantheon of contemporary American landscape painters.

Among Curry’s work from this past winter are several stunning portraits of Chatto. In two of them the island almost disappears within what



Mist, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches



he calls “gradients of light” that resonate up and down the picture plane. This vision, he explains, is almost like “obliteration,” but the island does not disappear. Mirage-like, Chatto becomes a manifestation of one’s desire to find something enduring in the view—in what can sometimes be a dark world.

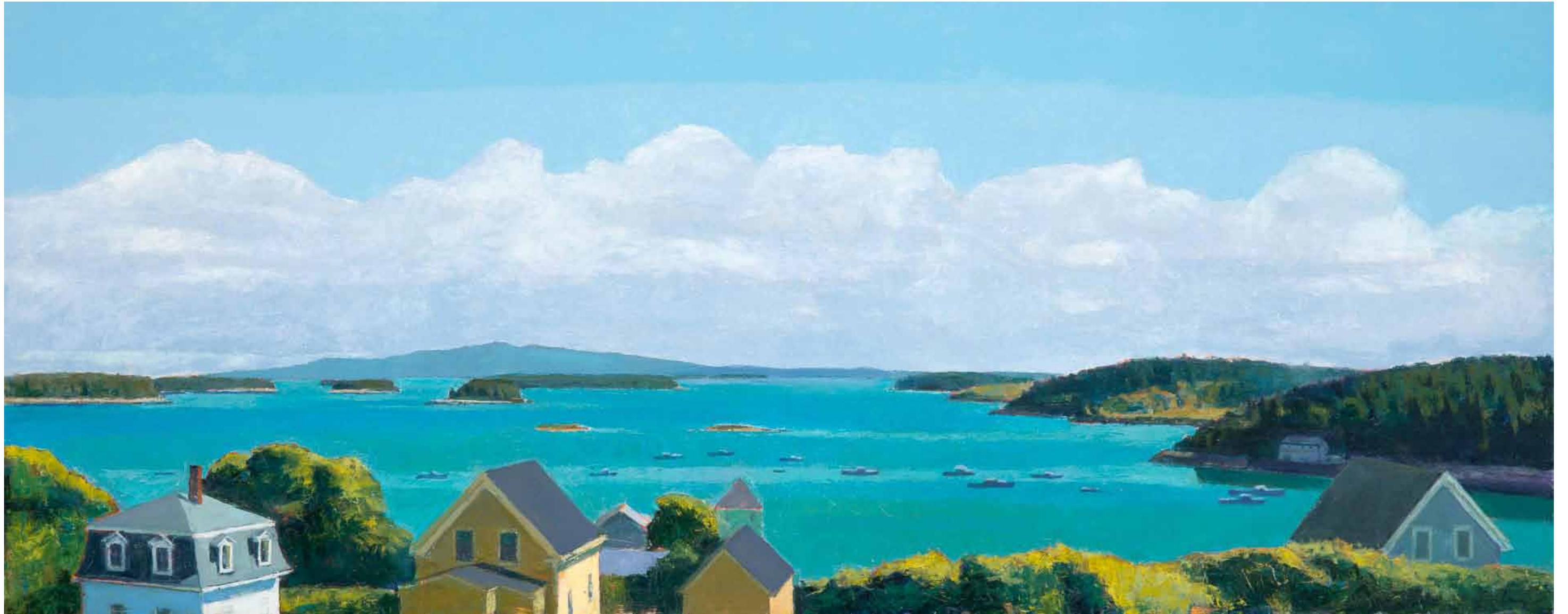
Both paintings feel more modern than Curry’s other island portraits, leaning into Color Field and even Op Art territory. Yet they remain about place, stunning evocations of a single island on the horizon that hovers, ethereal, in the middle distance, in a depth of air. One recalls what author Terry Tempest Williams once wrote in an appreciation: “The island [Curry] paints over and over again is a shimmering liturgy of light, transcendent.”

Curry loves light. He recalls George Pappas, his figure drawing teacher at the Rhode Island School of Design, telling his students they should paint the light coming from the body before them. That directive can also apply to the land, sea and sky, which take on a glow in Curry’s work that is the result of relentless scraping and sanding and painting to capture the sensation and glory of a particular motif. He is always moving away from the literal without sacrificing the essence of the scene.

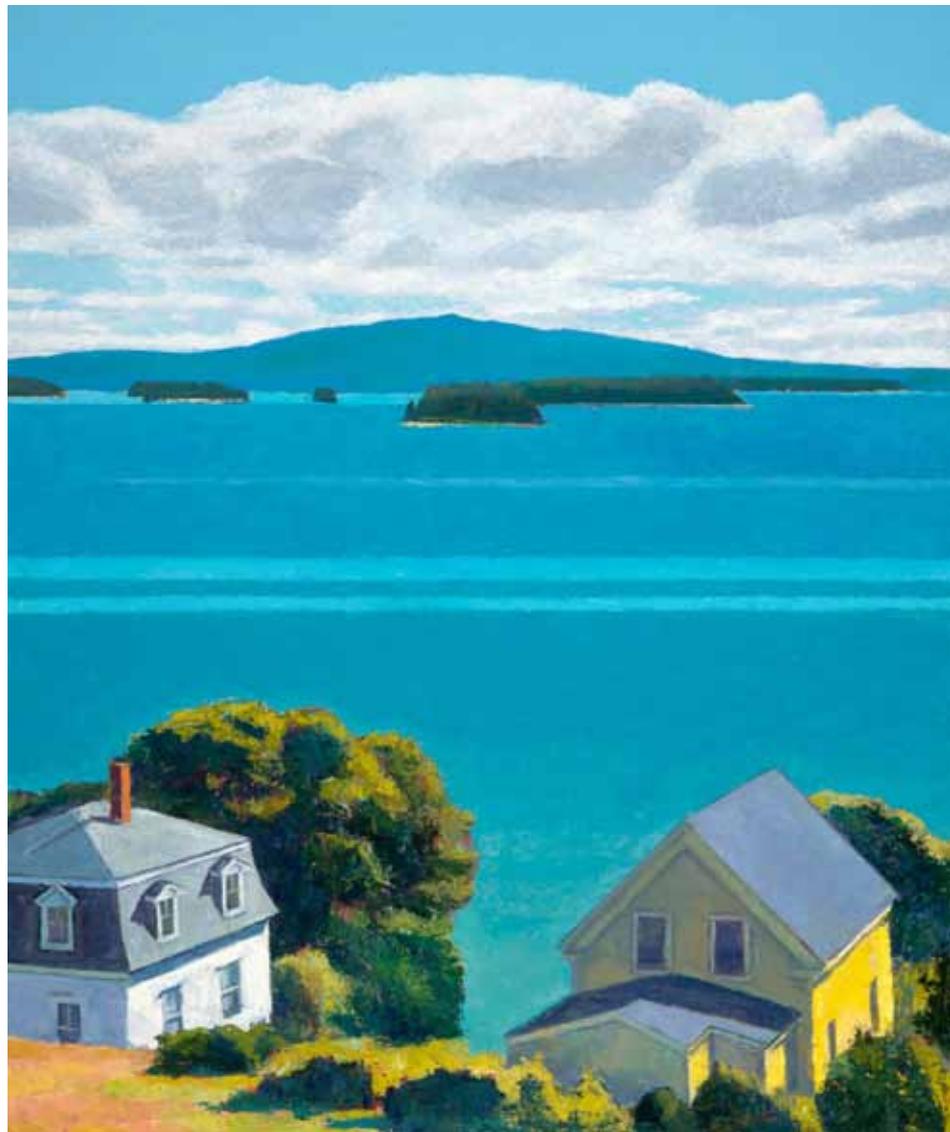
In the recent months of uncertainty, Curry has sought to represent a kind of life force in the world around him. We find solace and beauty in his profoundly blue skies, his tousled clouds, resilient rocks and ethereal islands. For these paintings, thanks—and praise—are owed.

*This appreciation is based on a visit to Curry’s studio in Brooklin on June 3, 2020. The Terry Tempest Williams quote is from *Island: Paintings by Tom Curry (Down East, 2012)*. Carl Little is the author of numerous books on the art and artists of Maine. He lives and writes on Mount Desert Island.*

Serene Waters, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches



The Harbor, oil on panel, 24 x 60 inches



OPPOSITE

Late Summer

oil on panel

20 x 36 inches

Isle Au Haut

oil on panel

20 x 36 inches

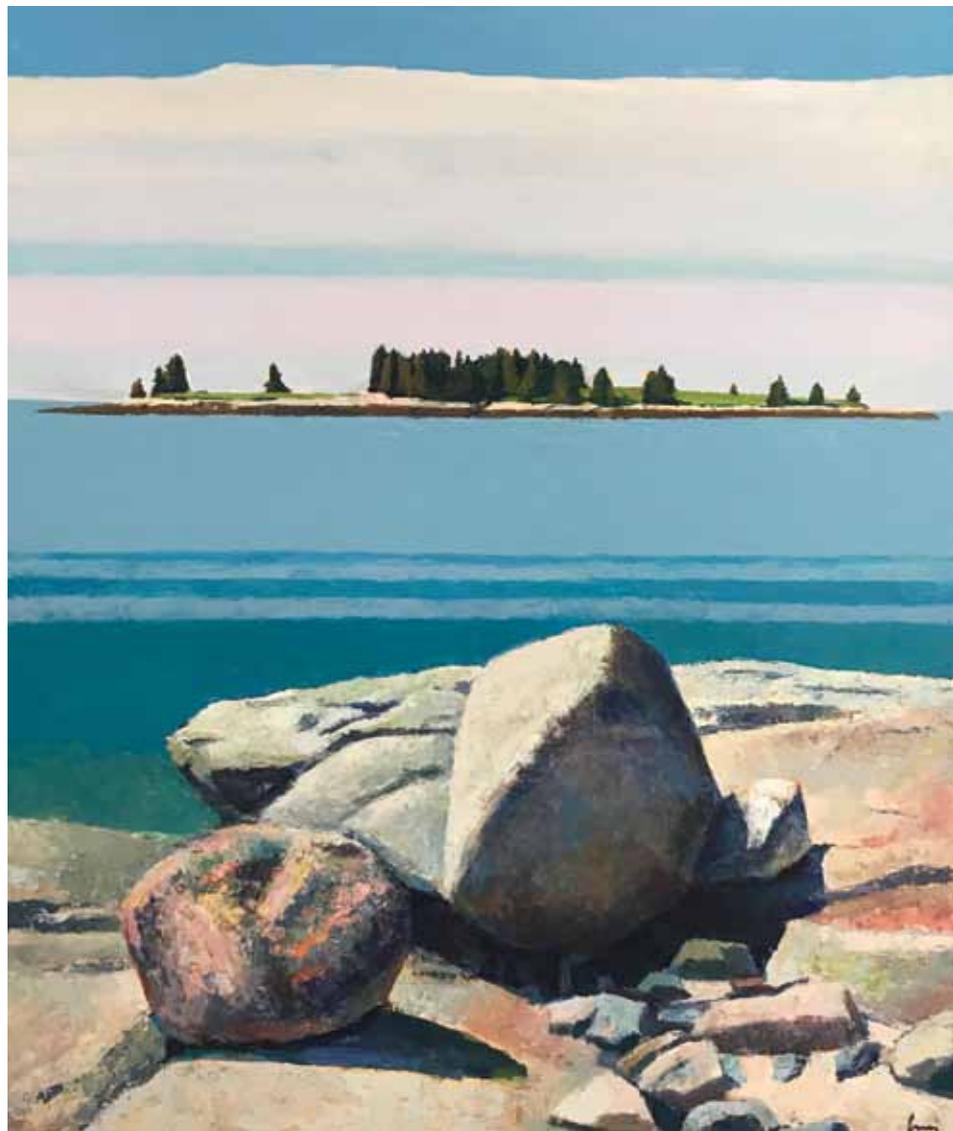




The Race, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches



Radiance, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches



OPPOSITE

High Tide

oil on birch panel
43 x 36 inches

Lazy Gut Island

oil on birch panel
43 x 36 inches





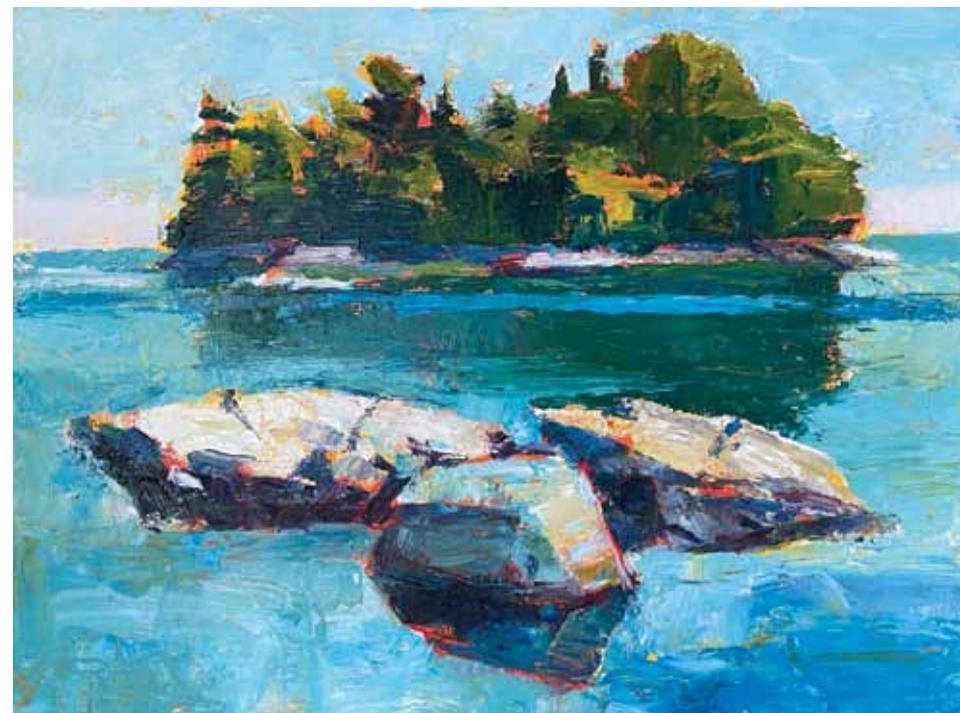
Heavy Weather, oil on panel, 16 x 20 inches



Still Water, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches



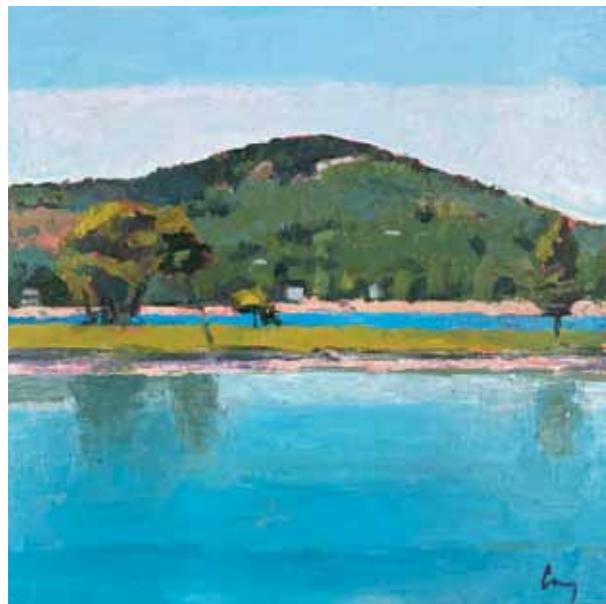
Mid-Winter, oil on birch panel, 36 x 43 inches



Mid-Tide Study, oil on panel, 12 x 16 inches



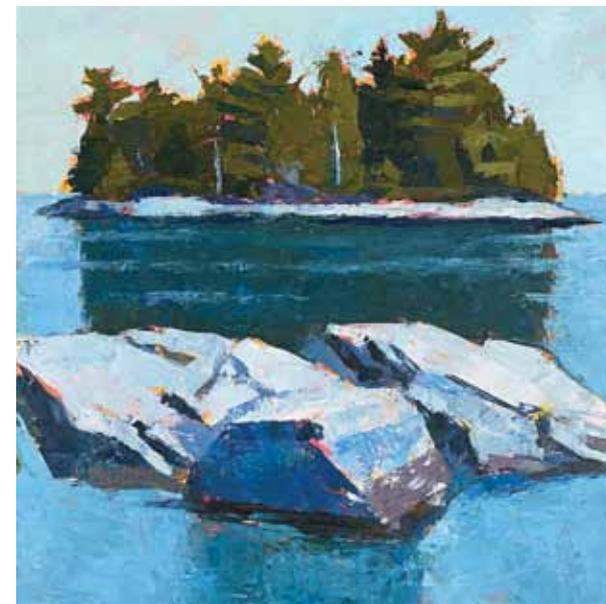
Blue Hill Mountain, High Tide, oil on panel, 12 x 12 inches



Blue Hill Mountain, High Tide, oil on panel, 12 x 12 inches



Sheephead Island, oil on panel, 12 x 12 inches



Island and Ledges, oil on panel, 12 x 12 inches

TOM CURRY



Tom Curry is an accomplished oil painter, who paints both the wild places and the small villages and harbors on the peninsula where he lives in Brooklin, Maine. An *en plein air* artist at heart, Curry prefers working outdoors in direct contact with the clear, searing light or a dense fog, the heat of the sun or a frigid wind, the sounds of crickets or the distant drone of a fishing boat,

and the smell of salt air. “I still can’t believe how gorgeous it [Maine] is; it’s serene, but disheveled; it’s raw and not overly organized.”

For Curry the Maine landscape is more than a passive backdrop of scenery. His work explores passing of time in its natural environment, the relationship between stillness and flux. He wants the viewer to feel alive—to experience the wild, muscular, and ultimately unknowable mysteries of the natural forces that are breathing, ever changing, and seamless.

Curry, who has been painting for over twenty-five years, frequently revisits the landscape of Chatto, a small island just offshore from his home. Chatto has become the subject of an ongoing series of more than sixty paintings, many of which were highlighted in the monograph *Island: Paintings by Tom Curry* (Down East Books 2012). The enduring magnetism of Curry’s island paintings is his ability to depict what he calls the paradox of place: “It is not fixed, but always changing—the light shifts from moment to moment, water is never still, clouds come and go.”

Curry’s work in numerous private and public collections, including the Farnsworth Art Museum, Delaware Art Museum, Wheaton College Museum, Federal Reserve Bank Collection, Boston Red Sox, Putnam Investments, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Fidelity Investments, and General Electric.

Art historian and critic Carl Little highlighted Curry’s work in the book *The Art of Maine in Winter*. His work has been featured in numerous publications including

Down East Magazine, Art New England, Island Journal, Bangor Daily News, Ellsworth American, The Boston Globe, and *The New Yorker*.

Curry earned his MS from University of Massachusetts in 1987. He holds a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design, 1981, and he completed a Graduate Program at Yale University in 1982.

BORN 1957

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2012, 2020

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

The Courthouse Gallery, Ellsworth, ME 2011–present

Wiscasset Bay Gallery, Wiscasset, ME 2010–present

Gleason Fine Arts Gallery, Portland, ME 2009

Gleason Fine Arts Gallery, Boothbay Harbor, ME 2009–present

Thos Moser Gallery, Freeport, ME 2005–present

George Marshall Store Gallery, York Harbor, ME 2005–present

Handworks Gallery, Blue Hill, ME 2003

Clark House Gallery, Bangor, ME 1999

The Clown, Portland, ME 1999–2003

Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, ME 1998–2007

Gallery, 357 Main Street, Rockland, ME 1998

Firehouse Gallery, Damariscotta, ME 1998–2009

Somerville Museum, Central Street, Somerville, MA 1994

Springfield Museum of Arts, Springfield, MA 1993

SELECTED CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

Farnsworth Art Museum

Delaware Art Museum

Wheaton College Museum

U.S. State Department

Federal Reserve Bank Collection

Boston Red Sox

Putnam Investments

Boston Company
Cambridge Savings Bank
Brigham & Women’s Hospital
Fidelity Investments
General Electric

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKS

Art New England, “Spotlight Review,” 2013.

“ISLAND, paintings by Tom Curry,” Down East Books, 2012.

Maine Home and Design, “The Canvas,” 2010.

Davis, Katherine. “East Hope,” (Cover), Penguin Books, 2009.

Little, Carl. “In Residence,” *Island Journal*, 2008.

“The Artist’s View,” *Bangor Daily News*, 2008.

Shetterly, Susan. “Painting Chatto Island,” *Down East Magazine*, 2007.

Little, Carl. “The Art of Maine in Winter,” Down East Books, 2002.

Bennet, Jenny. “Eye On The Coast,” *Maine Boats and Harbors*, 1999.

Little, Carl. “True Believers,” *Ellsworth American*, 2002.

Morgenroth, Lynda. “City Lights,” *The Boston Globe*, 1993.

The New Yorker Magazine, Illustrations, 1993–1999.

TEACHING

Decordova Museum School, Lincoln MA 1993–1996

Danforth Museum School, Framingham, MA 1992–1995

Cambridge Center for Adult Education 1987–1995

Wentworth Institute, Boston, MA 1994

EDUCATION

MS University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 1987

BFA Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI 1981

Graduate Program, Yale University, New Haven, CT 1982



Mid-Tide, oil on birch panel, 48 x 57 inches



Pack Ice, oil on panel, 16 x 20 inches

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