An abstract painting featuring a central, dark, pointed shape that resembles a stylized arrow or a drop. This shape is set against a background of light, textured, off-white or cream-colored areas. In the bottom left and bottom right corners, there are rectangular sections of a vibrant, teal or turquoise color. The overall composition is geometric and minimalist, with a focus on color and form.

WILLIAM IRVINE

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art

WILLIAM IRVINE

Sea Change

JULY 12 – AUGUST 6, 2021

Essay by Suzette McAvoy

A Life in Art by Whiskey Wolf Media



Spring Garden, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches

COVER *A Break in the Cloud*, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
FINEART



The Return, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 72 inches

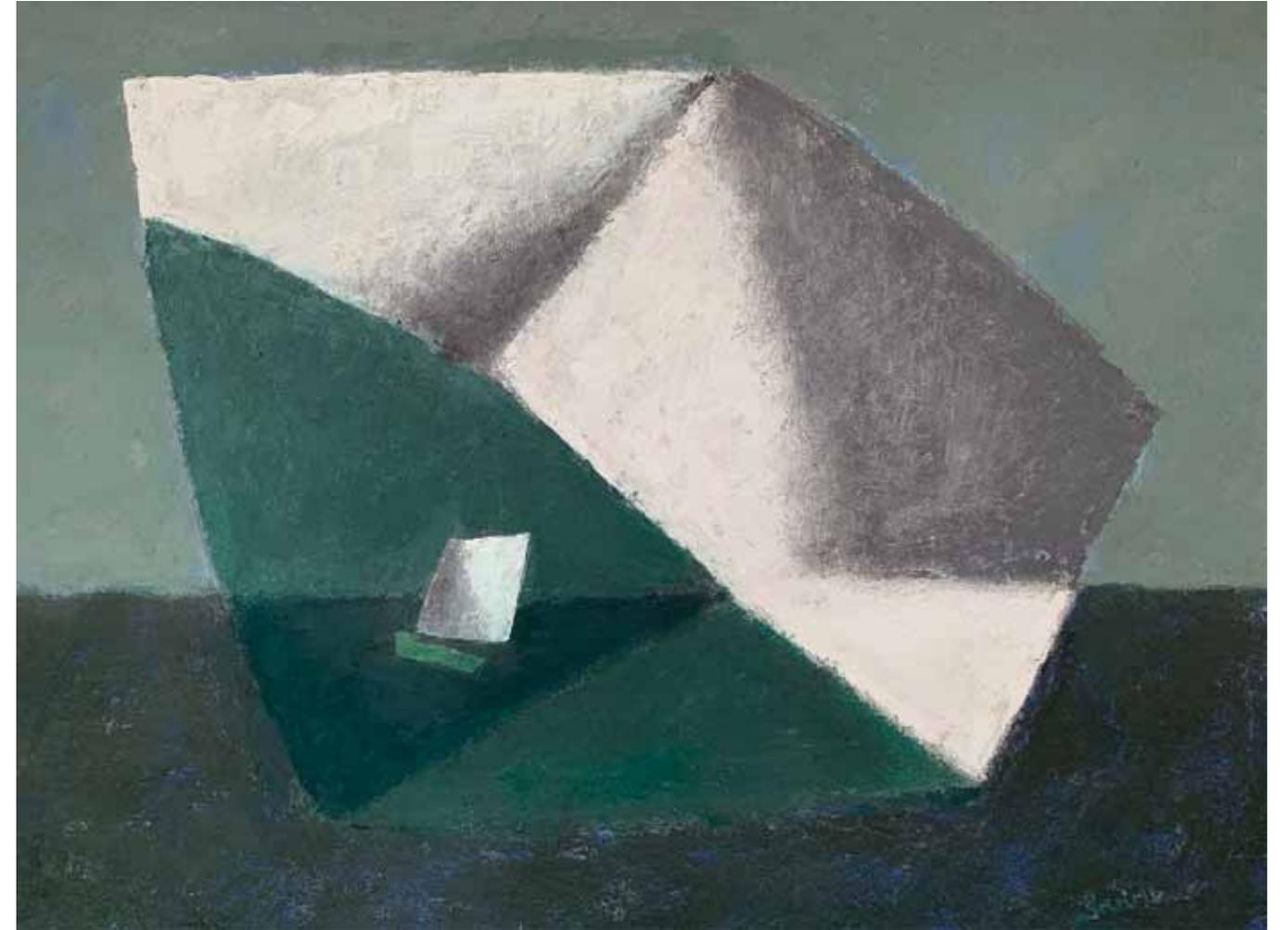


WILLIAM IRVINE

“Celebrating his 90th Year!”



Day Sail, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Under the Cloud, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Remembering the Dundonald Hills

In my dreaming
sheep sleep on green hills
bald as my father's head.

High over the Firth of Clyde
past brooks and brambles
and magpie meadows
I carry the sun on my shoulder.

But when the rain
crops the hill
I find shelter
in the wee farmhouse
that will always be there.

— William Irvine

STOPPING TIME

THE RECENT PAINTINGS OF WILLIAM IRVINE

by Suzette McAvoy

On a bright clear day in late March, I drove from my home in Belfast, Maine, up the coast and down through the Blue Hill peninsula to visit the artist William Irvine— who turned ninety in February of this year—at his home



Irvine in a kilt at the age of seven with his dog Gerda on the beach in Troon, Scotland.

and studio in the town of Brooklin, perhaps best known as home to *Wooden Boat* magazine, and where E.B. White wrote *Charlotte's Web*.

Situated on a hook of land, a stone's throw from the water, Irvine's house and studio directly

face the long low profile of Tinker Island, with sweeping views of Blue Hill Bay. Tinker, and this stretch of water, feature prominently in his work of the past decade. He has been “on watch” here since moving to the property with his wife Margery, a writer, in 2010. The couple had the house built to their specifications and it is filled with an eclectic, impressive collection of art, and a wall of books.

The studio, a few steps from the house, is a straightforward structure with one window framing the sea. Two large easels hold canvases in process; finished paintings are stacked neatly along one wall. A towering shelf of sketchbooks fills the far corner. The remainder of the space is taken up by worktables scattered with the artist's tools of the trade, tubes of paint, and the large clamshells he uses as palettes. “Paint with love and keep it simple,” is advice he received as a young artist and heeds to this day.



Storm Over Tinker, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Sketching near Cape Split, Maine, spring 1971.

Place—the “emotional experience” of it—is essential to Irvine’s art. His deep attachments to the rhythms, atmosphere, architecture, and natural environs of the places he has lived form the scaffolding of his life and approach to art. “I begin by sketching out an idea until I get a structural doorway through which I can pass to get to a painting.” Once through, he works directly on the canvas, wet on wet, in a single intensive session, following where the painting leads, letting the image evolve as forms and colors dictate. “I do not end up where I started,” he says. “I find it on the canvas.”

The latest group of paintings began with a series of four large-scale horizontal images of a lone lobster boat underway, its white hull tailed by a long straight line of wake, over which gulls hover, set against broad bands of sea and sky. Each painting is distinguished by a single color—blue, orange, green, grey—evocative of a time of day or sea condition. It is a scene Irvine sees “every day in the summer.” The composition, distilled from observed reality, is deceptively simple, its few spare elements conveying motion, specificity of environment, and emotional impact.



William Irvine and his wife, Margery, during a Zoom Talk hosted by Courthouse Gallery in 2020.

Scale plays a critical role in this series of paintings, as it does in all of Irvine’s art. The proportions of the small boat to the scope of the sea, the width and breadth of the sky in relation to the water, each carries “the experience of the ocean, not just a design.” We are reminded of the artist’s lifelong association with coastal places, from his upbringing in Troon, Scotland, to his more than fifty years living in Down East Maine.

Irvine first arrived in Maine from London in 1968, making the passage on the SS United States, lured by an advertisement for one hundred

acres and a farmhouse for \$4,000. When the farmhouse proved to be uninhabitable, he and his late wife rented an A-frame in Millbridge for the summer. Waking to the sound of gulls and lobster boats setting out to sea, Irvine “fell in love instantly.” Maine has been his home, and principal subject, since.

Subsequent years were spent exploring the coastal communities of Corea, Jonesport, and Sorrento, followed by decades living in a “charming, but drafty” 1815 center-chimney Cape in Blue Hill. The small white clapboard houses of



Woman with a Watering Can, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Wash Day, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches

rural Maine reminded him of the farmhouses of his native Scotland, and the motif is one he has returned to many times over the years. “The small house paintings, I do for the joy of it,” he says, “kind of like an hors d’oeuvre. I push myself when I do the abstracted seascapes, they’re the main course.”

Irvine’s house paintings are often populated by one or two figures engaged in domestic tasks, hanging laundry, feeding chickens, repairing a window, watering plants, burning brush, or simply communing with nature, often accompanied by a dog or cat, a few gulls or sheep. The sea, or the suggestion of it, is never far away. As invented as these narratives are, they are anchored by observed memories of people and places. They are, in the artist’s words, “A direct stab to the heart.”

The power of Irvine’s work is his ability to pare a scene down to its essentials from the arrangement and scale of forms to the selection and intensity of colors, while retaining a sensation of physical presence and feelings. His abstracted seascapes are testament to this. Employing the horizon line as the constant, clouds and their corresponding reflections are offered in a great array of shapes, sizes, and colors, conveying the



A Break in the Cloud, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



Irvine in his studio in Brooklin, Maine. PHOTO Jeffery Becton

At ninety, Irvine is painting at the top of his game. The synergetic relationship between subject and craft is fully in hand. His preferred method is to apply paint by stippling with paper towels to build up layers of color, blending and shaping forms, adding details later by brush or palette knife. The result is paintings that pulse with color, presence, and atmosphere, their surfaces seductively rich with texture. “When I’m painting,” he tells me, “I’m not old, I never feel my years. Painting is timeless, when you’re painting you stop time.”

sea’s infinite variety. While seemingly abstract, to those that have experienced life at sea, the effects are accurate, and palpable.

A recent work depicts a small white sailboat set against a square of red in a vast dark sky; the horizon is pink, and the boat’s triangular sail is reflected in a smaller square of bluish grey in the inky black water. With less than a handful of shapes and colors, everything is understood, the quietude, the solitary contentment, the overwhelming beauty of the evening. “We pass through nature very quickly, but nature is always there.”

Suzette McAvoy is the former Executive Director and Chief Curator at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art. She has written and lectured extensively on the art and artists of Maine.



Red Sunset, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Heading Out, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 72 inches



Evening Cloud, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Evening Walk, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



Table with Mussels, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Cloud Settling, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Lobster and Bait Bag, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Mermaid Resting in the Fog, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



WILLIAM IRVINE: A LIFE IN ART

A Life in Art is an upcoming film that chronicles the seventy-year career of artist William Irvine (b.1931), a Scottish/American expressionist painter whose abstract overtones and underlying geometric forms make his iconic work both assessible and modern. The film follows Irvine's life and artistic growth as it spans both shores of the Atlantic, from the village of Troon in Scotland where he was born and raised, to his eventual migration to America and the coast of Maine where he spent the past sixty years living and painting.

Utilizing never-before-seen archival footage interwoven with present-day footage, the film provides an intimate portrait of Irvine's artistic endeavors as he recounts historical moments during the twentieth century, including World War II in Scotland; the gritty, industrialized streets of Glasgow; and the bohemian neighborhood of 1950s Soho London where Irvine and his best friend artist William Crozier rubbed shoulders with the likes of Francis Bacon and Paul Potts, and where he came of age as an abstract painter.



Filmmaker David Jester setting up for an interview at Irvine's home and filming Irvine on Jeffery Becton's boat.



The archival footage was shot by Irvine in the 1960s, when he went to Provence in the south of France to make a film about Vincent Van Gogh. Irvine planned to film the outside of the nineteenth century asylum and monastery in Saint-Rémy where Van Gogh spent a year as a patient and created over 150 paintings.

Upon his arrival, Irvine discovered that the old building was about to be demolished. While the workmen were having lunch in a field, Irvine and his wife slipped inside the monastery where they explored the gardens and the interiors, eventually making their way to the cells with bars on the windows and doors. Using a Bolex 16mm camera, Irvine was able to film a great deal of the landscape and the interior, including a cell looking out the window at the olive trees in the garden. Although Irvine abandoned the project due to the high cost of film at the time, this never-before-seen footage survived and is included in *A Life in Art*.

For notices about the release of A Life in Art, and venues to see the entire film, please join the email list at courthousegallery.com.





Night Fishing, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Evening Gulls, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



The Lobster Coast, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



The Broken Cloud, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



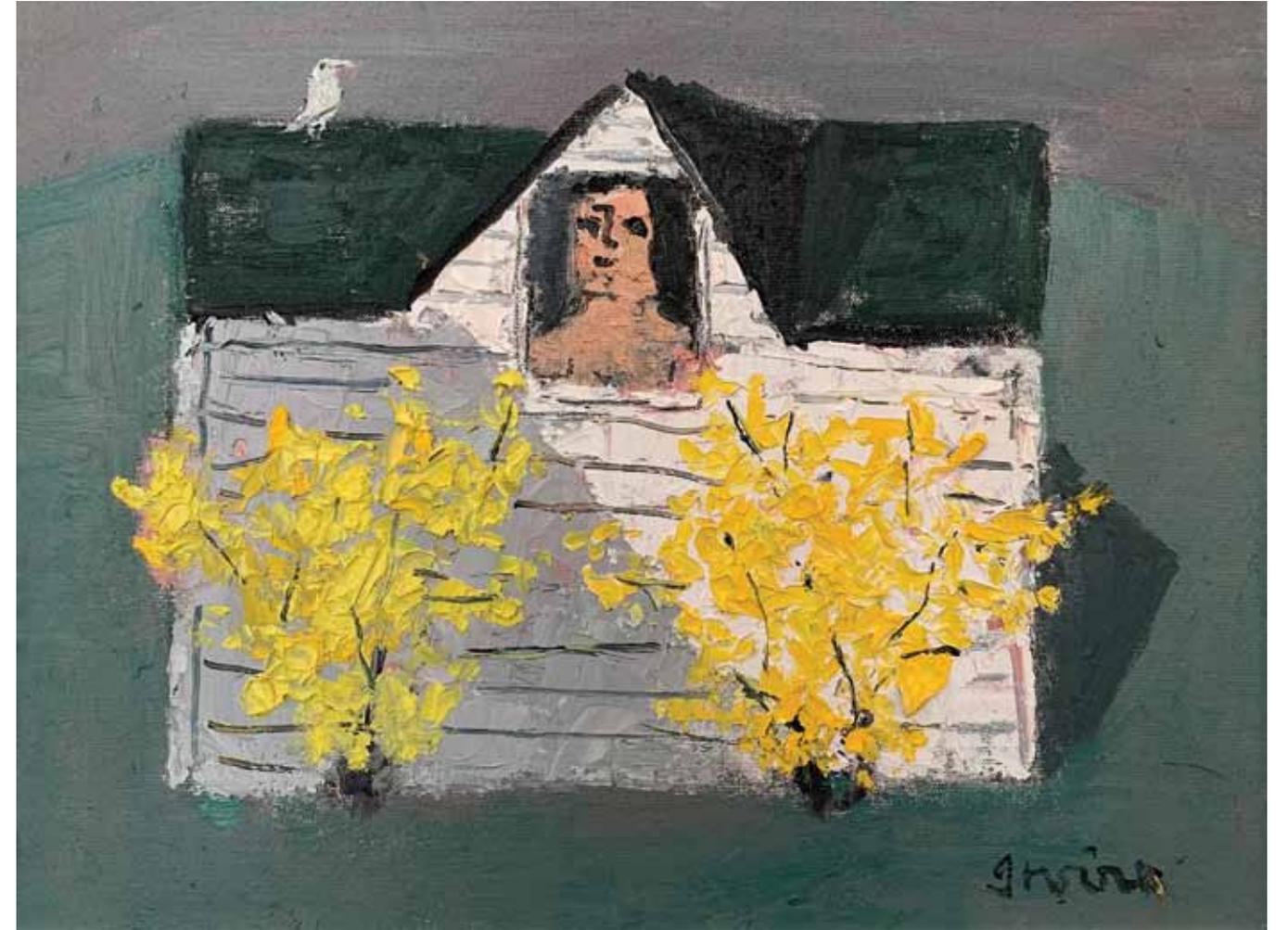
Table with Lobsters, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



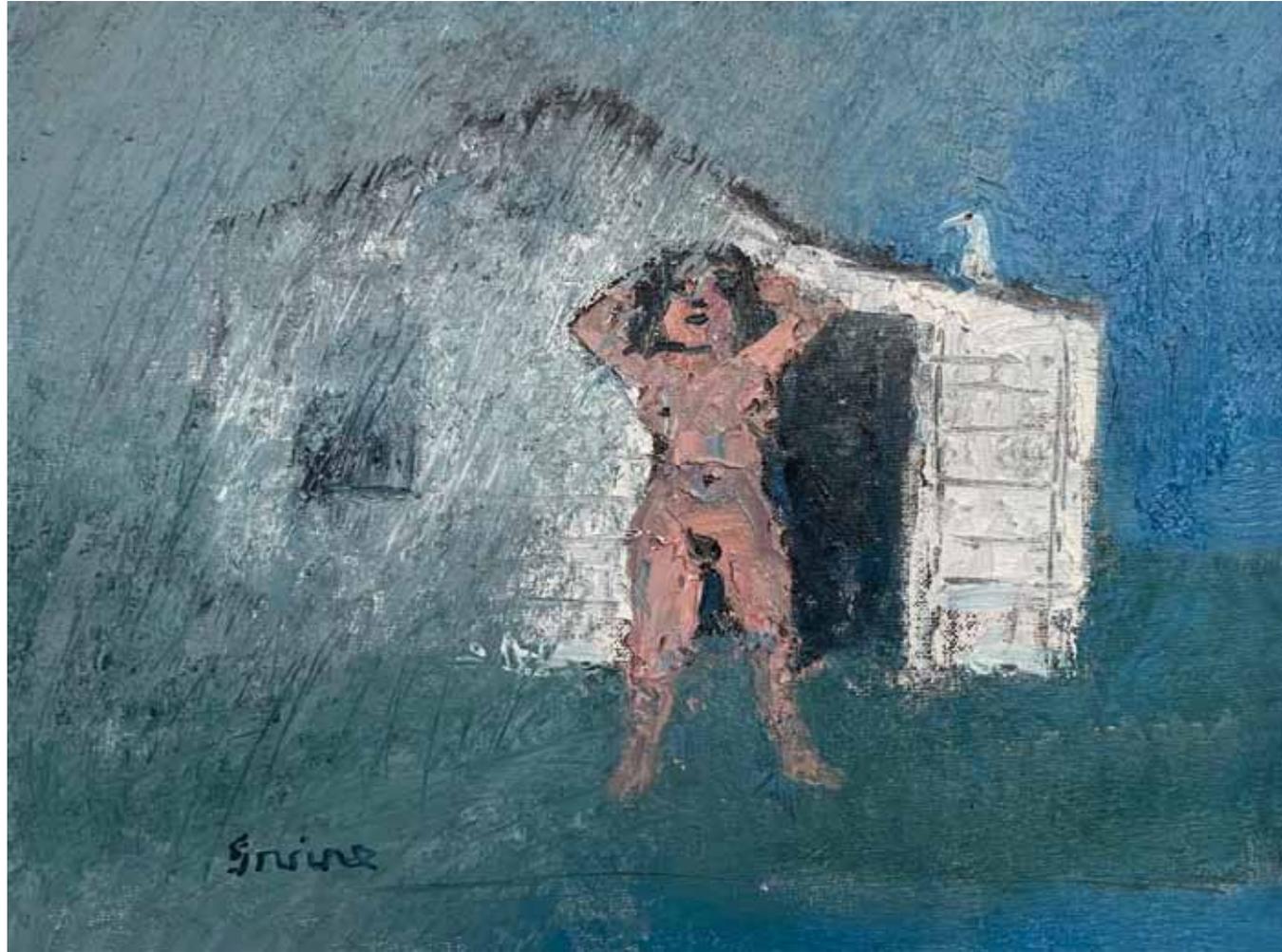
The Lobsterman's Table, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Bird on the Line, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



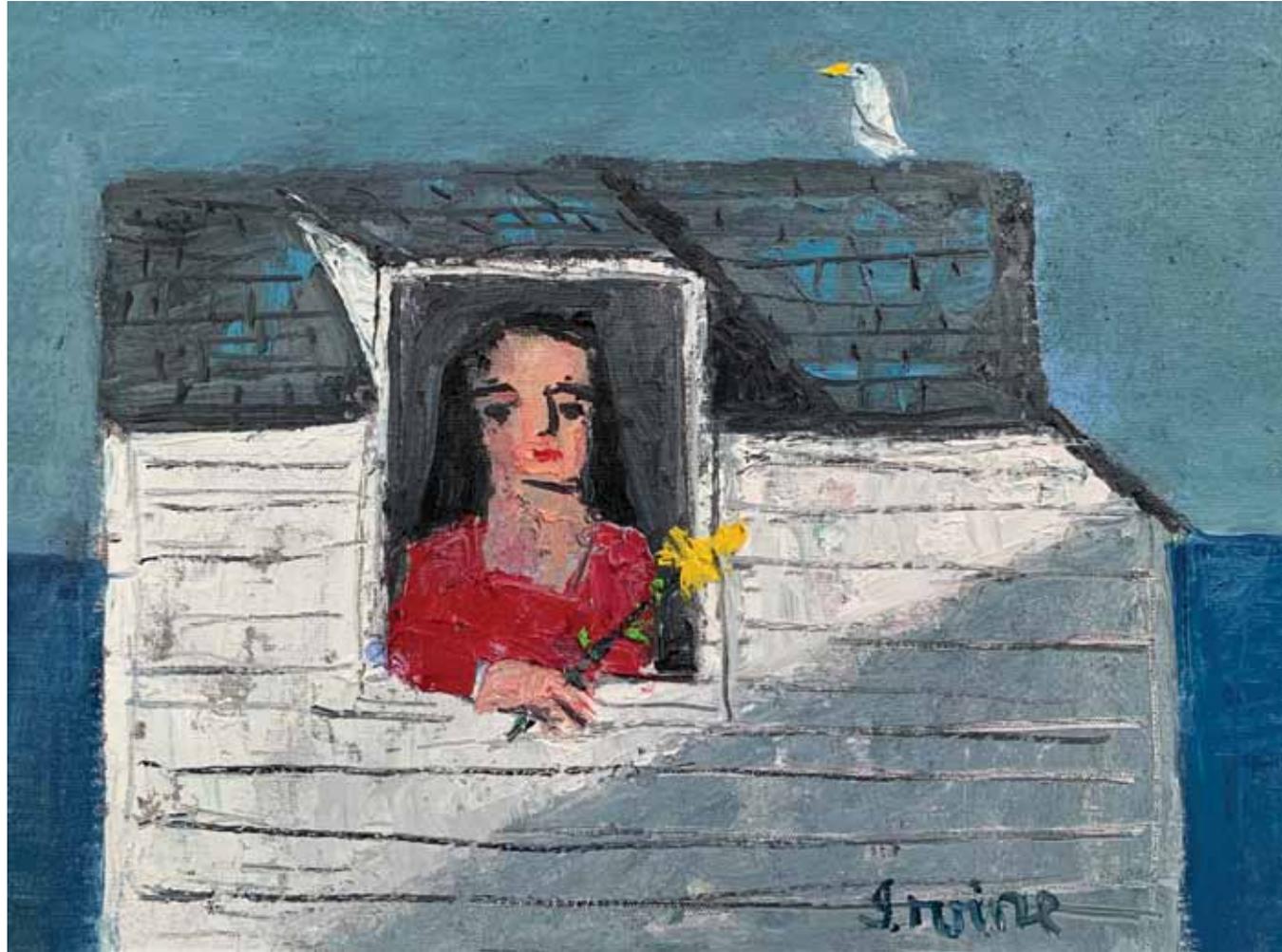
Spring Morning, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Sun Shower, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Woman with Umbrella, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



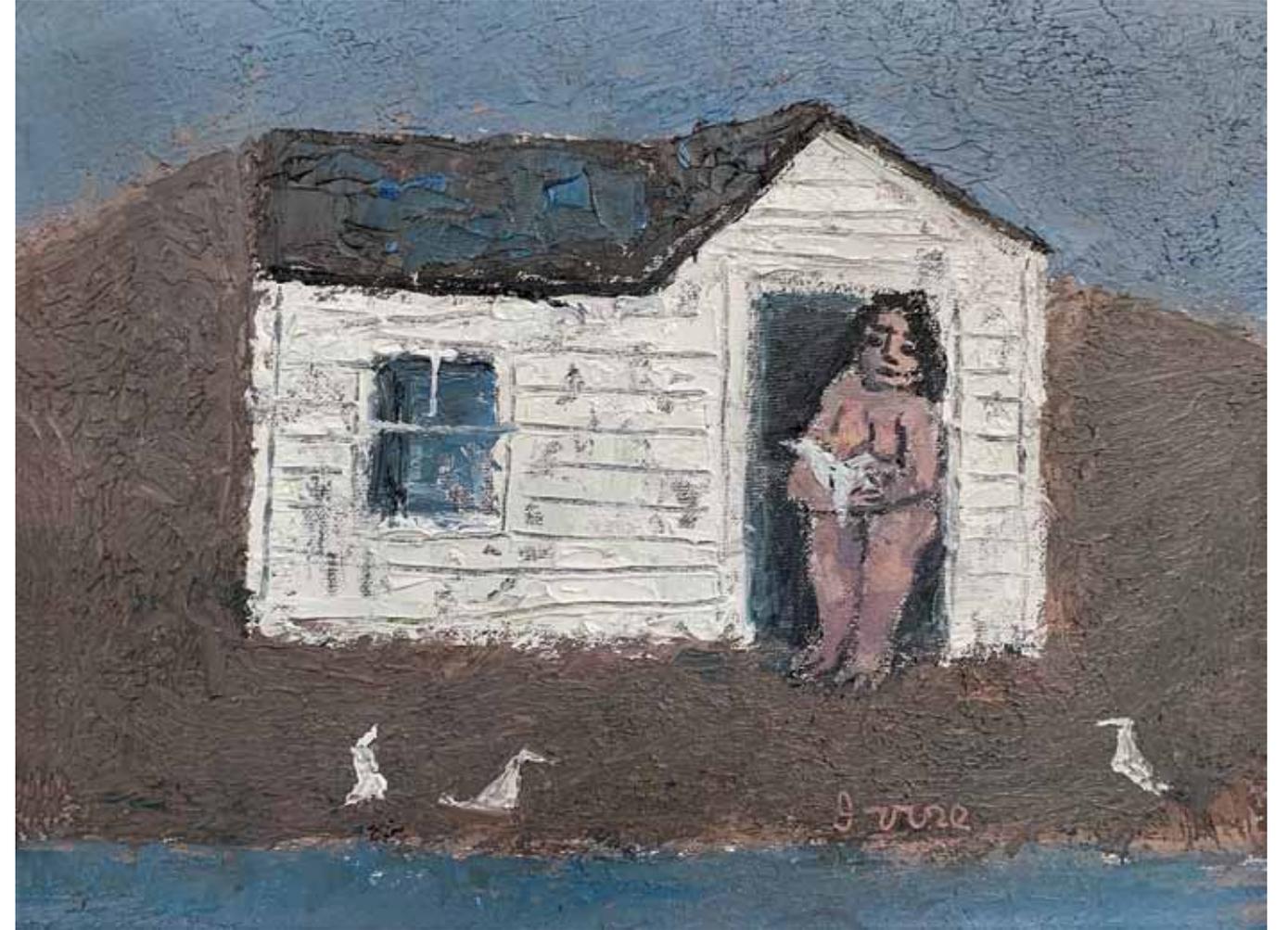
Woman with Flower, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Woman Washing Windows, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Woman with a Rose, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Woman with a Wounded Gull, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



Gathering Lupines, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



The Old Dog, 2021, oil on board, 12 x 16 inches



The Lighthouse, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



The Blue Cloud, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Two Sail Boats, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



The Approaching Storm, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



The Green Sea, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Sailing the Bay, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Evening with Baxter, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Evening Sail, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



The Sleeping Fisherman, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Passing Tinker, 2021, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



ABOVE *Wash Day*, 2021, porcelain vase with Mark Bell, 9h x 7 inches (two views)

LEFT *The Resting Mermaid*, 2021, porcelain plate with Mark Bell, 13 inches



ABOVE *Walking the Dog*, 2021, porcelain vase with Mark Bell, 8h x 6 inches (two views)

RIGHT *A Walk by the Sea*, 2021, porcelain plate with Mark Bell, 12.25 inches



ABOVE *Solstice*, 2021, porcelain vase with Mark Bell, 14 inches

RIGHT *The Dancing Sailors*, 2021, porcelain plate with Mark Bell, 10 inches





ABOVE *A Shower of Umbrellas*, 2021, porcelain vase with Mark Bell, 10.5h x 8 inches (two views)

RIGHT *Fishing the Bay*, 2021, porcelain plate with Mark Bell, 13 inches



Irvine in his former studio in Blue Hill, Maine, ca. 1973

WILLIAM IRVINE

William Irvine (b. 1931) was born and raised in Troon, a small town on the Atlantic coast of Scotland, a few miles from Alloway where the poet Robert Burns was born. Irvine became interested in art as a young boy. He majored in art at Marr College, a progressive secondary school in Troon. When the family of whiskey magnate Johnnie Walker heard about two budding artists at Marr, they invited the boys (Irvine and his best friend William Crozier) for a private viewing of Walker's art collection. This was Irvine's first opportunity to see original artworks by the masters.

Irvine graduated with a degree in drawing and painting from the Glasgow School of Art in 1953. After graduating from Glasgow and serving in the Scottish army, Irvine moved to the bohemian neighborhood of 1950s Soho London where he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Francis Bacon and Paul Potts, and where he came of age as an abstract painter. During his ten years in London, Irvine exhibited in many galleries, including one-man shows at the Drian Gallery and the Parton Gallery. In 1960, he met and married Stephanie Schram, an American student studying in London.

After seeing a newspaper advertisement for property in Maine, the young couple moved to the United States in 1967. They settled on the coast of Maine in Washington County. A few years later, they bought a house in Blue Hill, Maine, and the old attached barn became Irvine's studio for the next forty-two years.

Maine proved to be a turning point. Irvine combined the abstract with figures and objects, producing bold new seascapes, landscapes, and still lifes. He was moved by the everyday lives of the men and women living and working in these coastal villages. Paintings of these people, as well as his experimental seascapes, became lifelong themes for Irvine.

In 1985, Stephanie died after a long illness. Irvine married Margery Wilson in 1995. They built a house and studio on the shore overlooking the ocean in Brooklin, Maine. Living in such close proximity to the sea provides Irvine with daily sources of inspiration. He still lives there today with Margery and their Shetland sheepdog, Tam O' Shanter.

1. William Irvine and William Crozier attended Marr College and the Glasgow School of Art together. The friends moved to London where they exhibited together and became part of the artistic and literary scene of 1950s Soho. Crozier went on to become a noted British painter.

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2012, 2014–2021
Greenhut Gallery, Portland, ME 2017
The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland 2016
Marshall Store Gallery, York, ME 2015
Gleason Gallery, Boothbay Harbor, ME 2011, '12, '13, '14
Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, ME 1986–2011
Firehouse Gallery, Damariscotta, ME 2002–2009
Studio E, Palm Beach, FL 2003–2006
Shaw Gallery, Northeast Harbor, ME 2003, '05, '07
McGrath Dunham Gallery, Castine, ME 2001–2006
George Marshall Store Gallery, York, ME 2005
Eastland Gallery, Portland, ME 2001
Carnegie Museum, University of Maine, Orono, ME 2000
Davidson and Daughters, Portland, ME 1996, 1999
Leighton Gallery, Westford, MA 1982, 1995
Art Alliance, Philadelphia, PA 1993
June Fitzpatrick Gallery, Portland, ME 1992
Bayview Gallery, Portland, ME 1989
Noel Butcher Gallery, Philadelphia, PA 1982–1986
John Little Gallery, Clark University, Worcester, MA 1980
Rudolph Gallery, Woodstock, NY and Miami, FL 1968–1976
Drian Gallery, London, England 1960, 1962
Parton Gallery, London, England 1960
McLellan Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland 1958
Carnegie Library, Ayr, Scotland 1949

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2007–present
Gleason Gallery, Boothbay Harbor, ME 2011–present
George Marshall Store Gallery, York, ME 2007–present
Greenhut Gallery, Portland, ME 2006–present
Elan Gallery, Rockport, ME 2007
Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockport, ME 2006–2013
Turtle Gallery, Deer Isle, ME 2006
Penobscot Marine Museum at Searsport, ME 2002
Marine Environmental Research Institute, Blue Hill, ME 2001
Monmouth Museum, Lincroft, NJ 1984
Mast Cove Gallery, Kennebunkport, ME

Gregory Boon Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
Congress Square Gallery, Portland, ME
National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC
Munson Gallery, New Haven, CT 1982
American Art Cultural Center, Washington, DC 1978
Shore Gallery, Boston, MA 1970–1973
Portal Gallery, London, England
Artists International Association, London, England
Blue Hill Library, Blue Hill, ME
Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh, Scotland 1953

PUBLIC AND CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

Art in Embassies Program, Republic of Lithuania
Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME
Hand and Flower Press, London, England
Marine Environmental Research Institute, Blue Hill, ME
Rouse Corporation, Pittsburgh, PA
Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh, Scotland
University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, ME

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Maine Sunday Telegram, Philip Isaacson 2001, Ken Greenleaf 1996
Maine Times, Feature Article, Donna Gold 2000
Bangor Daily News, Feature Article 1999, 2000
Art New England, Carl Little 2000
Portland Press Herald 1992, 1999
Preview 1993
The Maine Times 1991
The Philadelphia Inquirer 1983
ArtNews, Ann Jarmusch 1983
Maine Life 1979
The London Observer 1960

EDUCATION

Glasgow School of Art, DA, Scotland

WHISKEY WOLF MEDIA

Whiskey Wolf Media (WMF) is a media group focused on connecting the stories of everyday people to history through artful films. WMF seeks people who are invisible or overlooked, giving them a voice and animating their stories for future generations to learn from and enjoy. Their motto is: “To seek knowledge from the past is to better understand the future.”

Principal David Jester is a filmmaker and a non-fiction published author. He earned his masters in American and New England studies with a concentration in cultural analysis, and a certificate in documentary filmmaking from Maine Media Workshop + College. Jester won an award from the State of Maine for his twelve-part public access television series on public safety, and his film *Champ 5* has been shown at multiple film festivals and recognized with several awards.

Leigh Doran is an award-winning photographer with ten years of experience in documentary films.



The “Stimulant” exhibition at David Archer’s bookshop gallery, Dean Street, Soho, London, 1957. Left to right: William Irvine, William Crozier, and John Wright, all graduates for the Glasgow School of Art. Photo by Roger Mayne.



Irvine and William Crozier in 1949 during their final year at Marr College, Troon, Scotland.



A Walk by the Sea, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
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