



JUDY BELASCO

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
FINE ART

JUDY BELASCO

The Back of Beyond

JUNE 8 – JULY 8, 2022

Essay by Katherine Wilkes



Beach Fort Point, oil on panel, 9 x 7 inches

COVER *Beaver Stream, Baxter*, detail, oil on canvas, 30 x 20 inches

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Sunset, Baxter Marsh
oil on canvas
14 x 29 inches

JUDY BELASCO

THE BACK OF BEYOND by Katherine Wilkes

Each painting emanates powerful stillness, or bursts with vitality, contained within an eternal instant of sensory fullness. These paintings contain codes, infinite data on the meaning of life.

In her solo show *The Back of Beyond*, Judy Belasco guides world-weary citizens into peaceful communion with the heart of Maine's wilderness. Her process combines adventure, extensive photography, hours of reflection, and skillful execution—a method that culminates in the formation of a sequence of transformative meditations. Each painting emanates a powerful stillness, or burst of vitality, contained within an eternal instant of sensory fullness. These paintings contain codes, infinite data on the meaning of life.

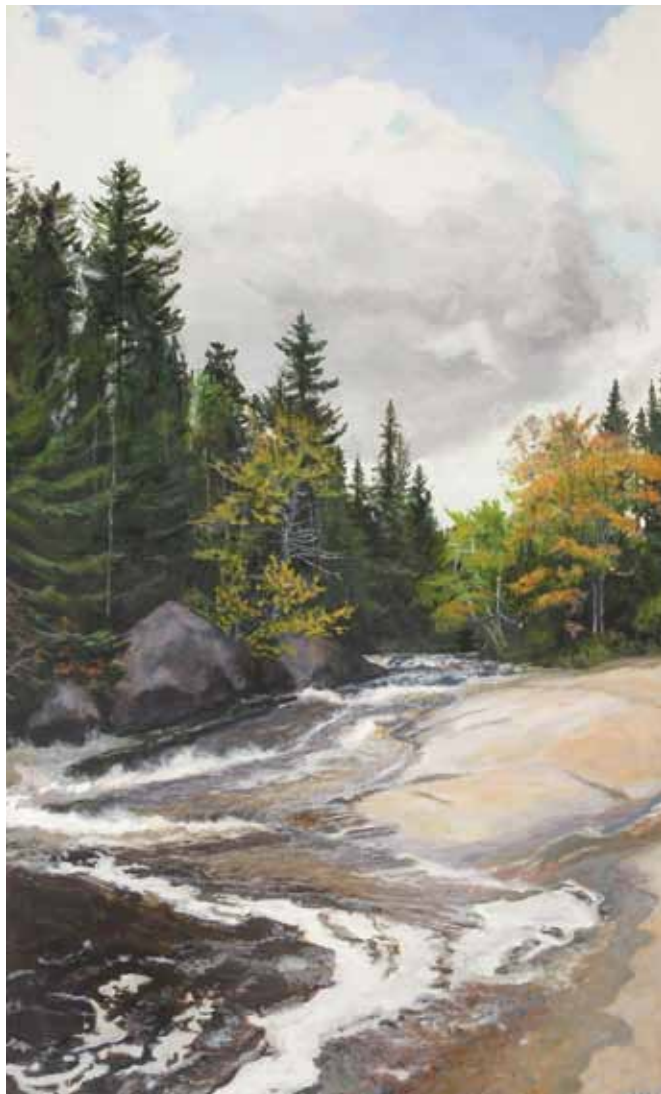
Many people in the modern world experience a great deal of anxiety and pressures. Mindfulness practices help turn their attention back to the freedom and clarity of

the present moment, and many attest to the power of simply standing in nature to alleviate modern woes.

In ancient times, people venerated gods to bring balance to the struggles of maintaining society. In particular, Dionysus, "the Mad One," loomed over all that is wild and untamed, existing outside order and daily existence. His domain mirrors the uncivilized mind that haunts the Western psyche, ever distancing from the natural. Back then; it was necessary to occasionally dip a toe into the unhinged to appease this deity. Annual festivals of wild abandon were celebrated. Priestesses of Dionysus, the Maenads, performed ecstatic rites by running into the mountains under the cover of night in a manic frenzy.



OPPOSITE *Water Slide, Baxter*, detail, oil on canvas, 28 x 17 inches



Water Slide, Baxter, oil on canvas, 28 x 17 inches

Such were the archaic customs of the ancients to prevent madness spreading throughout civil life.

Our modern lives yearn to be reunited with better ways than our current methods to ward off insanity. Perhaps reverence to the wild unknown, within and without, can do that. Judy Belasco has devoted many years to cultivating a deep relationship with the wild unknown through exploration, photography, and translating her experience into transcendent paintings. The past several years she has ventured into the wilderness reserves of Baxter State Park to deepen her work with the land apart from human spheres. Her paintings in *The Back of Beyond* offer those in need of solace her interpretations of these sacred spaces.

Sunset, Baxter Marsh illuminates a magic moment in the wild, as the sun closes out its daily light show, cascading a blanket of color across a hidden sanctuary. Here time ceases to endure. The viewer glides into a heightened reality merging with prismatic light reflected in the geometry of the physical world. In *Beaver Stream, Baxter*, if one gazes unfocused to the dark trees, the cloud mass begins to move through the bright sky and appears a gentle ripple in the stream—a looking-glass vision, breathing, with possibility. Vast clouds close in upon deep woods that hold many secret lives of tree networks and forest dwellers. Within the vertical canvas of *Water Slide, Baxter*, Belasco harnesses vitality at peak frenzy. Many elements converge into a

boiling cauldron beneath colorful imposing tree figures, encroached on by the passage of buoyant clouds.

The cultivation of Judy Belasco, the artist, has been significantly shaped by the Hudson River School. Belasco specifically resonates with the American Luminists. These artists fostered intuitive communion with the remote American habitat to bring about divine awareness on a personal level. Revelers conveyed their attunement with precision lighting effects, transforming landscape artistry with incandescent radiance. The heightened awareness of Luminism leaves audiences mystified, as they gaze upon the transcendent revealed in nature's glory. Belasco shines, in her own right, with depictions of an atmospheric presence at once indefinable, almost invisible, yet apparent in all her paintings.

Rocky Pond is a symphony in gray-scale. Here Belasco pays homage to several core Luminist themes. She emphasizes a geometric horizontal panorama within a palette of scaled-back cool tones, distilling tranquility. An omnipresent fog cloaks subtle mountain forms hovering over the razor sharp clarity in the crystal smooth waters. *Rocky Pond* echoes a notable mid-nineteenth-century Luminist painting, *Lake George*, by John Frederick Kensett, one of the genre's most significant painters.

More cool gray schemas present in the poetic *Schoodic Tide Pool* and *Misty Surf, Schoodic*. Belasco captures subtle



Beaver Stream, Baxter, oil on canvas, 30 x 20 inches



Rocky Pond
oil on canvas
10 x 22.5 inches

moments of sea-laden air over lazy waves, hinting at the cocooning of beautiful sea nymphs. The exclusion of their actual depiction allows us to hallucinate their presence, as one does when standing on the shore in a wet breeze, engulfed by seaweed-fragrant wafts. Above the scene, the barest moon looms. In the fresh, bright white spray of *Silver Schoodic*, a wave crest bursts forth—a brilliant cleansing meditation to inspire viewers. The far-off silver light pierces the refreshing mood beneath glowing optimistic cloud cover.

Quoddy Head reveals a theatre on the Maine coastline. Standing on the precipice of this mood is a solitary dignified tree, crowning the coastal cathedral. Below and beyond lies the watery dwelling of a monumental presence. The stage evokes epic Greek poetry where gods intervene

in human affairs. It feels as if at any moment Perseus, Andromeda, or the Hydra might wander into the scene; or Odysseus' ship might encounter the Siren's song.

Upon encountering this mythically evocative series from Judy Belasco, one can hear a kind of Siren call from beyond the trees, beneath the pristine waters, and drifting upon the wind. Through Belasco's paintings, we too can give reverence to the feral mystique that lies in *The Back of Beyond*.

OPPOSITE

Quoddy Head
oil on canvas
40 x 40 inches

Katherine Wilkes is an artist and musician living in Taos, New Mexico, where she maintains a studio.





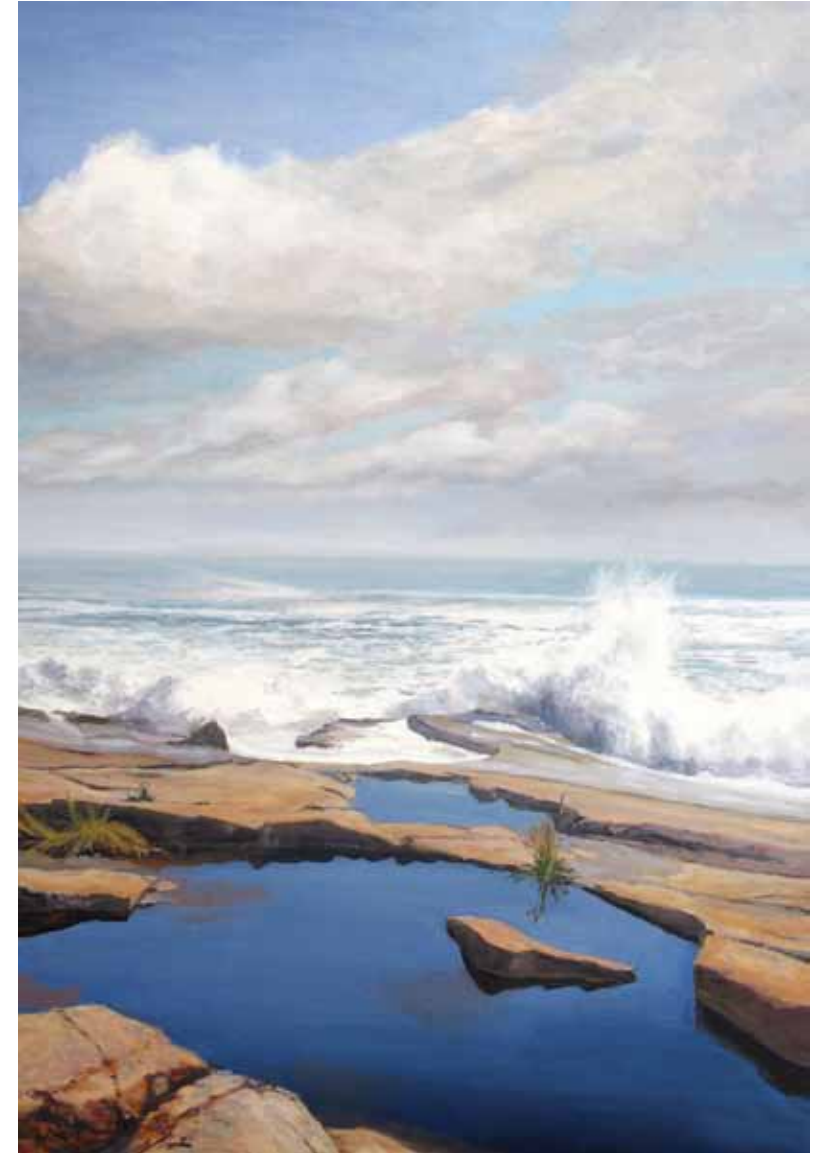
Schoodic Tide Pool, oil on canvas, 12 x 24 inches



Misty Surf, Schoodic, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Silver Schoodic, oil on panel, 24 x 30 inches



Two Waters, Schoodic
oil on canvas
32 x 22 inches



Katahdin, oil on canvas, 14.5 x 36 inches



Daicy Pond, Baxter, oil on canvas, 14 x 30 inches



Still Lake Interior, oil on canvas, 22 x 44 inches



Kidney Pond, Baxter
oil on panel
20 x 38 inches



Interior Maine, oil on canvas, 22 x 24 inches



Longest Wave, oil on canvas, 28 x 38 inches



Atlantic Fall Ocean, oil on canvas, 22.5 x 34 inches



Schoodic, Cobble beach, oil on canvas, 15 x 24 inches



Schoodic Seas
oil on canvas
13 x 9 inches



Moon Over Schoodic
oil on canvas
10 x 7 inches



JUDY BELASCO

BORN Doylestown, Pennsylvania 1942

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME, 2009, '11, '13, '18, '21

F.A.N. Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, 2000, 2003

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME, 2007–present

Mulford Gallery, Rockland, ME, 2007, '08, '09, '10

Susan Maasch Fine Art, Portland, ME, 2010

Betts Gallery, Invitational show, Belfast, ME, 2010

F.A.N. Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, 1999, 2000, '02, '08, '09

McGrath Dunham Gallery, Castine, ME, 1998, 2000, '01, '02, '03, '04, '05, '06

Maine Art Gallery, Kennebunkport, ME, 2004

SYDA Foundation (Invitational), S. Fallsburg, NY, 2003

5th Annual International Fine Arts Show, Boston, MA, 2001

4th Annual International Fine Art Show, Boston, MA, 2000

3rd Annual International Fine Art Show, Boston, MA, 1999

Museum of Modern Art, (Photography exhibition) New York, NY, 1971

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Germantown Friends School

MBNA

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Belasco paintings are represented in numerous private collections

EDUCATION

Maine Photographic Workshop: Fine Digital Print with John Paul Caponigro, 2005

Private Study: Maine Landscape Painting with Linden Frederick, 1996–2004

Maine Photographic Workshop: Fine Digital Print, 2004

Barnstone Studios: Classical Drawing and Dynamic Symmetry, 1993–1994

Philadelphia College of Art, BFA, Photography Major, 1969–1972

Philadelphia College of Art: Painting Major, 1960–1963

WORK EXPERIENCE

Art Teacher, Germantown Friends School, Philadelphia, PA 1976–2008



Hudson from Bear Mt. Bridge, oil on panel, 10 x 9.5 inches

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