



PHILIP BARTER

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
FINE ART

PHILIP BARTER

AUGUST 14 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

My Maine

A RETROSPECTIVE

Essay by Karin Wilkes



Floral, 2023, acrylic on board, 12 x 9 inches

cover *Taking Up*, 2021, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches

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The Old Bridge, Kittery, 2014, acrylic on panel, 20 x 24 inches



Wave
acrylic on board
30 x 24 inches
2020



PHILIP BARTER

MY MAINE: A RETROSPECTIVE

“Art is just a vehicle. The real art is people.”



Cove, Stonington 2023, acrylic on panel, 24 x 30 inches



Burning The Field, 2009, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

PHILIP BARTER *My Maine* A RETROSPECTIVE

Essay by Karin Wilkes with excerpts from the *Fisherman's Voice* and *Down East*.

Here is a man who has lived many lives, only to settle on the one best suited to his personality and panache: that of painter. . . . He appreciates an iced-in harbor beyond its picturesque possibilities, but he will paint it to a glorious turn. He is also a fool for blueberry barrens and Mount Katahdin.

— Carl Little, *Fisherman's Voice*, 2017



Hartley's paintings made me want to look at the Maine landscape again. — Philip Barter

“Philip Barter’s work is unmistakable.”

Philip Barter (1939–2024) was a self-taught artist from Boothbay, Maine, whose family roots on Barter Island, just off Boothbay, hark back to the 1700s. Barter’s artistic journey took him from Maine to California during the 1960s, where he met Alfonso Sosa, an abstract painter who gave Barter’s work a “charge of light and color.” While there, Barter encountered the work of Marsden Hartley and felt an immediate connection with the Lewiston-born painter. The experience compelled Barter to return to Maine and to commit himself to painting full-time.

In 2017, Marshall Wilkes published the monograph *Philip Barter: Forever Maine*. Written by Carl Little, the book was reviewed by the *Fisherman's Voice*. The review, “Philip Barter: Maine Master,” recognized Barter’s success: “He is an authentic Maine painter by virtue of his life-long



Pond, Mt. Katahdin, 2023, oil on panel, 36 x 36 inches



Philip Barter sketching on the Maine coast.

immersion, apprenticeship, and ultimate mastery of translating what he sees in Maine with paint. That mastery will be the arbiter of his legacy.”

Barter’s extensive oeuvre included quirky narratives about the idiosyncratic characters living and working in downeast Maine, and numerous land-and-seascapes that capture a strong sense of place—many inspired by his life-long fascination with Katahdin.

“I started going to Katahdin when I first got to Maine because of [Marsden] Hartley mostly. And I was so intimidated by Hartley for about fifteen to twenty years. . . . Then one year Priscilla and I were up there, and we were going down the upper Penobscot River, and I looked back and I saw this form, like an ascending bird, and I said wow. I thought, ‘That’s mine.’ From then on, all the Katahdin paintings have that or a variation of that composition... I couldn’t stop once I got going.”

The article also talked about Barter’s marriage to his second wife, Priscilla, and their commitment to their growing family. In the 1970s, Barter moved his family to North Sullivan in downeast Maine, where he and Priscilla immersed their children in art, creating “a life that is original and soul-satisfying.”

By 1984, the couple had seven children ranging in age from seventeen to one. Challenged to support his large



Pair of Shags, 1986, oil on panel, 21 x 24 inches



Sunrise, Rangely Inn, 1989, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

family as an artist, Barter took a ten-year hiatus from painting, working in all manner of traditional Maine jobs: He clammed, dug worms, was the sternman on a lobster boat, did carpentry, and dragged for mussels.

That May, *Down East* magazine featured Barter and his industrious family in “Making It In Maine,” a series about success stories from the Pine Tree state. “Family Ties” tells the story about the cottage industry Barter and Priscilla created to help support their large family.

“Several years ago, artist Phil Barter, of North Sullivan, stuck his neck out and around it his wife, Priscilla,

tied a new, homemade, all-wool necktie, the kind he’d always wanted but couldn’t find in a store. That was the beginning of The Barter Family, Inc., a business that now sells neckties and other garments made from Maine wool fabrics to stores and gift shops throughout New England.”

All the Barter children engaged in some form of making the family’s wool garments except the youngest, Jack, who was a one-year-old when the *Down East* feature came out. The carpentry jobs and fishing allowed Barter to buy the wool. He then went on-the-road to sell the garments, and a successful trip to an out-of-state wholesale trade show doubled their orders overnight.

The thriving family business eventually allowed Barter to return to his easel full time. During the long hiatus, he read about, and studied, art history. By the 1990s, Barter was experiencing a creative explosion—his work was in high demand, and he was receiving critical acclaim.

In 1992, Bates College Museum of Art mounted a retrospective of Barter’s work. The Farnsworth Museum, the Portland Museum of Art, and Bates acquired his work for their permanent collections. And Maine comedian Tim Sample highlighted Barter’s life in art in one of his “Postcards from Maine” segments on the CBS Sunday Morning program hosted by Charles Kuralt.

This time around, *Down East* gave Barter a feature in its August 1992 issue, highlighting his success as a painter.



Philip Barter in his studio, North Sullivan, Maine.



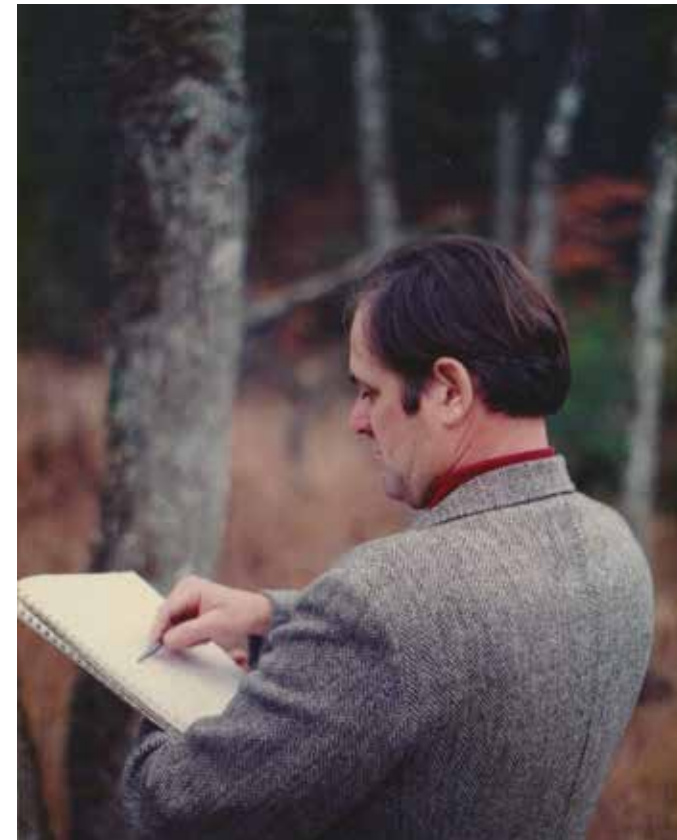
Sunset, Hog Bay, No 4, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches

“One Happy Fella,” by Beth Crichlow, lauds Barter’s success as a self-taught Mainer who took the art world by storm and never let up: “During the past ten years, Philip Barter has emerged as one of Maine’s most popular and prolific artists, a painter whose works now command prices of up to \$3,000. Barter’s bold landscapes are also commanding considerable critical respect, thanks to a career retrospective at the Bates College Museum of Art.”

“Barter paints by day and he paints by night. He paints in his studio and he paints in his mind, if not on canvas while weeding his garden or whizzing down the Interstate. Whether it’s a saw-toothed profile of Mount Abraham in western Maine, a roadside diner in Waldoboro, or a vase of red tulips on his kitchen table, his bold canvases sing with color and hum with life.”

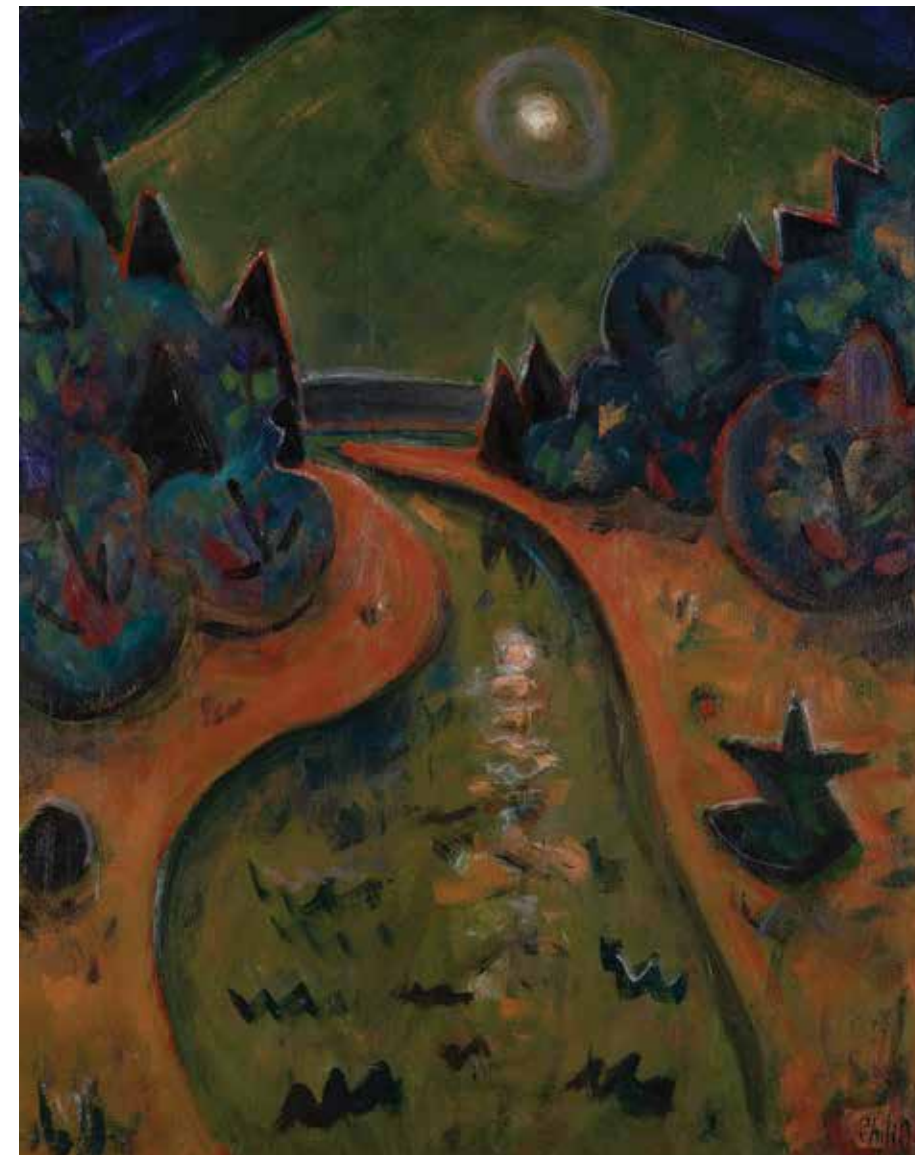
“He’s really found his own voice,” said gallerist and artist and Judith Leighton, who regularly showed Barter’s work in her Blue Hill gallery. “His latest works aren’t even landscapes anymore, they’ve become so abstract.” John Ames who showed Barter’s work at his Belfast gallery added: “The conventional wisdom was that Barter is a folk artist, rather than a serious painter. I don’t think people can say that anymore.”

Philip Barter’s legacy was his family, his creative spirit, and the tremendous body work he shared with the public. We hope you enjoy this Philip Barter retrospective!





Sullivan Harbor, 2022, acrylic on board, 24 x 30 inches



Moonrise Guzzel Inlet
acrylic on board
30 x 24 inches
2019



Snowmobile, 2011, acrylic on board, 24 x 30 inches



Katahdin Starry Night
oil on canvas
30 x 24 inches
1990



Maine Island, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches



Objects On A Wharf
oil on canvas
30 x 24 inches
1998



Blueberry Field, Aurora, Maine, 2016, acrylic on board, 26 x 24 inches



Red Maple, 2021, acrylic on board, 30 x 30 inches



Power Line, 2000, acrylic on board, 18 x 24 inches



Katahdin Winter, 2012, acrylic on panel, 24 x 30 inches



Ice On The Androscoggin, 2022, acrylic on board, 24 x 30 inches



Lupines With Farmhouse, 2012, acrylic on board, 24 x 24 inches



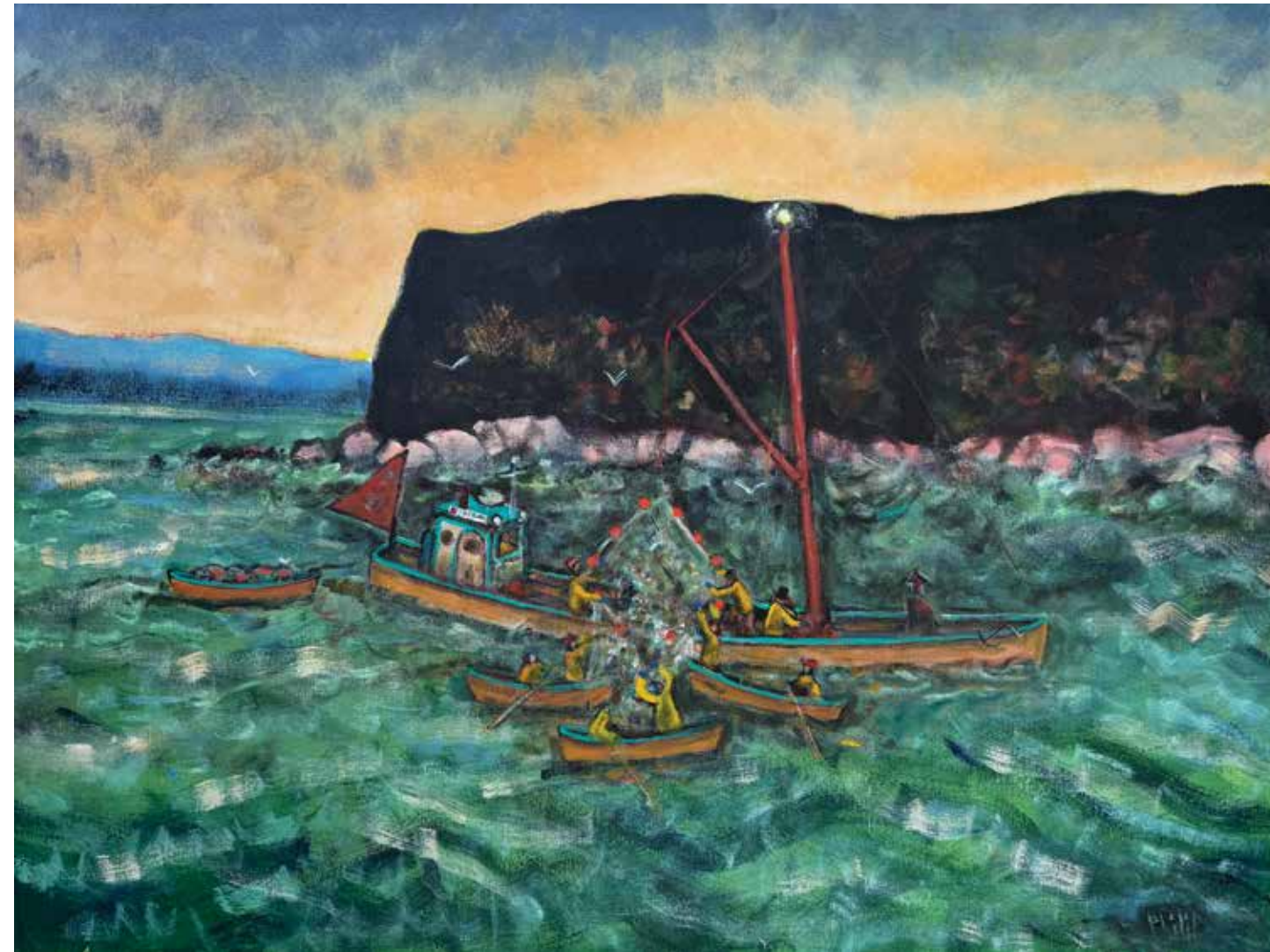
Ledges In A Blueberry Field, 2018, acrylic on panel, 24 x 30 inches



Northern Kingdom, 2023, acrylic on panel, 24 x 30 inches



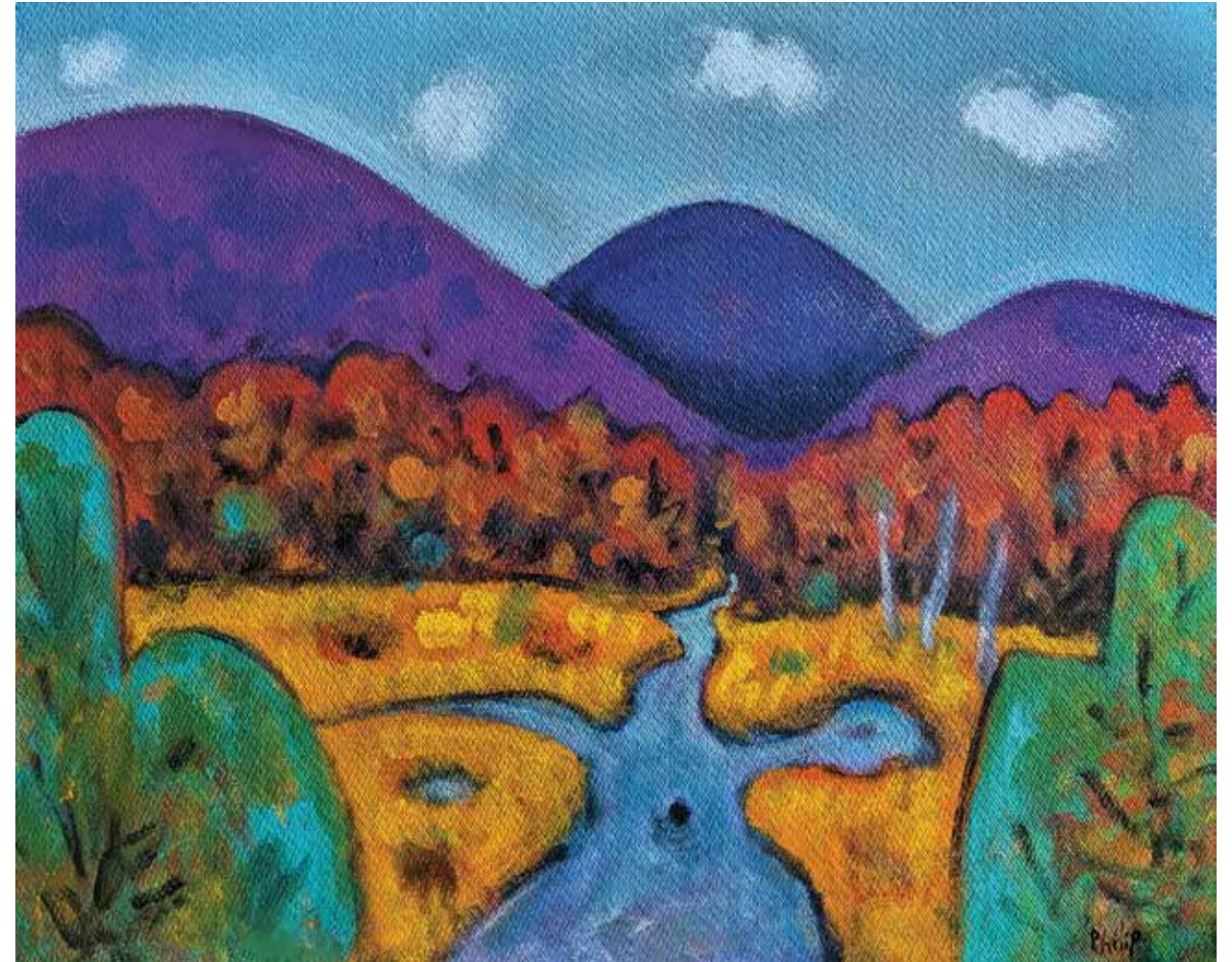
Spring, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 inchesboard



Taking Up, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



Rainmaker
acrylic on board
30 x 24 inches
2002



Pleasant River, 2022, acrylic on panel, 24 x 30 inches



PHILIP BARTER (1939–2024)

BORN 1939, Boothbay Harbor, Maine

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS (abridged)

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2017, '18, '19, 2024, '26

Littlefield Gallery, Winter Harbor, ME 2015

John Edwards, Ellsworth, ME 1999, 2000–2014

Gleason Gallery, Portland, ME 2013

Warm Springs Gallery, Warm Springs, VA 2008

Gallery 10, Camden, ME 2005

Bates College Museum of Art, "Retrospective: Twenty Years," Lewiston, ME 1992

Monmouth Museum, "A Bounty of Woods & Waters," Lincroft, NJ 1992

Gallery 68, "North Woods," Belfast, ME 1989, 1992

City Gallery of St. John, St. John, NB, Canada 1991

Wingspread Gallery, Northeast Harbor, ME 1991

Congress Square Gallery, Portland, ME 1989

O'Farrell Gallery, Brunswick, ME 1988

Six Deering Street, Portland, ME 1987

Turtle Gallery, Deer Isle, ME 1985

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (abridged)

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2006, '07, 2017, '18, '19, 2024–present

The Barter House Art Gallery, Brunswick, ME 2018, 2019, 2024, '25, '26

Littlefield Gallery, Winter Harbor, ME 2013–2016

Gleason Gallery, Boothbay Harbor, ME 2010–2016

Lincolntown Fine Art Gallery, Lincolnville, ME 2015, 2016

Island Artists, Isleford, ME 1990–2016

John Edwards Gallery, Ellsworth, ME 2000–2015

Firehouse Gallery, Damariscotta, ME 1999–2012

Gallery House, Nobleboro, ME 1999–2012

Sam Shaw Gallery, Northeast Harbor, ME 1990–2011

Wingspread Gallery, Northeast Harbor, ME, 1985–2008

Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Traveling Exhibition, Rockport, ME 2006

Blaine House, Traveling Exhibition, Augusta, ME 2006

Boston Print Makers Guild, Traveling Exhibition, Boston, MA 2006

Maine Audubon Society, Signature Artist, Falmouth, ME 2005, 2006

Davistown Museum, Liberty Village, Maine 2005

George Marshall Store Gallery, York, ME 2004

Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME 2002

Elements Gallery, Rockland, ME 2002

Roundtop Art Center, Damariscotta, ME 1993

Congress Square Gallery, Portland, ME 1984–88, 1992

Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, ME 1985–1992

Evergreen Art Gallery, Evergreen, CO 1992

Gallery House, Waldoboro, ME 1987, 1991

N.W. Barrett Gallery, Portsmouth, NH 1991

O'Farrell Gallery, Brunswick, ME 1985–1989

Wiscasset Bay Gallery, Wiscasset, ME 1986–1989

DeCordova and Dana Museum and Park, Traveling Exhibition, Lincoln, MA 1989

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, "Stories to Tell," Brunswick, ME 1988

The Johnson Gallery at Middlebury College, "Stories to Tell," Middlebury, VT 1988



Hillside With Birches, 1990, oil on panel, 24 x 30 inches

The Vermont Folklife Center, “Stories to Tell,” Middlebury, VT 1988
Bayview Gallery, Camden, ME 1982, 1984,1986–1988
David Hitchcock Gallery, Portland, ME 1983, ‘84, ‘86, ‘87, ‘88
Gallery Seven, Gloucester, MA 1987
Art for America, Newcastle, ME 1986
Walt Kuhn Gallery, Cape Neddick, ME 1985
Christine York Gallery, Augusta, ME 1984
Maine Coast Artists, Rockport, ME 1967, 1968, 1984
Pine Tree Gallery, Sullivan, ME 1966–1969
Boothbay Harbor Museum, Boothbay, ME 1968

PUBLIC AND CORPORATE COLLECTIONS (abridged)

Bates College Museum of Art, Lewiston, ME
Boise Cascade Co., Portland, ME
Brooksville Elementary School, Brooksville, ME
Central Maine Power, Fairfield, ME
Central Maine Community College, Lewiston, ME
Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME
Davistown Museum, Liberty, ME
Deer Isle–Stonington High School, Deer Isle, ME
Farnsworth Museum of Art, Rockland, ME
Grand Auditorium, Ellsworth, ME
Hitchcock Collection, Portland, ME
John Edwards Market Gallery, Ellsworth, ME
Mountain View Middle School, Sullivan, ME
Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME
Pyramid Studios, Ellsworth, ME
Sedgwick Middle School, Sedgwick, ME

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Small Floral, 2023, acrylic on board, 16 x 14 inches

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