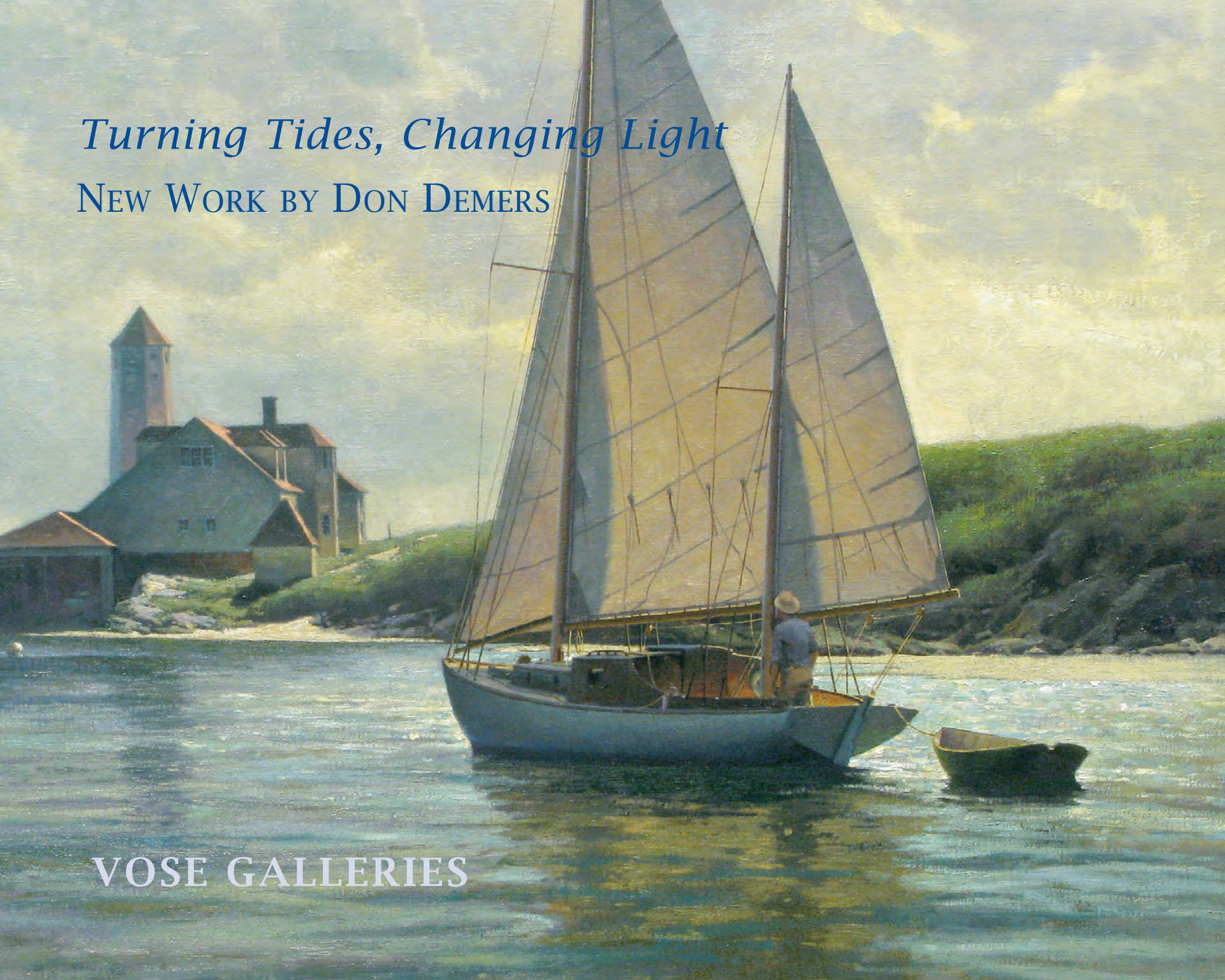


Turning Tides, Changing Light

NEW WORK BY DON DEMERS

VOSE GALLERIES





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A DIVISION OF NEW AMERICAN REALISM
VOSE GALLERIES contemporary

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November 6 - December 18, 2010

Introduction

by John Stobart

In 1979 I was in Boston aboard the *Unicorn*, a square rigger training vessel, accompanied by a PBS crew filming a maritime program. A young man took me around the ship who, ironically, had dropped out of art school and was working as a deckhand. We struck an immediate bond, but it would be years later that I would see that this young man had become a gifted talent in the marine painting field! Since that time, Don Demers, the young deckhand, and I have become great friends and painting partners, each admiring of the other's work.

Born in 1956 in rural Massachusetts, Don showed a serious interest in art at an early age, nurtured by his mother, aunt, and grandmother. While spending summers in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, Don developed a fascination with the sea, which became his muse and cemented his decision to become an artist. Don gives the most credit for his success to his high school art teacher ("The best teacher I have ever had!") who recognized his talent and encouraged him to pursue his passion for art.

In reviewing Don's prolific contribution to date, we will notice his two prominent fields of interest. One is his fascination for the ever changing moods of our shoreline; the other is his passion for painting directly from nature on-site. In the latter, time is of the essence, there being a narrow window of opportunity before the sun moves and changes everything! Here, however, is where miracles can happen and occasionally the picture will almost jump out of the frame. Claude Monet reminds us in words to a friend in 1890:

As for translating the blue of the sea and the sky, it is impossible. This place is drenched in light...It is wonderful. It's enough to drive you crazy, trying to depict the weather, the atmosphere, the ambience.

Don has become widely considered a favorite when in his esteemed role of teaching others, and when painting along with him, it is always a rewarding experience. I fondly recall our trip to Catalina Island, California, a few years ago where dodging the free ranging buffaloes kept us on our feet. I was very impressed to find the Plein Air Painters of America, of which Don is a signature member, were also avid champions of my mission to maintain and strengthen America's Art Culture and revive its awareness. For many of us the whole point of art, since emancipation from patronage in the late eighteenth century, has been to enhance the reality of an inspired subject in nature, and through each individual artist's developed skills and style, make it larger than life,

hopefully in the process to elicit the viewer with an emotional lift.

It's a thrill for me to see such a vigorous force as Don share our artistic vision. We artists have been striving against the tide to maintain the highest standards and now, like a gulp of fresh air, here comes Don Demers, brimming with enthusiasm and charm from the younger generation! And how did he come by the passion that seeps through his work giving it life and sparkle? How has he done this at a time when art education has been pronounced expendable and is eradicated from public schools?



John Stobart in his gallery

It is not without a tinge of jealousy that I see this affable young guy coming up to the threshold of change and dynamic opportunity, with energy enough to encourage a rebirth of the sacred culture of drawing and painting and be a forceful power to save and enhance its legacy.

Don was born to be a leader and has all the right ingredients in his personality to exercise the role, including the fact that he has an inviting "gift of the gab"—as we used to say back in the pub—and can be enthralling on his feet if given half the chance. With his dedication and wide ranging abilities to communicate as well as the immense popularity he enjoys among his peers, I see Donald Demers as a star, clearly visible from both east and west, who has become a major player in American Art nationally.

Congratulations Don, keep it up!

*John Stobart is currently the most prominent marine painter in the country. He has authored several books on maritime painting, and has produced two acclaimed video series for PBS, "John Stobart's WorldScape I and II," that have introduced time-honored painting techniques to a wide audience. As a philanthropist, the artist established the Stobart Foundation in 1988, which aims to support today's artists and to ease the difficult transition of art students from school to the professional art world. For more information about John Stobart, please visit www.stobart.com.



Chauncey Creek, Kittery, Maine, oil on linen, 24 x 36 inches, 2010



Portrait of an Inlet, Ipswich, Massachusetts, oil on mounted linen, 18 x 28 inches, 2010

Seeing with All Our Senses

by Marcia L. Vose

You can almost smell the mudflats in Don Demers' *Portrait of an Inlet, Ipswich* (p.4). Or taste the salt spray in *Surf at Short Sands, York Harbor* (back cover). Or feel the soft evening breezes billowing out the sails in *Leaving Damariscove* (p.7). Don's ability to evoke a response from the viewer, to go beyond literal representation, is a feat few artists achieve. "In my work," states Don, "I try to elicit senses other than sight. I'm interested in evoking sound, scent, even touch." Demers' work has a timeless quality, reminiscent of the great marine painters of the 19th century—Lane, Bricher, Richards—and his warm patterns of sunlight and shadow call to mind the early American impressionists.

Although many artists paint the sea, only the elite few have gone to such lengths as Don to establish an almost instinctual sense of his subject. In his early life Don spent summers with his grandparents in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, where he became fascinated by the boating scene and would constantly sketch and paint the boats and ships on the busy waterways, even making little ship models with all the rigging just right. He later augmented his knowledge as a crewmember aboard the square-rigged *Unicorn*, the schooner *Fair Sarae*, and the brigantine *Black Pearl*. These traditional sailing vessels carried him to the waters of the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Caribbean, where he learned to tell a spinnaker from a mainsail, a bowline from a reef knot. These lessons would support the integrity and accuracy of his later career as a maritime painter.



Low Tide, Bright Sun, oil on mounted linen
9 x 12 inches, 2008

Although Don attended both the School of the Worcester Art Museum and the Massachusetts College of Art, he dropped out after his junior year when he could not find instruction in the time-honored techniques of traditional painting and drawing. He considers himself primarily self-taught, although he cites Thomas Hoyne (1924-1989) and John Stobart as greatly influencing his maritime art. A collegial artist, Don also learned much of his craft through his many painting trips with other artists, particularly those with fellow artists and friends Joe McGurl and William Davis.

Because the artist loved narrative art, particularly the work of the Wyeths, Winslow Homer and Norman Rockwell, Don started his professional career as an illustrator. He found immediate success, his images reproduced on many book covers and in national magazines such as *National Geographic*, *Field and Stream* and *Yankee Magazine*. The Museum of American Illustration recognized his work in four annual competitions that included entries by all the best illustrators in the country.

In the early eighties, however, Don moved to Maine and began to shift his career from illustrator to artist, devoting much of his energy to painting maritime subjects and living the uncertain life of an independent artist. Again success came early, and the list of his wide-ranging accomplishments over the next twenty-five years is staggering, as his curriculum vitae attests (p.24). He has risen to the top tier of elite marine and seascape artists.

While his awards and recognition are numerous, it is particularly noteworthy that Don feels a need to give back to his profession, to teach and encourage others to pursue the rigorous training required to become a painter. Advanced artists in particular have thronged to his workshops, dozens of which have been held from Bordeaux, France, to Maui, Hawaii. And it's no wonder. In his training videos, we see a patient, constructive teacher who nurtures each artist to interpret the same subject matter in a personal way, to define what the view means to each student. In critiques, rather than imposing his own view, he helps students find ways to make their paintings better, perhaps reinforcing the light on a rock or simplifying the composition. And, of course, he provides copious amounts of encouragement.

The gallery is very proud to present our first major exhibition of Don's work, which has been two years in the making. He focused this show on painting seascapes rather than ship portraits, and like one of his mentors, Alfred T. Bricher (1837 - 1908), he traveled the inlets, bays and marshes of the New England coast to paint the nuances

of light and tide. Rather than photograph his subject matter, he prefers to paint en plein air because he believes the eye processes the light, and particularly the shadows, better than a camera. Back in his studio, he then develops his larger canvases based on the information he recorded in his smaller works done on-site. The results are awe-inspiring!



Resting on the Bluefish River, Duxbury, Massachusetts, oil on linen

18 x 26 inches, 2009, Private Collection

Although Don has had many solo exhibitions, his exhibition at Vose marks the first to include a full color catalogue, an enduring record of our association and shared philosophies of art. Don has mentioned that he is especially proud to be following in the footsteps of the great 19th century American artists whom the gallery has handled in its nearly 170-year history. In one of our conversations, Don confided that he was going to communicate with the gallery in hand-written letters rather than by email, so that his letters would be included in the gallery's archival records along with those by

Martin Johnson Heade, William Trost Richards, and A.T. Bricher. We are so pleased to include Don in that tradition.



Light beyond the Marsh, oil on linen, 26 x 40 inches, 2010



Little River, East Boothbay, Maine, oil on mounted linen, 18 x 30 inches, 2010

A peninsula called Ocean Point in East Boothbay, Maine, is where the sea's influence enveloped me. The passing sailing vessels, the tidal pools, the bird life, all enchanted me. But the relentless pounding of the surf, the unwavering breeze and the massiveness of the whole scene both scared and compelled me, and it continues to do so. -Don Demers



Surf at Blackhead, Monhegan, Maine, oil on linen, 24 x 30 inches, 2010



Clearing Skies over Chatham, Massachusetts, oil on mounted linen, 20 x 24 inches, 2010



Rhythms of the Coast, Popham Beach, Maine, oil on mounted linen, 12 x 24 inches, 2010

*My internal and external selves merge when I am with the sea. I experience a sense of wholeness.
The ocean is an all encompassing and very public phenomenon and yet, to me it is the most
introspective, solitary and private place on earth. -Don Demers*

Coastal Cloak, Ocean Point, Maine
Oil on mounted linen
10 x 12 inches, 2010



A Change is Coming, Ocean Point, East Boothbay, Maine
Oil on mounted linen
9 x 12 inches, 2008





Skiff Row, Round Cove
Yarmouthport, Massachusetts
 Oil on mounted linen
 9 x 12 inches, 2010



Old Dock House, oil on mounted linen
 9 x 12 inches, 2010



Little River Boat House, East Boothbay, Maine
 Oil on mounted linen, 9 x 12 inches, 2010

Chatham's Veil
Oil on mounted linen
6 x 12 inches, 2010



*View to White Island,
Ocean Point,
Boothbay, Maine*
Oil on mounted linen
12 x 16 inches, 2010





Leaving Damariscove, Maine, oil on mounted linen, 24 x 32 inches, 2010



Moon on the Bluefish, Duxbury, Massachusetts, oil on mounted linen
18 x 24 inches, 2010



Storm Tossed, oil on mounted linen
8 x 10 inches, 2010



Red Moon and Rising Sea, oil on mounted linen
12 x 16 inches, 2010



Between Tides, oil on linen, 24 x 36 inches, 2010



A Damp Day, watercolor on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2010



The Weather Side, watercolor on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2010



*The Keeper's Boat, Burnt
Island, Boothbay, Maine*
Watercolor on paper
9 x 12 inches, 2010



Georgetown (Tides of Life), oil on mounted linen, 12 x 24 inches, 2010

My attachment to the sea began in childhood. I can still remember the scent of salt air and how it excited and comforted me. The sea's repetitive variation and cyclical rhythm have a transcendental effect. Much the way a crackling fire can hypnotize. -Don Demers



Spring Breeze, oil on linen, 20 x 36 inches, 2010



By the Morning Surf, oil on mounted linen
12 x 18 inches, 2008



Rocks and Sunlight, oil on mounted linen
10 x 12 inches, 2010



A Fresh Breeze, Ocean Point
East Boothbay, Maine
Oil on mounted linen
10 x 12 inches, 2010



Prelude to Sunset, Ocean Point, East Boothbay, Maine, oil on linen, 20 x 36 inches, 2010



Bright Light, Burnt Island Light, Boothbay Harbor, Maine
Oil on mounted linen, 9 x 12 inches, 2009



Leeward Side, Indian Island, East Boothbay, Maine
Oil on mounted linen, 9 x 12 inches, 2009



Clearing Horizon
Oil on mounted linen
12 x 16 inches, 2009

Exhibitions

American Society of Marine Artists, 1985, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2003-06, 2008-09
California Art Club, *Contemporary Artists Paint Yosemite and the Eastern Sierras*, 2001
Crystal Cove Gala Invitational, Laguna Beach, CA, 2006-07
Cummer Museum of Art & Flowers, Jacksonville, FL, 1997
Guild of Boston Artists, Boston, MA, 2002-03
Haggin Museum Invitational, Stockton, CA, 2001
J. Russell Jinishian, Fairfield, CT, 1999-2004 (solo and group)
John Pence Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 2000, 2002 (with Joseph McGurl and William Davis)
Kensington-Stobart Gallery, Naples, FL, 2003
Laguna Beach Plein Air Painters Invitational, 2001-04
MJW Fine Art, Balboa, CA, 2003
Mystic Maritime Gallery Invitational, Mystic, CT, 1979, 1981, 1985-2009
Mystic Maritime Gallery International, Mystic, CT, 1983, 1985-2009
Mystic Maritime Gallery, Mystic, CT, 1988 (solo)
Plein Air Painters of America, 2002 (guest artist), 2004-07, 2009
Robert Wilson, Nantucket, MA, 1995 (solo), 1996
Settlers West Gallery, Tucson, AZ, *Great American West Exhibition*, 2004-09
Society of Illustrators, 1987, 1989
St. Botolph Club, Boston, MA, *Marine Art Exhibition*, 2002
Tree's Place, Orleans, MA, 1998, 2000-01, 2003-04 (group shows)
Vose Galleries, Boston, MA, *Realism Now: Traditions and Departures, Mentors and Protégés*, 2004

Awards

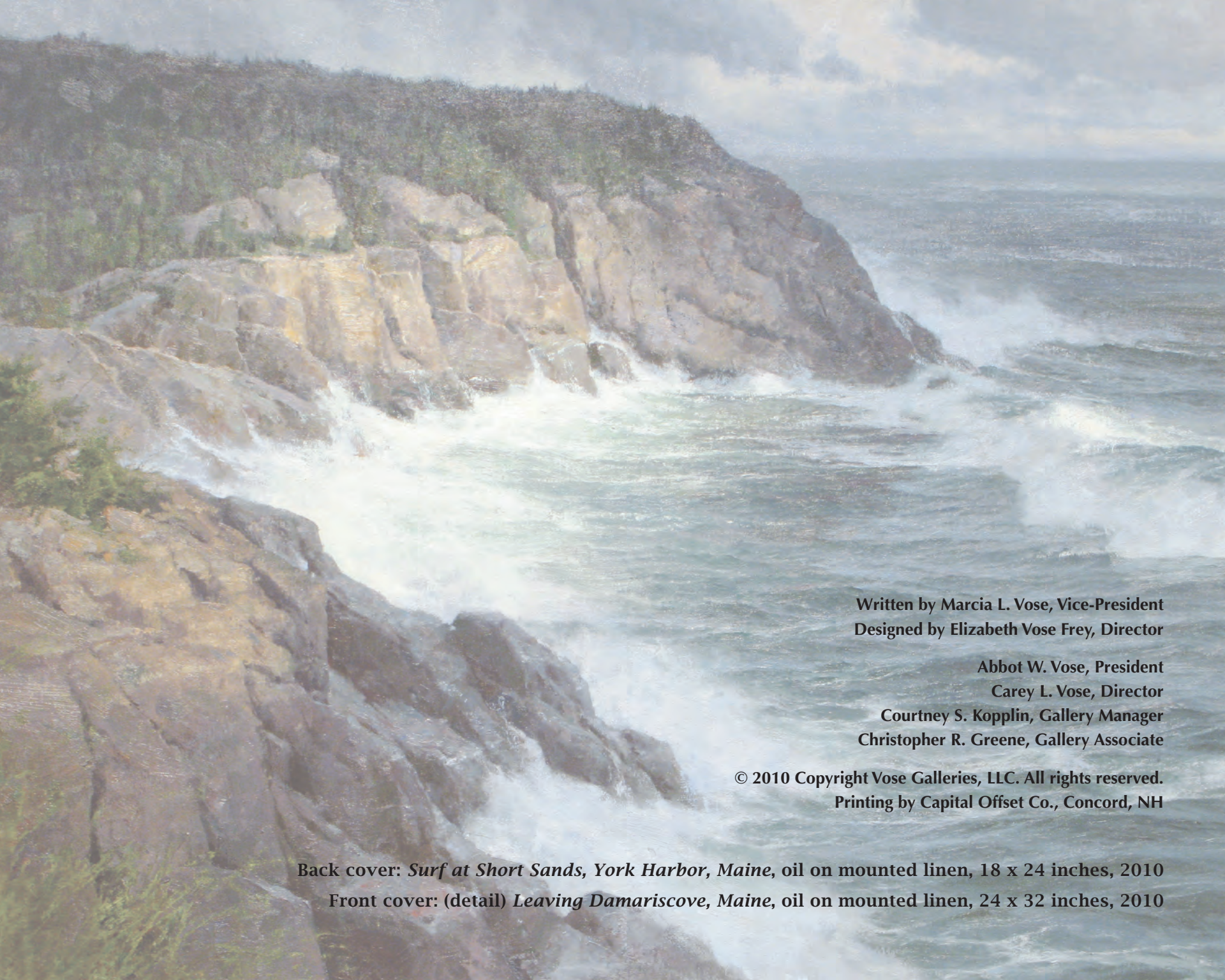
Society of Illustrators, 1987, 1989
Mystic Maritime Gallery: The Thomas Hoyne Award (three), The Rudolph J. Schaefer Maritime Heritage Award, The John Stobart Foundation Award, The Yachting Award (two), The Patron's Choice Award, Awards of Excellence (fifteen-record number)
Guild of Boston Artists, Award of Merit
Artists Magazine, First Place, Landscape
Laguna Beach Plein Air Painters, Landscape Awards, 2001, 2002, 2006 (silver)
Crystal Cove Gala Invitational, 2006, 3rd Place

Literature

Clark, Edie. "On the Wings of the Wind: The Passionate Maritime Paintings of Donald Demers." *Yankee* (Sept. 1993)
"Eye on the Coast: Donald Demers." *Maine: Boats and Harbors* (July 1996)
Yeomans, Kate M. "Out of the Blue: Marine Art of Don Demers." *Offshore* (Nov. 1996)
Doherty, M. Stephen. "Donald Demers Demonstrates Three Approaches to Landscape Painting." *American Artist* (Feb. 1999)
Doherty, M. Stephen. "Making the Landscape Your Own: Donald W. Demers." *American Artist* (June 1999)
Stavig, Vicki. "Capturing the Grandeur of Yosemite." *Art of the West* (Oct/Nov. 2001)
"Don Demers: Painting the Visual Language." *Plein Air Magazine* (March 2005)
Wolf, Rachel. "The New American Luminists: Light on Land and Sea-William R. Davis, Donald Demers, and Joseph McGurl." *Fine Art Connoisseur* (April 2006)
Demers, Donald. "The Importance of W. J. Aylward." Introduction. *Ships and How to Draw Them*, by W. J. Aylward. Flat Hammock, Mystic, CT (2008)
McGarry, Susan. "Acadia: Don Demers," *American Legacy: Our National Parks: On Location with the Plein-Air Painters of America*, Haggin Museum, Stockton, CA (2009)



Demers painting at his home on the Piscataqua River, 2010



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Back cover: *Surf at Short Sands, York Harbor, Maine*, oil on mounted linen, 18 x 24 inches, 2010
Front cover: (detail) *Leaving Damariscove, Maine*, oil on mounted linen, 24 x 32 inches, 2010

