

ART REVIEW
Shows at 82Parris and
Notch8 Gallery. E2

AUDIENCE

Deep Water/E3
Scene & Heard/E6

Sunday, June 11, 2023

Maine Sunday Telegram

SECTION E

“This is the dark part of the present time, and



Photos by Gregory Rec/Staff Photographer

Artist Anna Dibble is the driving force behind “SeaChange” at the Maine Maritime Museum, an immersive exhibit by Gulf of Maine EcoArts that highlights the environmental dangers in the Gulf of Maine brought on by warming water temperatures.

Maine Maritime Museum charts a new course with art installation on warming ocean

The Bath museum hopes that ‘SeaChange’ prompts constructive conversations about the future of the Gulf of Maine.

By MEGAN GRAY
Staff Writer

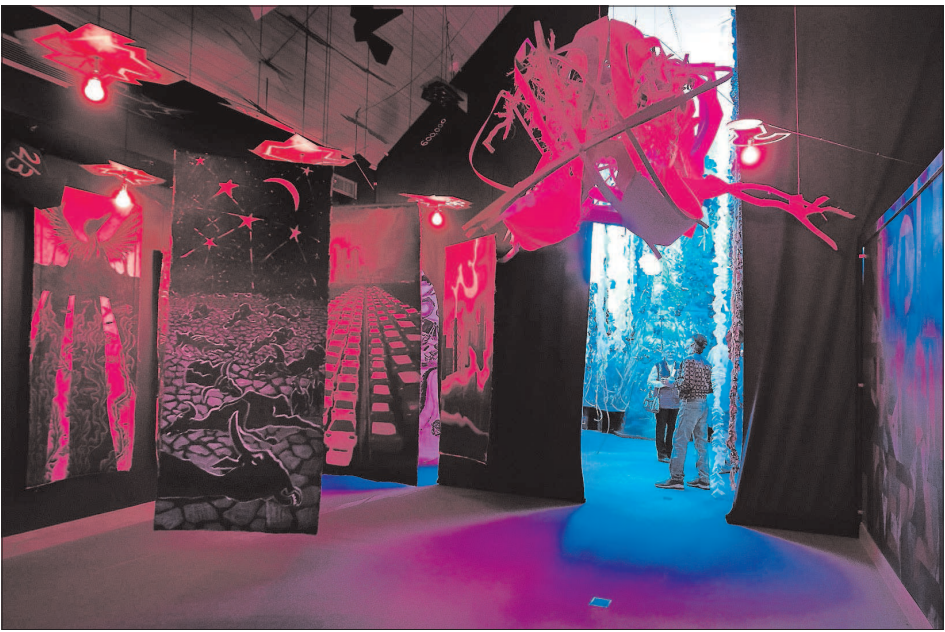
The Maine Maritime Museum in Bath is dipping into unfamiliar waters.

In February, the museum opened “SeaChange: Darkness and Light in the Gulf of Maine,” an immersive art installation that will run through the end of the year. The project by Gulf of Maine EcoArts re-creates an underwater mountain range called Cashes Ledge and invites visitors to reflect on our human impact on the ocean. At Maine Maritime Museum, where the focus has typically been on nautical history, the exhibit is a shift in both its size and subject.

“We want to broaden the conversation,” said Sarah Timm, director of education. “We want to make sure the museum is part of relevant conversations, and what’s more relevant for maritime Maine (than) that we’re the fastest warming body of ocean on the planet?”

Gulf of Maine EcoArts is a nonprofit collaborative that approaches environmental advocacy and education

then you’re going to move into



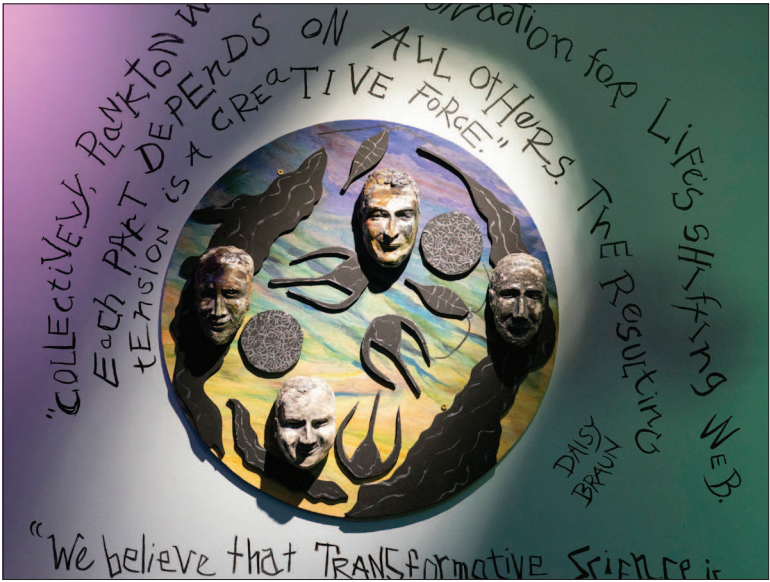
Visitors move through phases of the exhibit.

the light. Because that’s where



A painting of Rachel Carson, one of many environmental activists highlighted in the “Hall of Protectors.”

the hope is.” ANNA DIBBLE, FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF GULF OF MAINE ECOARTS



Maine Maritime Museum will host panel discussions and lectures all year in conjunction with “SeaChange.”

through art. Its projects involve artists, climate activists, students and teachers. This one was first housed at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay under the title “Majestic Fragility” and centered on a 24-foot wooden replica of a North Atlantic right whale skeleton that hung from the ceiling. That exhibit went up in 2021 and was on view until January.

Anna Dibble, a Freeport artist and the founding director of Gulf of Maine EcoArts, started talking last year with the staff at Maine Maritime Museum about finding its next home in Bath. The result was a months-long process that involved 22 artists and eight interns, input from Maine’s fisheries, and a major expansion of the original project.

“My main hope for it is that people will realize that they are part of the ecosystem, that the other animals are not separate from us, that we’re all species in an ecosystem together which we call earth,”

Please see EXHIBIT, Page E3

IF YOU GO

WHAT: “SeaChange: Darkness and Light in the Gulf of Maine”
WHERE: Maine Maritime Museum, 243 Washington St., Bath
WHEN: Through Dec. 31
HOURS: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
HOW MUCH: \$20 for adults; \$18 for seniors; free for members and children 17 and under (see Maine Maritime Museum website for information about other opportunities for free admission)
INFO: 207-443-1316; mainemaritimemuseum.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE MAINE MARITIME MUSEUM will host panel discussions and lectures all year in conjunction with “SeaChange: Darkness and Light in the Gulf of Maine.” These events are free and in person at the museum but require preregistration online at mainemaritimemuseum.org. Here are the events scheduled for this summer, all with 6 p.m. start times; see the museum website for more information about events this fall.

■ **July 10:** Building Sustainability in Maine’s Blue Economy
Seafood sustainability experts will talk about how to enjoy seafood and also protect habitats for generations to come.

■ **July 27:** SeaChange: Researching Climate Change in the Gulf of Maine
Deborah Bronk, president and CEO of Bigelow Laboratories for Ocean Science, will talk about the state of research on marine ecosystems and climate change.

■ **Aug. 24:** Mental Health for Changing Coastal Communities
This panel discussion will focus on the importance of mental health care, especially for people in coastal communities who are dealing with the direct impacts of climate change.

EXHIBIT

Continued from **Page E1**

said Dibble. “And we can all have a part in trying to keep this, or trying to make this again, a more sustainable planet.”

The main hallway outside the exhibit is bright with natural sunlight and lined with glass display cases. So the doorway into SeaChange feels like a portal into a different world – or a different museum, at least.

The first section is awash in red light. Dark paintings depict flooding, oil spills, a forest fire. A mural by Portland artist Ryan Adams asks, “Broken beyond repair?” Signs cut like jagged shards of glass bear disheartening statistics about threats of extinction for marine life.

“This is the dark part of the present time, and then you’re going to move into the light,” said Dibble. “Because that’s where the hope is.”

In the next phase of the exhibit, the light is blue for an underwater effect. The original whale hangs from the ceiling and spans both rooms, but the centerpiece in this section is a replica of Ammen Rock, the highest peak in Cashes Ledge. Artists also created enlarged comb jellies, plankton and kelp that hangs from the ceiling.

Cashes Ledge is located roughly 80 miles off the New England coast, an area that scientists say is a virtual ecological time machine because of the biodiversity still found there. It’s home to one of the world’s largest kelp forests, which provides food and shelter to schools of oversize cod and pollock. Other species that reside in or pass through Cashes Ledge include endangered North Atlantic right whales and humpback whales, as well as many types of sharks. Behind the towering structure is a video installation with dive footage from Cashes Ledge by National Geographic photojournalist Brian Skerry.

Commercial fishing is restricted in Cashes Ledge, and the debate over permanent protections for that area has been contentious in the past. Gulf of Maine EcoArts is supportive of such measures and has been working with Conservation Law Foundation on that topic. The staff at the



Gregory Rec/Staff Photographer

The art at the entrance to “SeaChange” at the Maine Maritime Museum was created by Colby College student Viva Goetze.

Maine Maritime Museum, however, said they do not see their role as advocating for one policy solution over another. Instead, they want the museum to be a place where conversations about the future of the oceans can take place.

“We’re a safe place to have these conversations because as a museum, we don’t want to take a stance one way or another because there are a lot of valid and conflicting viewpoints on climate solutions, but what is undeniable is that it’s a big part of the present and it’s going to be a big part of the future,” said Amanda Pleau, marketing and communications manager.

To that end, museum staff has planned a series of panels and lectures to facilitate those conversations about climate change and the Gulf of Maine. During the planning stages, the museum staff also asked Gulf of Maine EcoArts to meet with representatives from the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association to talk about the installation. Both groups described that conversation as positive.

The exhibit includes an

“EcoLab” where visitors can learn more about the impact of climate change in the Gulf of Maine, look at plankton through a microscope, and make a sea creature out of recycled materials. But Dibble pointed out that the art installation deliberately does not include wall text that tells people how to feel about the art and said their work is “not political.”

“I felt when I came out of that meeting that this is a leveler, that this is a medium where we can start trying to talk to each other,” said Dibble. “I think we have a long way to go. I did learn that, and I have learned that in the process of doing this project. But I think with art, you can do that.”

Ben Martens, executive director of the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, said he appreciated that the artists sought out input from the fisheries during this project. For example, they talked about the narrative that fishermen often discard gear in the ocean, which Martens said is not true of the boats that work in the Gulf of Maine. “Climate change is

happening to fishermen,” he said. “They are on the front lines of climate change. There’s a big push to talk about Cashes Ledge in the exhibit. There’s a lot of fishermen that fought to protect Cashes Ledge and make sure that was an important area.”

On one side of the exhibit is a “Hall of Protectors,” which recognizes 18 people from around the world who have done important work to help the environment. The association suggested and was glad to see included Ted Ames, a Maine fisherman and educator who earned a MacArthur Foundation grant for his research on the population structure of cod and the historical ecological factors connected to the decline of groundfisheries in the North Atlantic, and Robin Alden, who was the commissioner of the state Department of Marine Resources in the 1990s and worked throughout her career to integrate fishermen’s knowledge

into scientific research and policy. Ames and Alden, who are married, were also among the founders of what is now called the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries.

Martens said he hopes people who visit SeaChange see that Maine’s fishing community also want a healthy Gulf of Maine.

“The piece I always try and share is that the fishermen are the ones that are out there fighting for a better future for this ecosystem because they recognize that without putting good management in place, there isn’t a future for the lobster industry or the groundfish industry or the scallop industry,” he said. “We’re still in the early stages of how to figure out how to manage our oceans and our natural resources in our oceans. ... I hope that people go out there and realize that fishermen and conservationists are on the same page when it comes to the ocean. They are trying to protect it, and

they are trying to build something better.”

The exhibit has been up since February and has so far been a draw for new and younger audiences. The Maine Maritime Museum got a grant to support free admission weekends during the winter, and the number of guests rivaled summer weekends. The museum has also seen a greater interest from schools and hired an additional part-time educator to meet the demand. So far this year, the museum has reached more than 1,700 students, a 377 percent increase from the same period in 2022. “SeaChange” was the specific draw for one-third of those students through on-site tours of the exhibit and classroom visits with museum educators.

That response has bolstered the museum staff and reinforced their desire to try new things.

“I think it’s clear that we can be bold,” said Pleau.

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DEEP WATER

MAINE POEMS

*Edited and introduced
by Megan Grumbling*

This week’s poem, Carl Little’s “Shoveling,” was written in response to the digging out of buildings in Syria, Turkey, Ukraine and elsewhere. I love this poem’s wide-ranging meditation on the act of slipping a shovel into the ground, and on the shovel itself – its shape, and what the motion of its use evokes.

Little is the author of more than 30 art books, including monographs on Dahlov Ipcar, Eric Hopkins, William Irvine and Irene Olivieri. He and his brother David’s fourth collaboration, “The Art of Penobscot Bay,” is due out from Islandport Press

in the fall. He lives and writes on Mount Desert Island.

Shoveling
By Carl Little

I’ve seen shovels slipped into earth,
my father’s foot bearing down,
even cuts around baby cryptomeria
bound for the allée he envisioned
of shaggy trees in the back meadow

and Pedro removing snow from stoop,
satisfying fill and fling, the square
head holding mounds of dirty white
he threw to the curb, handyman
called upon to clear the decks

or me digging ferns in the woods,
sharp wedge slicing roots
to free clumps of fledgling fiddles
arranged in plastic sled for transport
to the front of the house or elsewhere.

We shovel, therefore we are, as
every wielder knows, the force
through which we search the rubble
hoping to spy a piece of clothing
with breather attached, scathed but living.

This simple tool, its long arm worn
to smoothness, hands sliding up and down
as if moving earth were playing a kind
of trombone, *oh when the saints come
marching in / I want to be in that number.*

Epilogue:
On the radio today the sound of shovels
turns the stomach, brutal clanks as
blades strike mediocre building materials,
voices calling, people weeping,
everyone digging furiously.

Megan Grumbling is a poet and writer who lives in Portland. Deep Water: Maine Poems is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. “Shoveling,” © 2023 by Carl Little, appears by permission of the author.

ART

Continued from **Page E2**

Guilmoth also offers a large-scale photograph that literally captures the ephemerality of a moment. To achieve it, they asked friends to stand on a dirt road, throw handfuls of dirt and flower into the air and quickly get out of the frame. The resulting image looks like specters walking toward us on the road while also freezing an event in memory. This artist touches into profound eternal questions through the materials of our ecology.

The paintings of Portlander Chel, which limn the line between abstraction and representation, occupy the opposite end of the spectrum. Their work is boldy colorful and flamboyantly gestural. Paintings like “I God in the River” appear at first completely abstract. But the closer we look, the more we perceive the body of water, as well as the craggy rock formations bordering it.

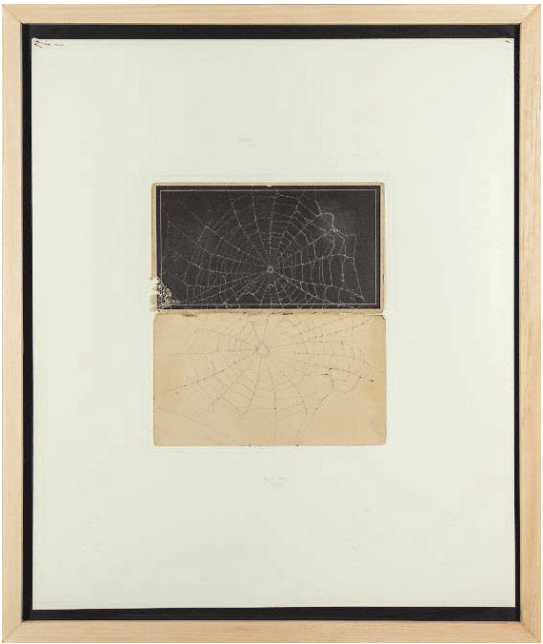


Photo by Bret Woodard

P Guilmoth, “Smoke & Powdered Milk 2023”

The title, of course, implies the deeper phenomenological reality of the river, which according to many wisdom traditions has – like all things – an inner spirit. Wisely, gallery owner Sharon Dennehy has placed Chel’s paintings on the opposite wall from Guilmoth’s works, as their polychromatic glory and jagged energy might have disturbed the meditative stillness of Guilmoth’s organic earthiness.

Atlanta artist Wilson, who co-curated the show, presents nature controlled. His highly graphic, black-outlined images are of potted flowers in decorative cachepots. They are easy on the eye, though one senses a struggle between wildness and the human desire to contain it (i.e.: a snake decoration writhing across the surface of a pot containing a cultivated blossom).

Jorge S. Arango has written about art, design and architecture for over 35 years. He lives in Portland. He can be reached at: jorge@jsarango.com

IF YOU GO

WHAT: “Portlanders: Nick Gervin”
WHERE: 82Parris, 82 Parris St., Portland
WHEN: Through June 23
HOURS: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: @82parris_ on Instagram

WHAT: “The Flower/ The Soil”
WHERE: Notch8 Gallery, 52 Center St., Portland
WHEN: Through July 8
HOURS: 2-6 p.m. Thursday through Saturday (by appointment other days)
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: 207-358-9433, Notch 8 Gallery on Facebook



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