

Cape Ann & Monhegan Island Vistas

by James O’Gorman

In the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, some American artists began to gather into more-or-less unstructured social groups in places like Giverny, Pont-Aven, and Concarneau in France, or, at roughly the same time, across the United States from California to New England. Peterborough in New Hampshire, Provincetown in Massachusetts, Old Lyme and Cos Cob in Connecticut, and

Cape Ann & Monhegan Island Vistas: Contrasted New England Art Colonies is on view through February 13, 2022, at the Cape Ann Museum, 27 Pleasant Street, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 01930, 978-283-0455, www.capeannmuseum.org. A 64-page catalogue by James O’Gorman, with contributions by Martha Oaks, Jennifer Pye, and Oliver Barker and published by the Monhegan Museum of Art & History, Monhegan, Maine, accompanies the exhibition organized by the Monhegan Museum of Art & History and the Cape Ann Museum.

Ogunquit in Maine, many of them coastal sites, were among the areas that hosted visiting artists. *Cape Ann & Monhegan Island Vistas* gathers selected works by artists who

worked on Monhegan Island, some ten miles off the coast of Maine, and at seaside Gloucester and Rockport in Massachusetts. The two colonies are different in every way





ABOVE: Bernard Corey, *December in Rockport*, o/board, 8 x 12, Rockport Art Association & Museum Permanent Collection.

RIGHT: Olga Itasca Sears, *George's Casting Room*, oil on composition board, 16 x 20, Rockport Art Association & Museum Permanent Collection.

LEFT: Paul Strisik, *Monhegan Pier*, 1959, o/c, 24 x 30, Monhegan Museum of Art & History, gift of Nancy Strisik.

except for the attractiveness of their eye-catching marine vistas, the historic importance of fishing, and to this day the presence of artists, both amateur and professional, behind almost every rock, tree, or building. Separated by a hundred miles of ocean, each location at times attracted artists primarily associated with the other.

Monhegan consists of a pair of very unequally sized islands rising above the oscillating waterline. In summer it is daily reached from "inshore" by a scheduled, passenger-carrying mail boat and two sight-seeing vessels. During the winter, only the mail boat is regular, weather permitting, and then just thrice weekly. Just



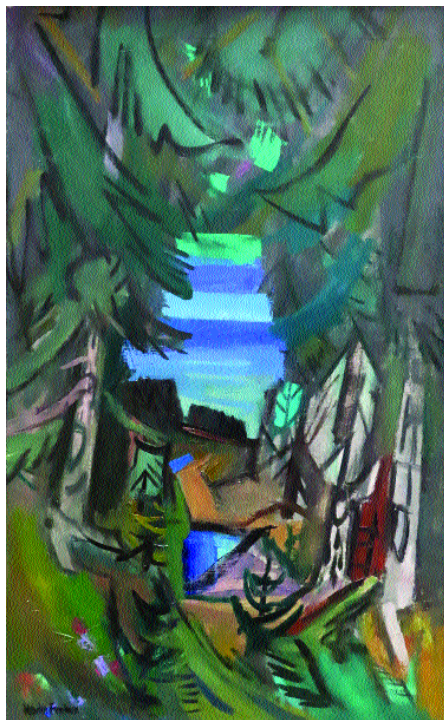
over a mile and a half long by about half a mile wide, the larger Monhegan island holds a village of scattered, carpenter-

shaped, wood-framed shingle houses built in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Public and private buildings such as the



few hotels and boarding houses, the church, the one-room schoolhouse, and the museum are connected by rough gravel roads travelled by golf carts and load-bearing pick-up trucks. The man-made focal point is the nineteenth-century lighthouse atop its highest hill. To the east, what is called locally the “back side of the Island,” sheer cliffs rise from seafoam and dramatically crashing waves to heights unmatched elsewhere along the Eastern seaboard of this country. The much smaller island Manana forms the western flank of the harbor dotted with small working craft and, in season, equally small sailboats.

The habitation of Cape Ann is something else entirely. On Monhegan the edge is nearly always apparent while in the densely inhabited parts of the Cape, one might be in any New England town. The area contains two built-up centers, the large-



ABOVE: Maurice Freedman, *Cathedral to the Sea*, 1968, o/c, 36 x 22, Alan Freedman, courtesy of Greenhut Galleries, Portland, Maine.

RIGHT: Charles Movalli, *Fish Houses*, Monhegan, c. 2010, acrylic on linen, 36 x 36, Dale Ratcliff Movalli.

BELOW RIGHT: William Lester Stevens, *Harbor Scene, Gloucester*, o/Masonite, 17 x 21, Rockport Art Association & Museum Permanent Collection.

LEFT: Don Stone, *Dorymen*, 1992, o/c, 20 x 30, Cape Ann Museum, gift of the artist.

BELOW LEFT: Aldro T. Hibbard, *Motif #1, Rockport Harbor*, o/c board, 17 x 21, The James Collection, promised gift of Janet and William Ellery James to the Cape Ann Museum.

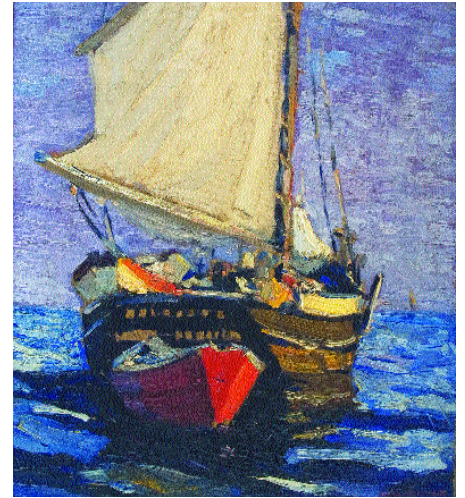
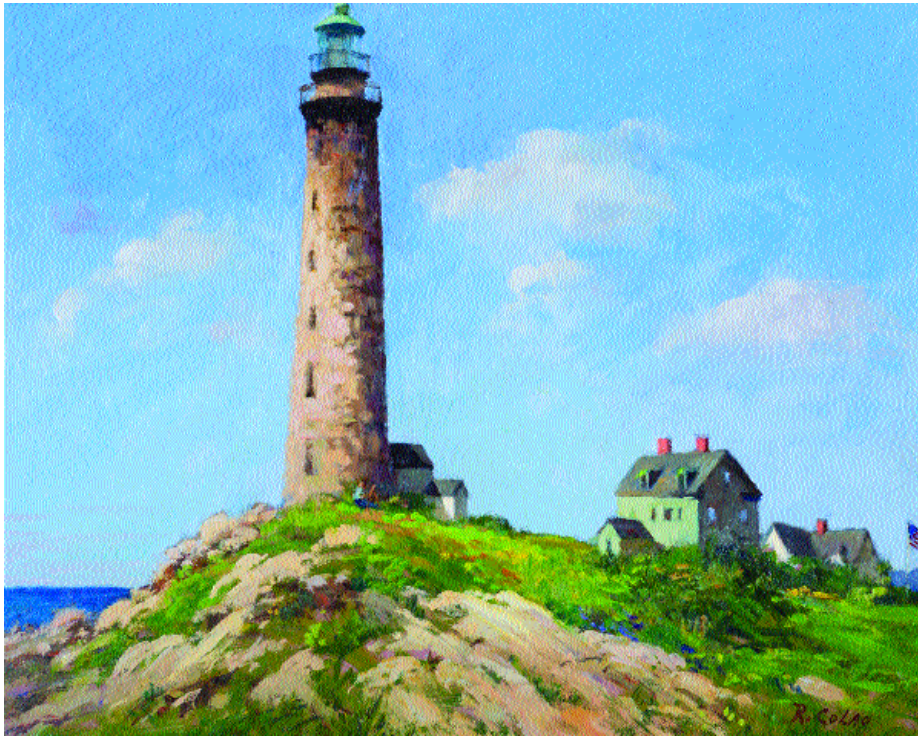


er Gloucester and the smaller Rockport. By the 1890s Gloucester had a trolley on Main Street. There are paved roads travelled by automobiles and trucks, many picturesque spires, architect-designed buildings such as the bristling brick City Hall, an industrially active waterfront with a fish processing plant, a large harbor once crowded with impressive sea-going schooners.

The Cape Ann population is compacted around that harbor strung out along the circumferential coastal road with its views of the twin lighthouses on Thatcher Island. That road also embraces adjacent Rockport, more town than city. Its busy harbor

is lined with vernacular architecture, including a building whose popularity among the artists has gained it the title of

“Motif No. 1.” Inland there are abandoned granite quarries, once the source of material used by architects in imposing



ABOVE: Eric Hudson, *Under Dark Sky*, o/c, 24 1/4 x 20 1/4, Monhegan Museum of Art & History, gift of James F. O’Gorman and Jean Baer O’Gorman.

LEFT: Rudolph Colao, *Thacher Island*, o/Masonite, 16 x 20, courtesy of the R. Colao estate.

BELOW LEFT: Theresa Bernstein, *Studio Garden*, o/c, 12 x 14, Rockport Art Association & Museum Permanent Collection.

RIGHT: Walter Farndon, *The Docks, Gloucester, Massachusetts*, o/c, 34 7/8 x 42, private collection.

BELOW RIGHT: Jacqueline Hudson, *Church Fair, Main St., Rockport*, w/c and gouache on paper, 20 3/4 x 29 1/4, Rockport Art Association & Museum Permanent Collection.



son, followed by William Trost Richards and Alfred T. Bricher along with Maud Briggs Knowlton and Alice Swett. Hudson’s daughter, Jackie, carried the family’s artistic tradition to the end of the next century, and was instrumental in the founding of the Monhegan Museum.

Beginning in 1903 a loose group of young New Yorkers led by Robert Henri arrived on the Island. Over the next years that number included George Bellows, Randall Davey, Rockwell Kent, Edward Hopper, Leon Kroll, Emil Holzhauser, and others. They came, they saw, they painted the Island’s features—primarily waves crashing on rocks or the interior of the woods—that would become standard fare for artists who followed. And then they left, some to move to Cape Ann. By 1914 a group of Island residents and fair-weather painters, followers of Henri’s lead or adherents of Impressionism such as Charles

buildings erected down the coast. Here too there are picturesque views worthy of the artist’s hand.

Despite its remoteness, Monhegan began to attract summer visitors (or “rusticators” in the local vernacular), including

artists, in the middle of the nineteenth century. After the Civil War, inns and boarding houses sprouted to accommodate visitors. The art colony origins have been traced back to the arrival in the 1890s of Samuel Peter Rolt Triscott and Eric Hud-



Ebert, had been established as the constantly changing roster of an informal art colony. That year the first group exhibition was hung in the studio of the painter and graphic artist Bert Poole. Until the founding of the Monhegan Museum, such studio exhibitions and later shows by the Women Artists of Monhegan Island on the porch of the Island Inn were the rule. Much of the work on the island is still sold out of artists' studios.

Professional and amateur painters, printmakers, and photographers continued to appear in the following decades, among them Edward Hopper, William Burpee, Andrew Winter, Margaret Patterson, James Fitzgerald, and Abraham Bogdanove. In the interim between the wars, Winter and Jay Connaway moved in year-round. The





1950s saw a second wave of New York artists, including modernists Murray Hantman, Lynne Drexler, Reuben Tam, John Hultberg, Joseph DeMartini, Frances Kornbluth, and Zero Mostel, who once said he acted so he could afford to paint. Since the 1960s Jamie Wyeth has had a house on the Island, one of several built early in the century by Rockwell Kent. That decade saw the founding of what is now called the Monhegan Museum of Art & History located atop Lighthouse Hill, a repository of works by resident and visiting artists. In its series of annual exhibitions and accompanying catalogues, the museum has chronicled the Island's history in relation to the history of American art.

The Luminist painter Fitz Henry Lane fathered the story of art on Cape Ann. His stone, multi-gabled house of the 1840s still stands above the harbor in Gloucester over-



ABOVE: James E. Fitzgerald, *At the Graveyard*, 1960s, o/c, 27 1/2 x 38, Monhegan Museum of Art & History, James Fitzgerald Legacy, gift of Anne Hubert.

RIGHT: Henry Martin Gasser, *New England Winter Harbor Scene*, c. 1947, w/c and gouache on paper, 21 1/4 x 28 1/2, Carol A. and Robert L. Stahl.

ABOVE LEFT: Donald Allen Mosher, *Harbor View*, 7/2013, o/c, 31 1/2 x 38, courtesy of the Mosher estate.

LEFT: Edward Henry Potthast, *Crow's Nest, Monhegan*, 1920s, w/c with gouache on paper, 15 3/4 x 19 1/2, private collection.

looking the sea, the locus of marine scenes he painted during a long career lasting into the 1860s. In the 1870s short but important visits to the Cape were made by William Trost Richards, William Morris Hunt, and Winslow Homer. In 1898 Frank Duveneck first summered in Gloucester and continued to visit the area for the rest of his life. John Henry Twachtman was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in



1902. Maurice Prendergast came repeatedly to paint in the area during the first quarter of the century.

By then the Cape, like the Island, had become an important intersection of American art. John Sloan abandoned New York

for Gloucester during the summers from 1914 through 1918. He talked Stuart Davis into summering locally beginning in 1915. The 1920s found Hopper recording the architecture of the area. Hosts of amateur and professional artists who worked in diverse media followed the pioneers to the Cape. Among them were the painter Theresa Bernstein and her husband, the painter and printmaker William Meyerowitz, who came in the 1920s. Leon Kroll had a house near Folly Cove as did painter Lilian Westcott Hale. Sculptors Paul Man-ship, Charles Grafty, George Demetrios, Walker Hancock, Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington, and Katharine Lane Weems all worked in local studios. The painter Milton Avery and printmaker Stow Wengeroth put in appearances.

The idea of an art colony began to strengthen. By the early years of the twentieth century many artists had gathered in summer rentals in East Gloucester and at first exhibited works in the lobbies of local hotels. The privately-owned Gallery-on-the-Moors was founded by wealthy collectors in 1916. It closed in 1921 after six seasonal shows and was replaced by the artist-led North Shore Arts Association. The NSAA's first event opened two years later in a refurbished building on East Main Street with an exhibition of 230 paintings, drawings, and etchings and fifteen sculptures. While the NSAA's shows were juried, the competing Gloucester Society of Artists, with an exhibition space nearby, was led by modernists who championed non-juried shows. The area continues to thrive under the name Rocky Neck Art Colony.

The roots of the Cape Ann Museum go back to the Gloucester Lyceum of 1830. After several new designations, in 1920 it acquired the 1804 Captain Elias Davis house and continues to expand in building and collections. In 2007 the Cape Ann Historical Association became the Cape Ann Museum. In 1921 the Rockport Art Association was founded by Aldro Hibbard, Anthony Thieme, Lester Stevens, and others in Hibbard's studio. It has today over 250 members and a growing museum collection.

While many Monhegan artists have over the years produced portraits, the bulk of their local output naturally leans toward sea, harbor, village, and landscapes. Cape Ann artists have had a greater variety of



ABOVE: William Lester Stevens, *Monhegan Lighthouse*, w/c on paper, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$, private collection.

subjects, from seaside to urban to industrial, at their disposal. The paired Cape and Island works of each of the artists shown in *Cape Ann & Monhegan Island Vistas* can provide only a glimpse of the wider production of the larger number of men and women who have held their sketch pads or propped their easels in front of some characteristic (or overlooked) vistas of the area, or the broader range of work created by even the relative few gathered here. Studying locally focused art has its own rewards, but it also enhances the experience of living in or visiting at these seaside colonies. The museums of Monhegan, Gloucester, and Rockport annually show works by many more resident or visiting artists, so the vitality of these centers will no doubt continue for decades.

—Adapted from the accompanying exhibition catalogue.