

Maine Home

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+ DESIGN

A photograph of a bright, modern living room. A woman and a young child are sitting on a long, low wooden bench, reading a book together. The room features a large window with bright orange curtains, a wooden chair with a fur throw and orange cushion, and a wall with several framed pictures. A black wood-burning stove is visible on the right side of the room.

Warm Up,
Slow Down

A superinsulated **Belfast** home,
a **Freeport** farmhouse,
+ a **Sugarloaf** ski lodge

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Telling Stories with *Style*



Painters Mary Bourke, David Cedrone, and Sheep Jones draw on the worlds of nature, memory, and imagination to suggest narratives of universal appeal. Their highly individualistic styles make use of patterning and shallow pictorial depth to give their images a deliberately decorative touch.

MARY BOURKE | DAVID CEDRONE | SHEEP JONES



MARY BOURKE

Mary Bourke is a largely self-taught artist whose work has been featured on the covers of magazines and books including *A Place Called Maine* and *Classics of Young Adult Literature*. In 2000, she had a solo exhibition at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, and in 2011 she was a visiting artist in the Portland Museum of Art's Winslow Homer Art in Process program, which pairs artists with high school teachers and students. Bourke lives in Lincolnville and is a generous contributor to many local benefit auctions. She is represented by Greenhut Galleries in Portland and Powers Gallery in Acton, Massachusetts, among others.

Mary Bourke grew up on Long Island in a musical and artistic family of nine children. Her childhood memories continue to inform her work, which she says is “about my place in the world.” While her work is rooted in personal experience, Bourke describes simple scenes of harmony and intimacy that we can all relate to.

Many of Bourke's paintings depict figures in close physical and psychological proximity to each other. The same sense of connection and stillness extends to her images of animals in nature. Decorative line work and earth-tone patterns describe stylized formal

relationships in a flat pictorial space. Faces are treated as a design element and therefore left unarticulated. “The pieces of a painting fit together like a puzzle or mosaic,” Bourke says. Beyond the formal aspect, this approach also reflects her belief in the interconnectedness of all living beings. Bourke does not work from direct observation but soaks up images, emotions, and ideas from what she observes, often scenes right beyond her doorstep. Working in acrylic on birch panel or linen for larger pieces, she builds up many layers of watered-down paint, sanding in between and “often finding some treasures in the developing texture.” Edges are left intentionally

multi-hued to blur compositional borders.

Recently, Bourke has been focusing more on the present—specifically, the seasons—with figures playing a smaller role relative to the natural environment. *In the Garden* shows this new development in her work: the gardener's form is subsumed and altered by the overall design. A shed and patches of colorful vegetables fill the shallow space of the composition with color and rhythm. At the center, the arc described by the figure's arms supplies a dynamic focal point. Bourke succeeds magnificently in making the personal universal and the ordinary beautiful.



■..... *In the Garden*, 2011, acrylic on birch panel, 30" x 30" Private Collection



DAVID CEDRONE

David Cedrone was born in Brighton, Massachusetts, and moved to Portland in 1984. He received artistic instruction at the School of the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, the Montserrat College of Art, and the Rhode Island School of Design, as well as from private instructors. Cedrone has executed murals in coffee shops, stores, and a family shelter. He ran his own gallery from 1995 to 1999 and is now represented by Casco Bay Frames and Gallery and by Trinket and Fern, both in Portland.

Cedrone uses stained glass and paint to produce vibrantly colored, elemental stories that evoke the fears and joys of life. Universal themes—love and heartbreak, happiness and danger—are addressed in his highly imaginative figurative work, which he creates in a stream of consciousness that allows him to freely distort forms to expressive ends. His cartoonish style conveys Cedrone's humor and optimism, even when mental illness and addiction are his topic. In *Did We Take Our Meds Today*, four small, whimsical characters sprout out of the head of a man holding a container of prescription drugs. "I am changing history in my mind and heart," the artist says of his work.

Cedrone looks toward dreams, legends, children's stories, and the people in his life for inspiration. His love of the ocean compelled him to execute hundreds of works featuring mermaids and mermen. Cedrone's world is also inhabited by angels and other creatures, including skeletons, that have acquired wings in his imagination. The artist has always owned a menagerie of pets, which currently includes three cats, two dogs, a hamster, and a parrot, but he has also owned fish and a pet pig. Animals play a prominent role in Cedrone's work, as the descriptive titles *Cat with Mermaid Shawl* and *Dancing Pig* clearly illustrate.

Girl Feeding Cat is one of Cedrone's relief paintings, which he builds up using

two to six layers of wooden shapes. He chose this technique "to breathe depth into the work." In an interior setting, a young woman is about to feed one of her goldfish to the orange cat on her lap. The fish does not seem happy about his impending demise, a feeling that may be shared by those who consider them pets. The artist admits that he occasionally (and intentionally) strikes a nerve in people. The painting on the wall and the spiraling line on the table's pedestal hint at a larger story. With these allusions to the serpent encircling the tree of knowledge, the scene becomes an allegory about the ambivalence and relativity of good and evil.



■ *Girl Feeding Cat*, 2010, acrylic on paper on wood, 15" x 11" x 1.5"



SHEEP JONES

Born in Waterville, Sheep Jones studied art at the University of Maine. She has exhibited predominantly in the Washington, D.C., area, and she participated in a 2003 group show that traveled throughout Eastern Europe. Her work is in the art collection of the University of Maryland University College, and she taught for 10 years at the Art League School in Alexandria, Virginia. Jones divides her time between Fairfax, Virginia, and Belfast. She is represented by the High Street Studio and Gallery in Belfast and the Steven Scott Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland, among other venues.

Jones paints highly decorative images of mystery and beauty. In her world, stories are suggested, not told outright. Odd situations and juxtapositions border on the surreal, sometimes carrying a dark undertone. While Jones uses a detailed, pictorial language, her images remain unspecific enough to encourage personal projections and interpretations. They give viewers space to dream.

Some of Jones's works combine seemingly disparate motifs in a quilt of visual gems. Fanciful botanicals, insects, and other natural subjects lead separate lives in their own pictorial spaces and guide the viewer's eye from one discovery to another. This compositional approach mirrors

Jones's working method: she typically realizes around 15 oil and wax paintings at a time, developing each in small increments. In the process, "they start speaking to each other," says Jones, and she will carry over a certain color, pattern, or motif from one work to another. In this way, certain recurring themes have emerged in her work, including solitary women and buildings. The images of shacks and cabins grew out of Jones's perception that houses in her suburban environment lack the kind of uniqueness often found in Maine. Placed at the center of the compositions, the imaginary buildings have distinctive character and seem alive with history.

Jones likes clothes and enjoys "dressing up" in designs, colors, and

patterns the young women who appear in her paintings. These are feminine, strong, and confident women who self-assuredly face the viewer, even if they are presented in an awkward or even potentially hurtful situation. The protagonist in *Fish Walker* playfully turns to face us while walking a fish on a leash, her dress cascading into the water she is wading in. The story told here remains withheld. Is she really taking the fish for a swim, or is it guiding her to a secret location? Who is she: a nymph or an incarnation of Sandro Botticelli's *Venus*? Mystery and whimsical suggestiveness abound in Jones's paintings. **MH+D**

For more information, see Resources on page 87.



■..... *Fish Walker*, 2010, oil on panel, 12" x 12" Collection of Paula Amt