

Amongst the Water

By Abigail Jones

Standing on the pebbles that border Upper Pleasant Bay in South Orleans, water splashes on your feet while you look at the scene before you. There is a house hidden behind the trees, and four sailboats lining the harbor, reflecting sunlight onto the bay. You take a deep breath, inhaling the salty air and exhaling as a breeze cools your back. This is a moment to remember, you think; standing on the pebbles facing the harbor, you feel at peace.

You take a step back and find yourself looking into artist William Gotha's oil painting "In the Shallows," featured at his exhibit "Waterways of Cape Cod and New England" at Gallery Antonia in Chatham. You may have never visited Upper Pleasant Bay, but as you indulge "In the Shallows," it becomes a place of comfort to you, as if you have lived in that house in the trees and sailed on those boats in the water. You suddenly know the direction the trees blow in the wind, and the way that the light warms the water while you stand with your back in the shade. The immersive experience of viewing Gotha's painting "In the Shallows" exists throughout all his work: Gotha's landscapes do not simply observe the Cape's nature, but capture it.

Gotha's artistic process has developed over the years since he painted his first landscape at age 12. "Art was a common type of activity in my hometown of West Springfield,



Chased by a Wave • 16" x 24" • oil on linen. Location: Nauset Beach, Orleans.



In the Shallows • 15" x 30" • oil. Location: Upper Pleasant Bay, South Orleans.

Massachusetts. And I really loved it. I just continued to paint all my life, and I took art courses when I could, and I resumed courses when I could. I painted on vacation, painted on business trips, painted any way that I could, anytime that I could," he recalls.

While Gotha has had a passion for fine art throughout his life, he was not always a full-time artist. He was employed by the US Navy, had a career in publishing, and led an

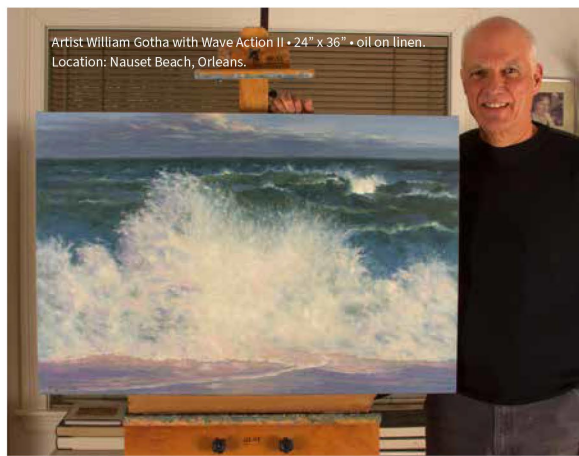
international marketing company while raising a family. "But while I was doing those things, I continued to paint. During vacation, I'd be painting a field and my kids would be running around it. We'd be up at Acadia, camping, and I'd be down on the rocks, and they'd be climbing around," Gotha reminisces.

Gotha's life shifted ten years ago when he sold his company and began to paint full-time. "It's been a real pleasure to take all my focus

and put it on this, because it's something that I started with a long time ago. But it was something that I always had to tag along with other things until all the important projects were done. And now I can really put my full energy into it—it's just exhilarating" he says.

Gotha's power to instill the movement and culture of a place into his paintings comes from his thorough process of color studies and knowledge of how to fit a scene onto a canvas. "I like to really understand the colors and the atmosphere and the humidity and the light, especially the shadow colors," he says. "You don't see it unless you're in the field. I like to get lots of reference material. Sometimes I go back to the same location a couple times at different hours of the day so I can see what the effect of light has on the color," he describes.

Color is not the only component of a painting that Gotha pays attention to, though. "Another aspect of that process is trying to figure out what canvas it's on. I never have the right size canvas when I'm painting in the field. I want to create a process that



Artist William Gotha with Wave Action II • 24" x 36" • oil on linen. Location: Nauset Beach, Orleans.



Down East • 16" x 24" • oil on linen. Location: Acadia National Park, Maine.

generates what I consider to be the perfect cropping of the scene. And in order to do that, I need time to think about it. So, when I get back to my studio from doing the color study, I bring out several different size canvases. I start sketching on them to see what it's going to take to hold this image that I've got in my head of that scene."

The comprehensive process Gotha uses when composing each of his paintings is what makes them so immersive. His work captures the subtleties of each place that he paints, whether it be the fog hovering over the rocks in "Down East" or the wind brushing against the marsh in "Sea Grass."

Although Gotha's artwork shows his dedication to mastering landscapes, he credits his artistic community for his success. Gotha is involved in a variety of different Massachusetts art associations that he notes have sped up his growth as an artist, including the Guild of Boston Artists, the North Shore Arts Association, and the Cape Cod Art Center. "I think I'm progressing faster, because I've tried to use my listening skills that I developed in the business world. And I tried to bring that forward and employ myself in situations where people around me felt comfortable in offering their opinions" he notes. "You move yourself along by listening and asking for help and constructive criticism, and it makes the process go faster. I don't have time for taking offense when I'm really focused on getting better as quickly as I can. I know that I need help from other people to do that.



W. GOTHA
Sea Grass • 16" x 24" • oil on linen. Location: Dennis, MA.

And so, my part in that process is to remain enthusiastically receptive."

Collaborating with other artists is what led Gotha to Gallery Antonia in Chatham. Roberta Miller, the director of Cape Cod Art Center, introduced Gotha to Gallery Antonia owner Domonic Boreffi. Gotha has now exhibited with Gallery Antonia for two years, and his upcoming exhibit "Waterways of Cape Cod and New England" will be his first solo show at Antonia. For Boreffi, Gotha's careful consideration of all elements of his paintings makes them stand out. "He has that really sort of focused approach. I think it shows in his work; he's very detail oriented," Boreffi shares.

"You really feel like you're there, and you're present in one of his paintings," Boreffi continues. "I'm excited to see all of his works. And the entirety of a large wall of his paintings I think will be really powerful. It's just a different

experience when you get that perspective, since I generally only have a few pieces out of a handful from each artist. So it's nice to have a strong presence. And that's the benefit of a solo show—to see the range."

Gotha shares Boreffi's excitement for the exhibit. Centering his show around waterways has allowed

him to feature paintings from both Cape Cod and other iconic locations across New England.

"The Cape is a waterway," Gotha explains. "The ocean and the land interact so incredibly on the Cape because the elevation is very low. And so, you have these areas where the ocean comes into bays, or backs into rivers. And I've done



W. GOTHA
Swift River • 16" x 24" • oil on linen. Location: Conway, NH.

paintings of those estuaries and the interaction of the water with the grasses. I think that's a beautiful thing—where one environment kind of intermingles with another environment. I'm always fascinated with water. And I'm fascinated with rocks as well; there's a lot of rocks and water in my paintings."

Gotha's attention to detail when painting water and rocks is clear when admiring his work. In 'Chased by a Wave,' set on Nauset Beach in Orleans, a young boy runs away from the water that encroaches him, capturing the playfulness and childhood memories of vacations to the Cape. In 'Swift River,' water crashes over rocks down an idyllic river in Conway, New Hampshire. While not set on Cape Cod, 'Swift River' still resonates with the exhibit's Cape audience as, for some, it reminds them of previous ventures along the east coast, and for others it provides them with an aspiration for a future travel destination.

Whether Gotha's paintings make viewers reminisce of the past or hope for the future, they can provide all with a feeling of peace. Gotha's passion enables him to capture the essence of nature around him in oil paint. "I can't shut my eyes off," he explains. "I take advantage of every place that I go. Even if I only have time to take one shot of something, I record it. And then I can go back to that location."

"Waterways of Cape Cod and New England" is a moving exhibit for artists, collectors, and the public alike. Visiting the five-star rated Gallery Antonia, which was recognized as one of the top ten art galleries on Cape Cod, will create a new tradition for all Cape lovers wishing to celebrate both local and international art. Gotha's artwork will transport you across the waterways of the East Coast and instill in you a tranquility unique to

his artwork. Admiring his paintings, you may find yourself 'In the Shallows,' watching the breeze pass on the Upper Pleasant Bay as you take a step deeper into the water.

"Waterways of Cape Cod and New England" started on July 30th and runs through September 5th with an opening reception on August 4th from 5 pm to 7 pm. Gallery Antonia is located at 1291 Main Street in Chatham, and the exhibit

will be shown on the upper level. To see more of Gotha's artwork, visit his website at williamgotha.com. To learn more about Gallery Antonia and Gotha's exhibit, contact Domonic Boreffi, gallery owner, at 508-469-4020 or visit the gallery website at galleryantoniam.com.

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