



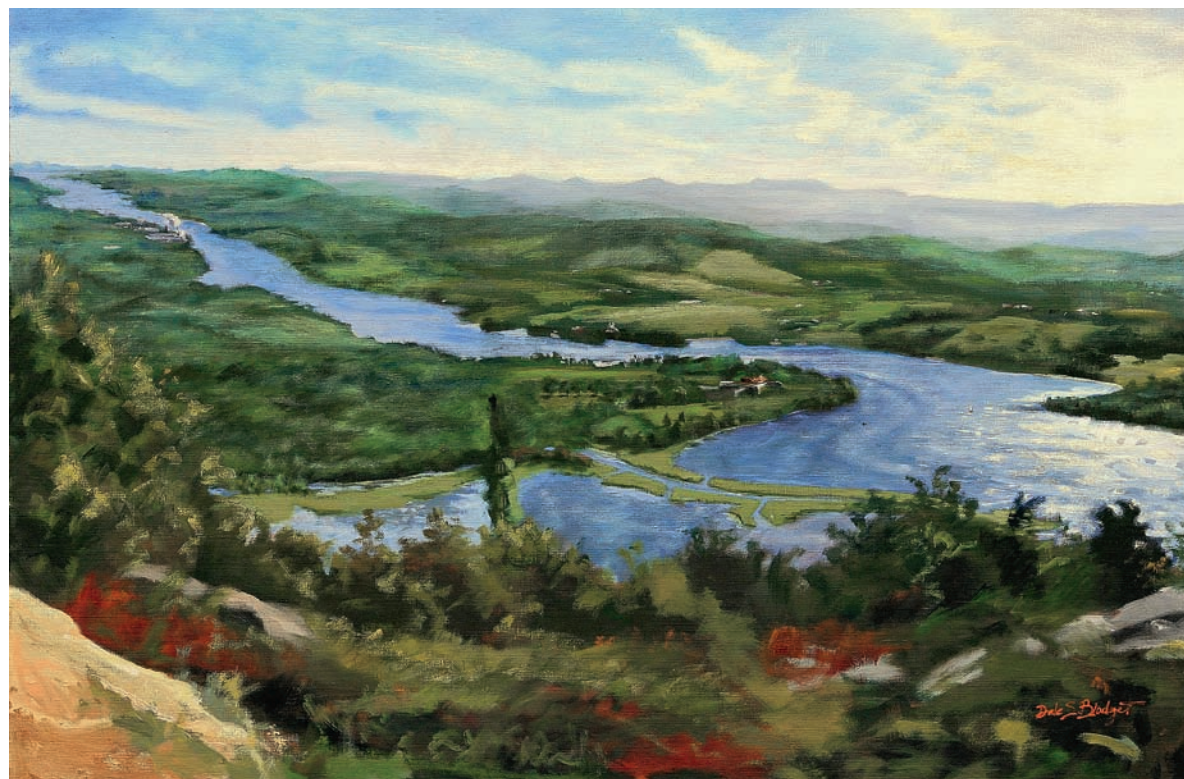
Open to Interpretation

38 artists capture the mystery and wonder of Lake Champlain



Exhibition dates and locations:

- May 8–25: Shelburne Farms, Shelburne
- June 1–15: National Arts Club, New York City
- June 29–Aug. 3: Boston Public Library
- Aug. 19–Sept. 20: Southern Vermont Arts Center, Manchester
- Sept. 23–Oct. 31: Vermont Statehouse, Montpelier



Above:
Helen Shulman's
"Waiting for
Champlain"
Above right:
Bonnie Acker's
"Champlain
Organic"

Left:
Dale Blodget's
"9 a.m. from
Mount Defiance"

By TOM SLAYTON

LAKE CHAMPLAIN, WHICH DOMINATES most of western Vermont, has been many things to many people in its long history — an explorer's pathway, a warrior's strategic route, an entrepreneur's opportunity and home to thousands who have lived along its shores.

Its appeal to artists is no less diverse. In "Champlain's Lake Rediscovered: Vermont Artists Celebrate the Lake," each of the 38 artists in this broad-reaching and beautifully executed exhibit has combined his or her own creative spirit, medium and artistic style with the immense subject. The result is 38 very different expressions of the lake — different lakes, if you will.

There are, for instance, several traditional, realistic landscapes. Dale Blodget offers the huge views for which Lake Champlain is justly celebrated. Bonnie Acker's paper collage, "Cham-

plain Organic," and Ken Rush's oil, "Champlain Bridge Fractal," step away from traditional landscape forms to give us a more expressionist and intellectual view of the life surrounding the lake. Acker's view is a positive one, with images of smiling workers harvesting fruit (the word "organic" beams just below) as wild geese ascend from a marsh into the sky. It is an ideal vision of place. Rush's composition, by contrast, employs industrial images, including the long arc of the Champlain Bridge, to invoke the contemporary world of commerce and industry that surrounds the lake.

One of the most compelling images in the show is Helen Shulman's beautiful oil, "Waiting for Champlain," which presents the lake in three indistinct, dreamlike views, united by their warm, earthy palette. As the

title hints, this is Lake Champlain as the great French explorer might have himself encountered it: wild, undeveloped, both beckoning and slightly ominous. The largest view here is of a reedy wetland where banks of autumn-hued reeds open to a winding watery passageway. Vignettes within the larger composition show hazy views of a wooded bay and the open lake nestled among surrounding mountains. The painting captures both the sense of mystery and wonder that Champlain must have felt as he first entered this huge lake, and the sense of vague discovery that we contemporary viewers sometimes encounter in dreams.

Thus, like many images in this fine show, it links us, mind-to-mind with the past, deepening our experience of the lake through the medium of art. 🍂