

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS
WINTER LANDS

SNOWED IN

BY JOHN O'HERN



1. Somerville Manning Gallery, *Storm Break at Midnight*,
oil on linen, 40 x 60", by Peter Sculthorpe.

Nathaniel Currier published **Frances Flora Bond Palmer's** lithograph *American Winter Scenes: Morning* in 1854. At that time, James Merritt Ives was his bookkeeper. In 1867, Ives became a full partner and the firm of Currier and Ives was born. The company produced thousands of hand-colored lithographs in unlimited editions ranging from 20 cents to \$6 each. Palmer (1812-1876) produced over 200 of the company's scenes although her name doesn't appear on all of them. She and her husband were commercial illustrators in London and moved to the U.S. in 1844. A critic once wrote that her work had "a boldness and freedom not often exhibited by a female pencil." Palmer's output included her famed winter scenes and ranged from floral still lifes to smoky locomotives. Commenting on the popularity of her work one writer noted, "It is likely that during the latter half of the 19th century more pictures by Mrs. Fanny Palmer decorated the homes of ordinary Americans than those of any other artist, living or dead."

Palmer's playful scene is one aspect of life living in

winter lands. **David Vickery** portrays its practical and communal side. A warm, inviting light emanates from inside the market while outside, supplies for what some say are Maine's two seasons—winter and the Fourth of July—sit by their shoveled-out access. Vickery says, "I liked the evening mood of this scene, about 5 p.m. in January, when people are stopping by the store after work, and the beautiful contrast of warmth inside and cold outside, and the messy make do aspect of winter life."

He continues, "The ice bin and propane exchange cabinet speak to summer gatherings and grilling (what the propane is most used for), which are now dormant under the record snowfall of 2015, when I shot the reference photo. Also, I found the red 'ICE' text very attractive (any chance to use full strength red) and a comically redundant reminder of what we have to deal with for many months." Vickery lives within a stone's throw (or two) of the Olson House, one of Andrew Wyeth's favorite subjects, and is well-acquainted with Maine's many moods. He says of his paintings, "It's



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2. Dowling Walsh Gallery, *Broad Cove Market*, oil on panel, 14 x 18", by David Vickery. 3. Cavalier Galleries, *The Snowscape Painter*, oil on canvas, 24 x 36", by Joseph McGurl. 4. National Gallery of Art, *American Winter Scenes: Morning*, 1854, published by Nathaniel Currier, hand-colored lithograph on wove paper, 21 1/4 x 27 1/8", after Frances Flora Bond Palmer (1812-1876). 5. David Marty, *Morning Glory*, oil, 18 x 24". 6. David Marty, *Winter in the Woods*, oil, 12 x 24". 7. Hadley Rampton, *Jaune et Violette*, oil on canvas, 36 x 36". 8. Knox Galleries, *Flowing Clear and Cold*, oil, 12 x 12", by Penn Dunn. 9. Knox Galleries, *The Three Amigos*, oil, 30 x 36", by Dean Bradshaw. 10. Studio 7 Fine Art Gallery, *Evening Shadows*, watercolor, 23 x 40", by James Fiorentino. 11. Sally Ruddy, *Foggy Orchard*, oil on canvas, 11 x 14"

getting it to feel real, rather than look real, ultimately." Having survived many Maine winters and enjoyed the brief summers, I feel at home in Vickery's paintings—in this case, escaping the bitter cold in the warm camaraderie inside.

Peter Sculthorpe paints in the Brandywine Valley, the haunt of Andrew and many other Wyeths. He recalls Wyeth attending his openings and talking with him about the paintings on display. The fieldstone barn and house in *Storm Break at Midnight* are classic Brandywine Valley structures, many built by the English settlers who cleared the fields of stone to plant their crops. The fresh snow softens the built environment in the ethereal moonlight. A fire burns all night to take

the edge off the cold, and chopped wood lies stacked outside the door. Recalling the paintings of William Trost Richards (1833-1905), Sculthorpe muses, "Richards' work has inspirational value in its directness and matter-of-factness. He has the ability to make a meager subject iconic and approachable at the same time"—qualities that make his own paintings stand out as well.

Joseph McGurl is literally outstanding in his field in *The Snowscape Painter*. A master of plein air painting he is acutely sensitive to the changing qualities of light in the landscape. "I am attempting to make a deep, organic connection to my subject. Consequently, I must know my subject on a very deep level and spend a great deal of

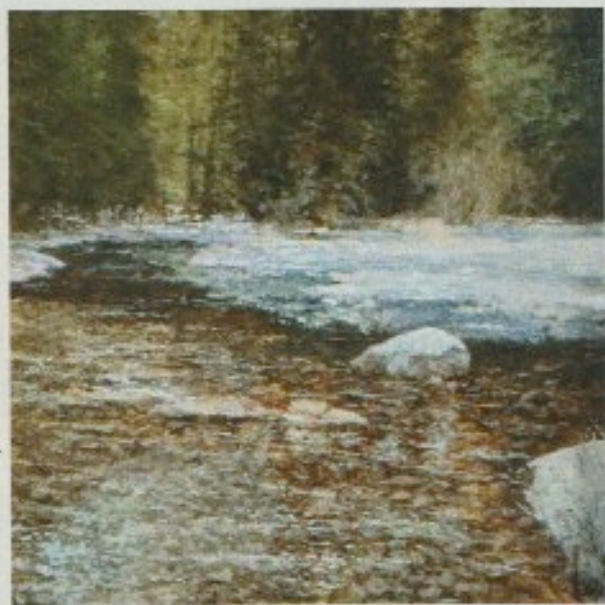
time studying, painting and observing...As I am painting, the feeling I am experiencing physically is very different while painting a tree as opposed to a cloud or a rock. I am not just painting the tree, I am the tree... I am using a combination of empirical observations, rational knowledge and emotional connections to re-create with authenticity the responses I acquire from the natural world." Fifteen years ago, McGurl and I participated in a conference on representational art held on Cape Cod where he lives. I had included his work in an exhibition several years before that. Over the years I have watched his knowledge of the science of light and his sensitivity to its emotional impact appear in more and more complex paintings.



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Read on to find an array of other winter-inspired scenes presented by esteemed galleries and artists, from depictions of snowy forests to winter sports to wildlife braving the frigid season.

Living in the Pacific Northwest near Seattle, artist **David Marty** typically experiences more rain than snow, so snow days always bring inspiration, he says. "In

the winter, I love to venture up into the Cascade Mountains or western Montana to enjoy and capture the beauty of their snow-covered landscapes," says Marty. "I believe a dynamic snowscape relies on the artist's ability to capture and convey the play of light within the scene, contrasting the warm light on the snow with the cooler blues and lavenders that wintertime

uniquely provides. When done well, a snow scene should provide a sense of peace, tranquility and timelessness."

Plein air painter **Hadley Rampton** is energized by the challenges and beauty of nature like the dynamics of light, atmosphere and temperature in the Rocky Mountains and deserts of the Southwest. "Some tell me I'm crazy for painting in

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12. Knox Galleries, *Schussboomer*, bronze, by Shari Vines. 20 x 26", by Douglas Allen. 13. Sally Ruddy, *Lonesome*, oil on canvas, 18 x 24". 14. Studio 7 Fine Art Gallery, *Moonlight Vigil*, oil on canvas.

the mountains in the dead of winter or for battling swarms of biting flies in summer. And yet, there I stand for hours, working, feeling there is nowhere else I would rather be," she says.

Represented by Knox Galleries in Beaver Creek, Colorado, is Pem Dunn, whose plein air style can portray the stillness and solitude of winter. Dean Bradshaw is an impressionist who is able to show the exhilaration of flying through powdery snow as seen in his skiing scene *The Three Amigos*. Another artist represented by the gallery, Shari Vines, recently completed a bronze of a penguin in mid-ski down a hill. "My love of penguins and winter inspired me to sculpt a penguin on skis to portray

the sense of unrestricted speed and joy of cruising straight down the hill," says Vines.

California artist Sally Ruddy's latest series presents fleeting moments of life's inherent magic as she honors her environment and artistic tradition. The artist combines direct observation of nature with her imagination, reflecting on her intimate world to capture these impressionable moments and preserve these memories on the canvas. "The thrill for me in painting lies in the countless possibilities of the interjection of a single stroke of color upon color," Ruddy explains. Incorporating expressionistic qualities, her lyrical design elements create a unique experience for her viewers as they observe a moment frozen in time.

Studio 7 Fine Art Gallery is a 2,500-square-foot gallery located in the rolling hills of New Jersey, an hour train ride from New York City and Philadelphia. The gallery represents more than 30 artists creating paintings and sculpture and has recently added nationally acclaimed wildlife artist Douglas Allen to its roster. Celebrating the winter season, the gallery is holding an exhibition, *Change of Seasons*, featuring the romantic landscapes of Jim Rodgers, also new to Studio 7, along with Allen and other artists including James Fiorentino, Peter Fiore, Gary Godbee, Anne Stoeber and Mark de Mos. The exhibition runs through February 29. ●

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