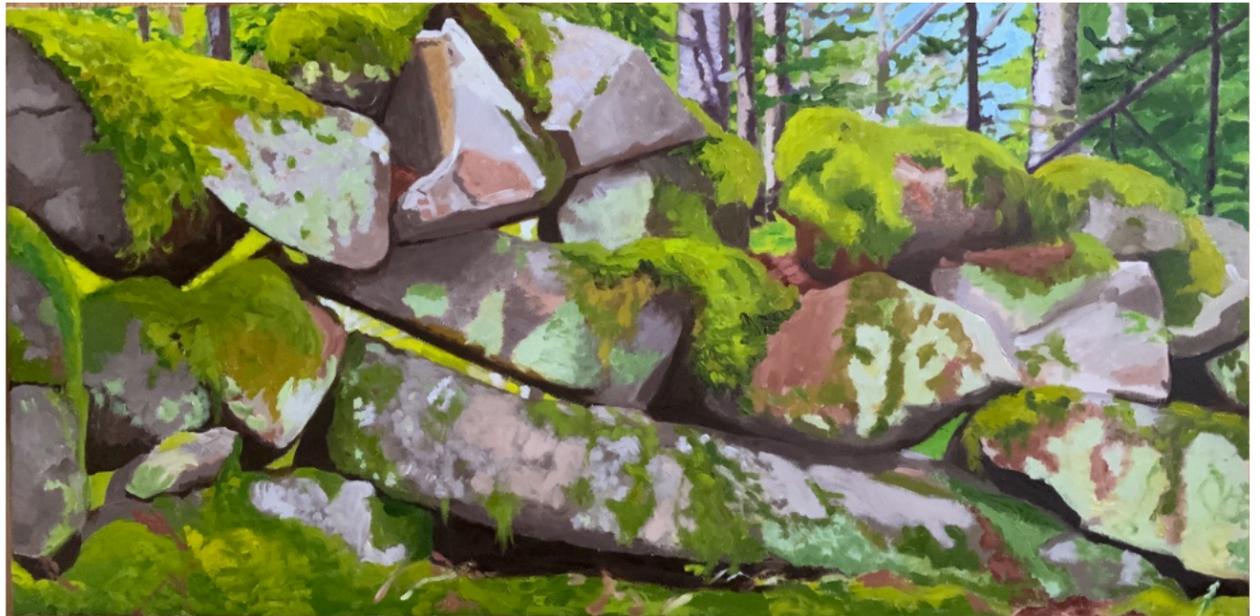




The Rockland City Council has passed a new Harbor Plan. Louise MacLellan-Ruf from the harbor advisory committee will be interviewed by Steve Carroll on this Wednesday's Rockland Metro show from 5 to 6 PM. WRFR broadcasts on 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 fm in Camden, and streams online at wrfr.org.

All subjects are on the table as well, and listeners are invited to call in with questions and comments. The number to call is 593-0013



Black Lives Matter

by Joe Steinberger

26-year-old Rockland resident Raheem James is in jail, charged in a series of break-ins in his neighborhood. Bail has been set at \$5000 cash. Probably most people reading this story could come up with that bail, or have a friend or family member who would, but I am guessing that James will remain in jail. I am also guessing, given the evidence that has been reported in the Courier Gazette, that Raheem will go from the Knox County Jail to spend a few years at the Maine State Prison, at a cost to taxpayers of about \$60,000 a year, and that after his release from our "Department of Corrections" Raheem will not be corrected, but will instead be hardened and debilitated, and likely will get back into trouble. I pray that I am wrong in this, but it is a guess based on almost fifty years of experience as a criminal defense attorney.

Is it about race? Certainly it is. The legacy of slavery, in which Africans were systematically deprived of their culture, and years of segregation and oppression, in which our criminal "justice" system has played a leading role, have a terrible legacy of which Raheem is surely a victim. This conclusion, though, comes from my reading of history. My personal experience is about oppression that is not about race, but about class. In my fifty years I never represented a black defendant. We have had so few here in Maine. With the exception of one native American, a terribly sad case of oppression and despair, my clients have all been white - almost all poor white.

One, a man already serving a long term in prison who had grown up poor in Lewiston, told me that I was the first middle class person he had ever met who had treated him with respect, who spoke to him man to man as an equal.

Yes, it is we who are the oppressors, we who, if not racists, are certainly classists, we the superior "educated" people, we who do nothing, say nothing, about our cruel system that imprisons more people than any on earth. And our prisoners are overwhelmingly poor people, black and white.

Black lives matter. White lives matter. Or do they?



Raheem James came from Brooklyn to Rockland, hoping, I assume, to find a better life here. Did he? Will he find any respite here, any help here? The evidence so far is probably not.

Journal of a Painting

by Susan Beebe

July 14, 2020 – On the island! 56/84 degrees F. I started a painting, my third this summer. Of the stone wall at the west edge of our land, on an 18 by 36-inch canvas. I'm looking up the hill at the stone wall, with some very big rectangular slabs below, all slanting from upper left to lower right, bright sunlit green chinks between, with dark shadows below, and some potato-like round rocks perched on top, draped with luxuriant moss. No deerflies bugging me, but a few more mosquitoes than last time. Lots of red squirrels: one made it clear he didn't want me there. Two hermit thrushes singing beautifully back and forth, one dead ahead of me that I couldn't spot. A pileated woodpecker's loud drumming downhill to my right, then the large black shape flew in front of me. Red-breasted nuthatches, a distant winter wren. Around noon, heavy gray thunder clouds blocked the one chink of blue sky I see in the painting, and I packed up. Two trips, to carry the painting, and to cart the easel, paint box, stool, palette. I'm standing in a very small flat place, behind me is a soft, thick patch of moss I don't want to ruin.

July 15 – Partial clearing early (we got 1.5" rain last night.) I worked on the painting about 2 hours. Fewer mosquitoes than yesterday! The birds sang less, except when the sun came out. The hermit thrushes sang again, one very near me, and a black-throated green warbler. The cloudiness allowed me to see the sculptural shapes of the rocks without distracting lights and darks. The dark-dark under some rocks and moss is almost black. I could spend all summer painting in these woods, I'm so lucky to be here.

July 16 – 46/70 degrees F. Mostly sun. Continued the stone wall painting from 9 AM- 1 PM, including two trips each way transporting the painting and gear in the cart. I thought I'd have another cloudy session. But suddenly it cleared off, and the woods came alive with little rustles, woodpecker taps and bird song. This time I saw the hermit thrush A LOT singing and foraging! He sang all puffed up (and was just the color of my burnt sienna, cobalt violet, white mix – making a brownish gray), and then, alert, he grabbed something on the twig ahead. He flew from branch to branch singing, then dropped lightly to the forest floor 30 feet below his perch, hopped along a fallen log, then flew up again. A mouse peeked out of a hole in the moss right at my feet, then ran to another hole a foot away. The whole hill is pockmarked with holes, a network for mice and squirrels. Later a shrew ran up and over the wall. Besides these, I heard or saw eagle, osprey, raven, flicker, hairy woodpecker, r-b nuthatch, parula and black throated green warblers. Two parties of 4-5 people walked by and saw me (I'm 50 feet from the path.) I felt a bit like a fox or moose in the shadows watching chattering hominids walk by and hoping they won't notice.

The shapes of the stones are starting to come together like puzzle pieces, making sense. I also worked on the sky, the tree branches and trunks beyond the wall.

July 17 – 49/67 degrees F. Mostly cloudy. Continued painting 11 AM-1 PM, not counting set-up and take-down. A couple of times it got so dark and the wind blew ominously, I thought I'd have to rush back holding my canvas. Sometimes it was hard to see. I saw the hermit thrush sing again, right in front of me, about 12 feet up on a small bare spruce branch. When I stand for 2 hours in the woods (only when I paint), I become aware of the "individual lives" of birds in that territory, just as Bernd Heinrich says. That particular thrush, not just any thrush, his perches, his routine, his answer to the distant song of a rival. It's hard to think of that ethereal song as aggressive, but it is.

The wall has become magical to me: looking so closely at each rock, the patterns of lichen, ghostly pale green or reddish, the shapes of the moss, all seem to glow. The chinks between give the rocks a lightness – they are solid but perched precariously on points and corners. How did the people ever get them into place?

July 18 – Fog early, clearing. I painted from 10:45-1:15. Less foggy in the woods, "inland." When have I had the chance to work on a painting in the woods for 5 days in a row? Not since 2001! The hermit thrush was silent a long time, I felt lonely! Then he announced himself with a long series of "que-e-er" calls. When he was right in front of me, I painted him on my paper palette. Next time, bring a small canvas. The r-b nuthatches with their excited and constant yacking are comic relief to the exalted song of the thrush.

I forced myself to tackle the big stone at the bottom of the wall, and got it filled in with gray mixed from burnt umber, cobalt violet and titanium white, the dark shape below with straight

(Journal of a Painting, cont. from p. 1)

burnt umber. I finally saw the overall picture: the stones (foreground) are dark, except for a few lit-up facets and moss at the top, and the background, the chinks between stones and the strip of forest at the top, are bright. This happens about 1 PM; before, there were distracting lights and darks on the wall, or my palette was lit up, blinding me, or a beam of sun made the surface of the canvas look like fur.

July 26 – Back on the island. 89 F, hottest day so far. Dry in the woods, moss hard. Continued painting 11-1. Hard after a week's absence. I saved my palette from last time, so I could set it up the same. A good, long view of a brown creeper hitching up a mossy maple trunk downhill from me. Hermit thrush silent the first hour, sang the second.

July 27 – Finished the stone wall painting! Carried the canvas back once because it was raining lightly, then went back again. The long stone at the bottom, its surface, needed more attention, because it's the least interesting shape. Around 1 PM, I felt, "That's it – I'm done!" Then the hermit thrush, which hadn't started singing till late, flew to a perch right in front of me and sang! I grabbed the little canvas I'd brought in case this happened, and scribbled a painting with the colors I already had. He stayed about 5 minutes.

There's always a feeling of sadness when you finish a painting like this: this time, this experience will never come again. For a while, you feel like you've stopped time. And now it starts marching forward, with the hermit thrush singing less, finishing nesting, getting ready for fall migration. I hate the birds to leave the island: here they're so safe, no cats, cars, or plate glass windows.



photos by Ron Tesler



WEEK TWENTY-THREE

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

Seagulls have discovered the crows' patio breakfasts. No amount of scaring them away has been effective. Regretfully, I'll have to give up on breakfasts for my favorite crows. They roost nearby and arrive as soon as they see me, so I guess they'll just forage elsewhere. It must seem so odd that I'll miss these intelligent birds. There is so much to miss during these strange coronavirus days.

Finally we have some much-needed rain. Walking across my lawn is like walking on crushed glass. Crunch, crunch sounds underfoot on the browned remnants of grass.

I've meant to keep my COVID-19 Random Notes as a sort of personal diary. But what is happening in my South End of neighbors and friends is a socio-economic phenomenon of epic proportions. Some would say – especially hungry realtors and our city government – just sell while the market is red-hot before you're priced out with burdensome revaluation property taxes in this new competitive market of water views people from away with deep pockets find to be bargains.

Gentrification has arrived in our South End like a relentless real estate steamroller encircling our neighborhoods. Properties and vacant lots sell in a matter of days. Some houses have been and will be teardowns; others were and will be more gut-jobs similar to what has already been snapped up by The Deep-Pockets led by salivating realtors and their finders, one of whom lives in the South End. Dis-placement of long time lower income homeowners negatively affects a community's history and culture as well as housing and economic vital issues our city council and other city entities ignore.

I've read about New-Yorker-Deep-Pockets in bidding wars for estates in the Hamptons to create COVID-Compounds to escape the virus to work from home.

Meanwhile, other Deep-Pockets keep erecting second luxury houses in our South End they occupy half the year. Our homes aren't just houses. Our homes are histories of Rockland's generations of families that are being transformed into commodities.

Yesterday, while getting the mail, the red squirrel that lives in the big maple ran up to me and stopped less than two feet away. We had a staring contest. Then it ran off and went under my car. A few minutes later, it ran at me again. I stomped my feet and it took off. I wondered what I would do, if it attacked. It has to be quite curious and courageous to come that close to a large human compared to its tiny self.

Today I noticed a spider web by our mailbox. I decided to drop a tiny bit of wet cat food into the web to feed the small spider. The piece of Nine Lives Beef Pate landed perfectly. The spider reacted swiftly by weaving more web around it, to dine later.



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