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2018 Annual Guide

PORTLAND ART GALLERY



A guide to 65 of Maine's  
most collectable artists

# Maine Home +DESIGN

75 Market Street

Suite 203

207-772-3373

[www.mainehomedesign.com](http://www.mainehomedesign.com)

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# ARTIST INTERVIEWS

Art Collector Maine artists on their process, inspiration, style, and more



Daniel Corey, *Autumn*, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

# JULIE HOUCK



*As a contemporary landscape painter working in oils and encaustics, Julie Houck aspires to convey not only the scene but also the moment and mood. The moment is fleeting but the painting allows us to live in that moment a bit longer, to linger, to reflect, to contemplate, to enjoy. She is inspired by the interplay of light on the landscape, which is ever-elusive and always changing. Painting softly allows her the opportunity to recreate that one particular special moment when the land, light, and atmosphere seamlessly fuse.*

**Light Bridge,**  
oil on linen,  
34" x 46"

## **Q. YOUR PAINTING SEEMS TO FOCUS ON LANDSCAPES. WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO CONVEY IN THEM?**

**A.** I approach a landscape in terms of trying to distill it down to its minimal components to what that essence is. So it's a little more of a visceral experience than an actual rendering of what something looks like. I'm particularly drawn to wetlands, to marshlands. The landscape is always changing; it changes with every tide. I'm drawn to the serenity of it, especially the landscape during the wintertime when it's not so obvious in-your-face bright sunshine and blue sky, blue water, and green trees. There are more subtle grays in these three seasons out of the year: fall, winter, and then the spring. Even mud season is beautiful.

## **Q. WHAT IS YOUR PROCESS LIKE?**

**A.** I'll usually do smaller studies in the field as a reference, and then I will use those as points of departure for the larger, more contemporary works. But it's not exactly a paint-by-number process where I have the small one, and I blow it up by scale to make the large one look just like it. For me, the process is a little more interpretative and reactive and responsive. I'll see something out there that catches my eye, and I'll get it down and then I'll maybe use parts of that, or some of it will become an inspiration for something in a larger piece, but it's not a direct match in terms of blowing it up larger. And the little pieces actually stand alone as finished paintings. They're fresher, they're more reactive, they're looser, they're capturing a moment in time, while the contemporary pieces are developed over a period of weeks.

## **Q. LIGHT IS CLEARLY A KEY COMPONENT IN YOUR WORK. HOW DO YOU CREATE IT?**

**A.** You always see the evidence of light and the transmission of light in my paintings. I tend to work between two different ways of creating that light: indirect and direct. Indirect is working in transparent layers where I might lay in up to 40 different layers of paint to create the translucent feel in a sky. It appears like the spectrum of the sky washing over where it's almost cloudless, but it's an atmospheric wash. These are the edgier, contemporary, more minimalist types of pieces. The pieces that are more developed with actual cloudscapes are more atmospheric as well as luminescent in that the clouds have movement to them. These are a combination of indirect, which is the many transparent layers, as well as direct, which means applying paint in opaque brush strokes. It's a solid thing, you can't see through it. I combine those two processes to create whatever the scene is.

## **Q. HOW DID YOU LEARN TO DO THAT?**

**A.** I'm classically trained. I went to classical ateliers when I decided to redirect my career from photography to painting. I didn't go back to the traditional art school, although I did study at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. I entered a traditional program of drawing and painting, then I ended up going to private ateliers taught by classical realists in San Francisco and in France. Because I wanted to learn and study light, and learn light on form, and there's no better way to learn about light than to study in a classical atelier, because that's all they teach, light on form. And once you understand how light hits any sort of three-dimensional object or space, that's very freeing. It's like downloading the software program, teaching you how to use it, and saying, okay, you're on your own, go.