

*Fruit and French Windows*

Sophie Birch  
Johnny Defeo  
Jon Pilkington  
Ffion Reed

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13th October - 20th November 2023

*Watercolors are what the creative ones in the family did while summering on Cape Cod. It was a default activity, like boating, and another way of avoiding each other by the sea. Those small, thrifty, earnest, joyless, protestant landscapes were my first, wrong idea of art.*

In 2013 I came across this quote from John Kelsey and was completely floored by its twistedness. It not only underscored a struggle with purposefulness, but more hauntingly it announced an evasive truth of what art should be. For a long time I willingly misunderstood this quote, in favour of a calcified conceptualism in art. Thinking about the hierarchy of gestures - is one gesture more important than another?

Today relying on painting as a gesture to share a glimpse of one's psyche still feels like a subversive thing to do. Critics can laugh at an idea of a radical sentimentality, but another dawn breaks on Harbor's End, and I'm filled with the familiar mix of anticipation and exhaustion. The relentless pull of the sea calls to me, urging me to venture out into the icy waters, to dance once more with those elusive lobsters. But today, my heart carries an extra burden—an urge to paint. The waves outside my window seem to understand this secret desire of mine, their rhythm a gentle reminder that there's more to life than hauling traps and measuring lobsters. As I sip my morning coffee, it still feels surreal, like a dream I've yet to wake from. The other lobstermen go about their business, oblivious to the storm of colors and images swirling in my mind. They'd laugh, I'm sure, if they knew about my art. My identity through trade is what defines me in their eyes, and I've always found solace in that simplicity. But this newfound passion, this compulsion to capture the sea's beauty on canvas, is undeniable. Perhaps it's the salt-soaked air that stirs my soul, or maybe it's the cobalt lobster that sparked this artistic journey. I can't say for sure, but what I do know is that I can't ignore it any longer. The morning's haul is modest, though my heart isn't in it as it used to be. I spot the vibrant creatures among the traps, their hues a stark contrast to the dull sea-green surroundings. In a delicate gesture, I place the cobalt lobster into its container, promising to release it back into its watery realm. A symbol of my transformation, perhaps. With the day's work done, I return to my cottage, closing the door behind me. It's just me, the sound of the waves, and my paints. The palette waits patiently on the table, colors glistening in the soft afternoon light. I can't resist any longer. My hands reach for the brushes, the strokes of creativity and expression I've kept hidden for too long. I choose to paint the cobalt lobster. It's a challenge, but it feels right. As I bring it to life on the canvas, I can almost feel the lobster's vibrant spirit. The way its blue shell glows against the murky depths. It's more than just a lobster; it's a symbol of the change that's taken root within me. As the sun begins to dip below the horizon, I step back to survey my creation. The cobalt lobster, or my canvas, surrounded by tumultuous waves, feels alive, ready to rejoin the sea that birthed it.

## Worklist

1. *Out of the frying pan into the fire*  
Ffion Reed  
oil on canvas,  
35 x 28cm, 2022
2. *Deep River*  
Ffion Reed  
oil on canvas, 48 x 58cm, 2022
3. *Head Above Water*  
Jon Pilkington  
oil on canvas, 120 x 90cm, 2022
4. *Without title - after Gherardo di Giovanni del Fora*  
Sophie Birch  
oil on canvas, 115 x 127cm, 2023
5. *Shallow Pond*  
Sophie Birch  
oil on canvas, 70 x 56cm, 2023
6. *Mountain Fantasy*  
Johnny Defeo  
oil on canvas, 45 x 70cm, 2023
7. *Mother and daughter in the garden*  
Ffion Reed  
oil on canvas, 25 x 20cm, 2023