

Artist Rick Fleury makes his way back to the Vineyard

Self-taught artist Rick Fleury's oil paintings evoke emotion.

By **Gwyn McAllister** - May 30, 2017



"Katama" —Rick Fleury

There have been a lot of instances of synchronicity in the life of artist Rick Fleury. One of those events was an extended stay in 1984. The most recent one has brought him together with Louisa Gould, who features his work in a show, opening last weekend.

“I rarely seek out an artist, but I’ve always loved Rick’s work,” says Ms. Gould. “I’d seen his work at a gallery in Newburyport. I had a JPEG of one of his paintings on my desktop for years.”

It turns out that when the gallery owner contacted him, Mr. Fleury was already thinking about showing his work.

on the Vineyard.

“It’s been on my mind for a long time,” says the Maine-based artist. “It felt like a great fit. As soon as we spoke on the phone, it was obvious that we were on the same page.”

Ms. Gould represents dozens of artists working in a variety of styles, but, as a photographer specializing in boat race scenes. Mr. Fleury’s luminous seascapes in oil perfectly capture the coast. With minimal brushstrokes and the perfect rendering, the artist imparts the mystique that has drawn visitors to the

“His paintings really evoke an emotion,” says Ms. Gould. “The way they flow, expansive, flow. There’s a feeling that you’re on a beach or somehow. Anytime you get a feeling when you look at a

Perhaps what sets him apart from other artists working in the same subject area is that Mr. Fleury is creating his own way of painting,” he says. “I found ways of self-teaching that have pushed me into ways otherwise.” A natural draftsman, Mr. Fleury has honed his style by immersing himself in the work of others as “dialogues.” Describing one such dialogue with abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, he says, “I base my work on Rothko. How might he influence me in my work?”

Mr. Fleury has conducted similar experiments with the Dutch Masters and the Hudson River artists, with whom he feels an affinity. “They were all about raising the landscape to that place of almost sacredness,” says Mr. Fleury. “They were trying to bring attention to the landscape so that it wouldn’t be destroyed by coal mines and steel. When I got into landscape painting, it felt right to me. It was about the beauty of open space, and the solitude and the preciousness of that. To me, especially on Cape Cod and the Islands, I feel how important open space is. I feel like I’m bringing attention to that. I always thought I was going to do that with words — as a journalist. It’s something that I’ve been doing much much more effectively with my paintings.”

Mr. Fleury started out in life as a writer. While studying journalism at the University of Colorado

Boulder, he spent a summer on the Vineyard working for Island Windsurfing in Edgartown. Back at thesis on the Vineyard Gazette. He sent the paper to Dick Reston, then editor of the Gazette, hoping for no openings at the time, so Mr. Fleury headed to New York City, where he established himself in the opened up at the Gazette, and Mr. Reston contacted the now successful professional and offered him as an account executive. I just have to say no,” Mr. Fleury recalls. “Immediately after hanging up the phone on a flight the next day, and wrote for the Gazette for the next two years, 1984 and 1985.

The next step for Mr. Fleury was a move to Paris. “As a young writer, I wanted to be in Paris in my 20s. While at the Louvre for an exposition on Life magazine, Mr. Fleury spotted a familiar face. Interviewed Ralph Graves, an old acquaintance from the Vineyard. “It turns out that he was the former managing editor who had always said that he would help me out if I wanted.”

Mr. Fleury returned to New York, and went back into the advertising business, making frequent visits to the Vineyard. Eventually he established Communications — working on the Island and in Boston. He worked on several publications, including the Cape Cod Times and the Boston Globe, the New York Times, Adweek’s Brandweek, and the Village Voice.

Despite his success as a writer, Mr. Fleury found himself in Sarasota, Fla., to be with his mother, who had been diagnosed with cancer until her death two and a half years later. While there, he was picked up while in Paris. A gallery owner saw his work, and he started painting tinted sketches. The samples sold out, launching Mr. Fleury’s career.

“Grace” —Rick Fleury

Returning North, Mr. Fleury wound up in Boston. He had been working in photorealism. Once again he was discovered, and offered a job with success similar to that he had enjoyed in Florida. Mr. Fleury applied to the Cambridge Art Association and was sealed. “I thought, ‘My God, what is going on? Maybe I should try this. I’m not committed to a job or a career, I’m fancy-free. Before I go back to New York, maybe I’ll see if I’m an artist.’”

Settling in Provincetown, Mr. Fleury met an established New York artist who convinced him to switch to painting.

an oil painter. The acrylics are holding you back. Here are my oils — use them.’ I painted all night.” T efforts, and was impressed enough to buy it. “As soon as I touched oils, it was like a fish finding water I never went back. I left the hyperrealism behind too.”

Now living in Liberty, Maine, Mr. Fleury has shown his landscapes at galleries and institutions all over Museum of Art, where he was given a solo show in 2006. He also shows in Naples, Fla., and Jackson I work as a platform to speak on the issues of conservation, preservation, and environmental awareness

Showing his work at the Louisa Gould Gallery, Mr. Fleury feels like he’s come full circle, back to his st number of Vineyard seascapes, and looks forward to rediscovering some of the Island’s beautiful spot Memorial Day show was a really nice, warming introduction back to the Vineyard,” he says.