

A Sense of Place

*On the Outer Cape,
an imaginative painter
recreates beautiful
landscapes on a
copper canvas*

The life of an artist often takes on many interesting forms and this is no different for Eastham painter Rick Fleury. From journalist, ad agency executive to self-taught painter, Fleury's career has been an interesting journey. Along the way, the artist has been mindful of the influence his surroundings have had on his life. This connection and appreciation for his environment underscores the essence of his artwork, whether it is capturing the splendor of a brilliant sky framing a stretch of land or the swirling moodiness of a stormy day.

BY KYLE CONNORS



Aspect, Oil on Canvas



Regard, Oil on Copper

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Fleury went to school in Colorado for journalism and after graduation turned his creative genius into a career in advertising and public relations in New York City. He also wrote for the Vineyard Gazette and spent six months working in Paris before things changed dramatically when his mother was diagnosed with cancer.

"I went to Florida to be with her," says the painter. "And when I was in Florida with my mom and dad, I was painting to calm myself really." Fleury was always drawn to art, harking back to his college days, but he had never pursued it at the time. "I had a beautiful studio in Boston, and I used it as a gallery to feature Vineyard artists but I wasn't exhibiting myself," says the painter. "I didn't think I was an artist."

Things were set in motion to change that notion. He continued to "play around" with drawings and watercolors. After his mother's passing in 1995, he returned to Boston to consider his next move. "I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but I was painting again," says Fleury. Then his future became clearer. The artist was painting more seriously and was given the opportunity to exhibit his work in Boston. The show was a success and sold out.

This exhibit in Boston and an invitation to show on the Cape gave the artist time to consider his next move. "I figured before I went back to New York I would seriously try being an artist," says Fleury. "I was free to give art a try." He settled in Provincetown during that time and proceeded to pursue his goal to become a full-time artist.

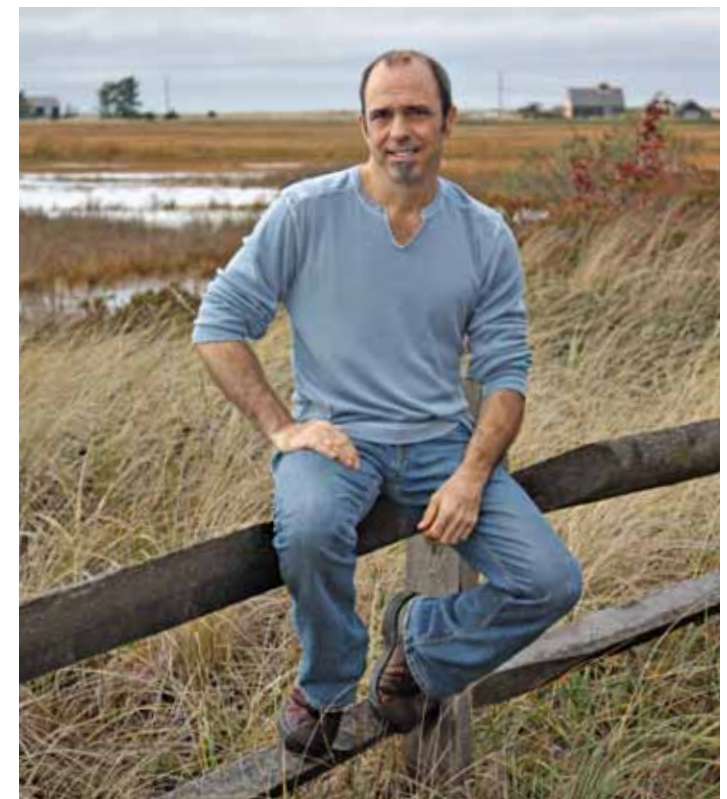
When oil paints entered his life it became the turning point in his artistic career. "I tried them and I was like a fish finding water," says the artist. "The motion, the fluidity, the movement was amazing." Fleury paints *alla prima*, where a painting is completed while the paint is still wet.

It's the purity of Fleury's presentation that makes his landscapes striking, subdued and sometimes surreal. The environment and nature play principal roles in his work. Fleury's connection to the Cape is abundantly apparent in his work. As much as he gets swept away in creating the coastal landscapes, he immerses viewers into these locales

firsthand. To the artist these works aren't drawings or photographs, but often memories—or mental snapshots—evoked by mood and emotion that he is able to share.

Whether the subject depicted is a specific location such as Nauset Beach in Orleans or a representational Cape Cod beach scene, Fleury's dynamic brush work brings them alive. A mellow blue and vaporous white might dance in an expansive sky sitting atop a lively blue sea, or heavy and light grays and wisps of green intertwine as they vie for attention on the canvas. The colors are minimalistic, which keeps the scene kinetic but not chaotic. The prominence of the sky is what gives the paintings their most distinct personality.

Beyond canvas, the contemplative allure of the artist's work is further enhanced by painting on copper, a technique dating back to the 16th century. After discovering a process that





Mystic, Oil on Copper

allows copper to receive paint, he continued to work with it as a medium, which he's done for about ten years. "It's an incredible surface to paint on," says Fleury. "It's smooth and you get this luster coming through that's just beautiful." His pieces painted on copper often feature exposed areas of the metal, which gives the scene an added radiance such as a glint on the horizon or as a shimmer in water.

His work is well-traveled, part of local collections and private ones across the United States and abroad. The work of the

To view more of Fleury's work, visit Addison Art Gallery, 43 Route 28, Orleans or www.rickfleury.com.

Copley Artist Society member is featured in the Addison Art Gallery in Orleans and has been exhibited at the Cape Museum of Art in Dennis, Provincetown Art Association and Museum as well as the

Cahoon Museum of American Art in Cotuit.

As his artistic journey continues, Fleury enthusiastically welcomes what comes next. Although taking the time to pause and reflect is integral to his approach, it is in part the momentum of curiosity that keeps him and his work moving forward. "What am I going to discover in this painting that's different," asks the painter. "And that's what keeps me painting." For Fleury, the destination and the journey are equally important.

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