

CALDBECK GALLERY

Wild Thing

September 5 – October 18, 2025

Wild Thing presents work by ten artists who have drawn on the untamed, the primordial, the unruly, and even the supernatural for inspiration. Nature and natural cycles predominate – even where the human presence is felt. The emphasis is on the undomesticated, open-air environments, elemental materials, flora, fauna, weather, and in some cases, humans in the wild (and being wild). We have Lois Dodd's exuberant nudes frolicking in sunshine, contrasted with Katherine Bradford's nocturnal couple outside the comfort of their domestic space in a dark landscape. Eleanor Conover and Jarid del Deo engage with landscape directly, each using a unique visual language to express the sensation of time and place. Jana Benitez describes her work as rooted in the tension between boundless energy and restraint, surrender and control. James Prosek's sculptures of weathered wood, scoured by fire, offer narratives of rebirth and the fluidity of nature. Grace Hager's ceramic sculptures of trees, like David Wilson's woodland tableaux, present characterful avatars of things in the wild, slightly spooky, yet inviting. Dennis Pinette's fire and wind paintings champion the power of natural elements. Bernard Langlais populated the ninety acres of his farm in Cushing Maine with sculptures carved from wood. In this cast of thousands, animals and animal spirits predominated. These acrobatic creatures are welcome contributors to this mix, perhaps reminding us to look around at what's out there.

Melanie Essex, September 2025



Jana Benitez writes “My paintings operate at the level of sensation – direct, raw, and effective – rather than via representations or stories. Through vibrant color and rhythmic gesture, they aim to intensify visceral felt experience. They begin without a fixed plan and evolve intuitively. Luminosity is achieved through a complex interplay of layered transparencies, heightened by swaths of opacity. Marks vary in speed and intensity registering bodily states: urgent, inquisitive, yearning, trembling. Every line, pour and pull of pigment across the surface holds a different temperature of feeling. The edge of the rectangle – plus vertical and horizontal lines delineated with a ruler – accentuate the brimming lushness of organic form. They echo the question already inherent in the medium of painting: how can aliveness be expressed and contained within a frame? My practice is rooted in this tension between boundless energy and restraint, surrender and control.”

Jana Benitez received her BA from Brown University and her MFA from Boston University. She is represented in Asia by Pearl Lam

Galleries. She was an Artist-in-Residence at the Crystal Bridges Museum in Arkansas 2018 and Annex Arts in Castine, Maine in 2024. Benitez' work has been included in numerous international art fairs, including Art Basel Hong Kong, Art Singapore, Arte Montecarlo, West Bund Art and Design in Shanghai, Maison et Objet in Paris, and Art Athina in Athens, Greece. Benitez has been showing her work internationally since her first solo exhibition at the Ayala Museum in the Philippines in 1998 and her first one in the US at the Walter Wickiser Gallery in New York



Katherine Bradford began painting when she was living in Maine year round in the 70's. She moved to New York City in the 80's but continues to return each summer to her home on the coast of Maine.

She is best known for her paintings of ships and of swimmers that are inspired by artists such as Marsden Hartley, Milton Avery and Alex Katz. Her work has been the subject of one person shows at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art (2013), in the Modern Museum in Fort Worth Texas (2017) and the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine (2022).

Bradford was born in 1942 in New York City and attended Bryn Mawr College (B.A.) and Purchase College (MFA). She is

represented in New York by CANADA, in Berlin by Philipp Haverkamp, in Milan by Kaufmann Repetto, in Tokyo by Tomio Koyamam Gallery and in Portland OR by Adams and Ollman.

In 2001. Other solo exhibitions include Pearl Lam Galleries, Hong Kong; Galerie Steph, Singapore; Institute of Cultural Diplomacy, Berlin, Germany; Universidad Catolica, Santiago, Chile. Her work resides in the Royal Collection of Princess Dana Firas of Jordan, the Pataka Museum in Wellington, NZ, the Crystal Bridges Museum in Arkansas, the Groton School in Massachusetts, and at many major institutions in Manila, Philippines, including: St. Luke's Hospital, Museo Pambata, and Solaire. Born and raised in NYC within the context of a Filipino family, Benitez moved to Rockland in March 2020 at the first onset of the pandemic and has been in love with life in Maine ever since. Her painting studios are in Bath, Maine and midtown Manhattan, and she works between both places.



Eleanor Conover writes, "My work investigates physical surface, speculative architecture, and a questioning of representation in environmental space. These paintings begin as geometric line drawings that I build into non-rectangular structures, supporting a dyed canvas ground and subsequent layers of paint. The irregular nature of each painting's support emphasizes the perimeter, yet each form remains singular, invoking but not settling on topographical and bodily subjects, I titled a recent show "As the Crow Flies", an idiom that, like the paintings, contains suggestions of orientation (geographically and individually), curvature, and the refusal of a form of abstraction that conforms to a strict cartesian grid. Some paintings assert their presence by bending away from the wall

like an inflated lung or wind-filled kite; others enact expected flatness with a thin, uniform depth.

The work converses with historical painting languages, bringing open-ended, process-based work into conversation with a more perceptually-rooted understanding of depicting light and space. The paintings also contain idiosyncratic material play and gesture through the inclusion of marble stones, acrylic image transfer, and transparent linen and polyester that reveals the internal sculptural structure of the support. By alluding to both weight and levity, edges and fragments, I push up against what painting can “collect”, hold, or be, and expand ideas about the relationship between a given subject's structure and content.

Conover lives and works in Maine. She is Assistant Professor of Art at Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.

Artist Photo: And.Again._Docu



Jarid del Deo is a painter living and working in Maine. His oil paintings utilize the New England landscape as a tested vehicle for investigating color, shape and composition. Del Deo prefers a long contemplative study of his surroundings, plucking out details that best describe a place.

After completing his BFA in painting and printmaking at the University of New Hampshire, del Deo spent over a decade working in the performing arts in the Pacific Northwest and Europe. In 2012 he settled in Maine and turned his focus back to painting. Del Deo exhibits regularly on both coasts and has work in private collections throughout North America and Europe.

Del Deo writes, "As my approach to landscape painting evolves, I am less concerned with a one-to-one visual documentation of my environment. I am still working from my

observed surroundings but I am more interested in painting the felt experience of being in a place. My responsibility toward composition, shape, color and value is inescapable but I am more comfortable exchanging what I consider visual accuracy for something that is more spiritually expressive. I do have a viewer in mind when I paint and I want to make work that is believable and relatable. A painting could be considered successful if it causes the viewer to reflect on their own relationship to the environment. I attempt to facilitate this by describing the atmosphere and heightened specialness of a place. I will often use a dramatic light source, compositional framing, or layered space to lead the viewer into the painting. I paint in oil, usually on panel, and I will work on a painting over a few weeks (or more) making changes until I feel like it carries the same level of interest as the real life subject. I will typically have several paintings in various states of completion going at once and I like carrying ideas across the different panels. I don't consider groups of work a series but they will often have a shared palette, similar mark making or varied approaches to the same subject."



Lois Dodd pictured here in the sun room of her Cushing, Maine, home is an influential American painter known for the taut lucidity of her imagery and the fine balance of abstract form and representation in her work.

Caldbeck Gallery was first to show her figure paintings of nudes in the groundbreaking exhibition, "Women at Work" (2001). At the time, Hilton Kramer wrote in the New York Observer, the exhibit, "caused something of a sensation even among her devoted admirers...(with) its painterly invention, and the richness of its pictorial allusions...with an undercurrent of irony and humor.....and high-octane painterly virtuosity." In 2021 Caldbeck presented a further collection of Dodd's nudes, all step flashings based on plein air drawing made by the artist at the sketch group she was a member of for decades in Maine. The paintings in "Wild Thing" are from this series.

Dodd's work is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Portland Museum of Art, the Farnsworth Museum, Colby College Museum of Art, the Bowdoin College Museum all

in Maine, as well as numerous national collections. Currently she is the subject of a major retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Den Haag in the Netherlands.

A graduate of Cooper Union, Dodd herself taught for many years at Brooklyn College. She was a founding member of the Tanager Gallery – a cooperative gallery that played an important role in New York's post-war art scene. She first visited Maine in the 50s with her art school friends, among them Alex Katz, beginning a longtime association with the Skowhegan School of Art. Katz and Dodd and others bought a house together in Lincolnville. In the early 60's Dodd found her own home in Cushing, where she continues to live and work each summer.

Artist photo: Courtesy of David Dewey



Grace Hager (b. 1993, Los Angeles) is an interdisciplinary painter and ceramic sculptor. She received a Master of Fine Arts in 2023 and Bachelor of Fine Arts in Printing with a Minor in Art History in 2015 both from Maine College of Art & Design. Grace has exhibited throughout the United States, including at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Caldbeck Gallery, Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, ME, Wassaic Project, MEPAINTSME, OVERLAP Gallery, CT State Gateway Community College, The Parsonage, and George Marshall Store Gallery, among others.

She is the recipient of multiple grants and awards including a CERF+ Get Ready Grant, a MAC Springboard Grant, a partial James Beard Haggarty Scholarship, a grant from the Belvedere Fund, and a project grant from the Puffin Foundation. She is the

recipient of a Fellowship in Painting from Vermont Studio Center and has been artist-in-residence at Cuttyhunk Island Residency, Wassaie Project, and Maine College of Art and Design, among others. She currently lives and works in Maine.

Grace Hager writes, “My work locates the natural world as a realm of possibility: a source of transformative encounters that generate awe, positioning the magical within the observable world. Continuing in a tradition of Romantic landscape painting, such experiences stand out as moments where empirical, fantastical, and emotional worlds begin to intermingle. Raised by a family of scientists, I inherited a practice of reverently observing the natural world and its inhabitants. In the face of increased disconnection and isolation, the landscape offers an experience of connection even for the solitary — simultaneously generating contemplation of inner worlds and an expanded awareness of the interconnected universe.

Trees, the sun and moon, animals, and other natural elements act as both proxy for and companion to the viewer. My often-solitary subjects echo the tradition of the *Rückenfigur*, a singular figure situated within the natural landscape onto which the viewer may project. My ceramic sculptures exist in physical space and become *Rückenfigur*, where my paintings function as viewfinders that invite the viewer to enter a sublime environment.

Color is the abstract language I use to incorporate a multifaceted emotional experience into observed and

imagined landscapes. The awe-inspiring natural order of rainbow wavelengths within visible light inspires my use of vibrant color that charges my subjects with a sense of magic.



Bernard Langlais (Amer. 1923-1977), a Maine native son knew early success through the Roko Gallery, the Kennedy Gallery, the Martha Jackson Gallery, Midtown Gallery, Allen Stone Gallery and the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. He was in numerous solo and group shows, including exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art and "The Art of Assemblage" at The Museum of Modern Art in New York (1961). His many honors include a Childe Hassam Purchase Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1968, a Maine Arts and Humanities Award in 1971, a Maine Artists Award from the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1975, and a National Endowment Artists' Award in 1977.

Langlais, the eldest of ten children, was born in Old Town, Maine – a logging community on the Penobscot River. His

spoken in the family home. Following high school, Langlais left Maine to study commercial design in Washington, D.C. He enlisted in the Navy during World War II, pausing his education. After the war, Langlais abandoned commercial art and spent three summers at the Skowhegan School in its early years as an experimental art school set on a farm in central Maine. He went on to study at the Brooklyn Museum School, spent a year in Paris on the GI Bill, and received a Fullbright Scholarship to study in Norway. He married fellow Mainer, Helen Friend, in Oslo in 1955. The artist lived and worked in New York throughout the remainder of the '50s. Together the couple purchased a summer home in Cushing Maine in the early '60s, moving there permanently in 1966.

Trained as a painter, Langlais began to work in wood in the early 1960s, finding success with abstract imagery through assemblage in the New York art world. With the move to Maine his subject matter shifted towards the figurative, drawing on the fauna of coastal Maine, and grew to include political and sports references as well. Langlais claimed that he “loved having contact with the wood”. The humor and immediacy in his animal and human creations veils his sophisticated use of shape, texture and pattern. In the relatively short period that he worked in Cushing from 1966 to his untimely passing in 1977 Langlais made myriad works that populated the 90 acres of his saltwater farm ranging in scale from intimate wall pieces to life-size elephants. In 2010 Helen Langlais bequeathed the entire estate – comprising 2,900 works to Colby College. Today, the Colby College Art Museum possesses the most complete museum collection of Langlais.

The artist's legacy lives on in the form of the Langlais Art Preserve in Cushing, Maine, under the stewardship of the Georges River Land Trust.

Artist Photo: Courtesy the Georges River Land Trust/Langlais Art Preserve



Dennis Pinette says of his work, "I like to push things to the edge of disintegration." His visual framework draws on the energy found in fire, the tangled order of woods, fields and waves and in industrial landscapes. Curator Suzette McAvoy noted, "Pinette is restless by nature...there are no beginnings and endings in (his) works. They are consciously, acutely, not narrative. They demand the immediacy of impressionism, the knowledge of formalism, and the freedom of abstract expressionism held within the grasp of a romantic spirit for their fruition."

Pinette's work is included in the permanent collections of the Portland Museum of Art, the Farnsworth Art Museum, Colby College Museum of Art, Bowdoin College Museum, Bates

College Museum of Art, the DeCordova Museum, the U.S. Department of State and numerous corporate and private collections. He has shown his work with Caldbeck since 1986, with Rosenberg + Kaufman in New York, at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, the Ogunquit Museum, the Katonah Museum and at the Wadsworth Atheneum.



Artist, writer, naturalist and Yale graduate **James Prosek** published his first book at nineteen years of age, Trout: An Illustrated History (Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), which featured seventy of his watercolor paintings of the trout of North America.

Prosek writes, “My work is deeply inspired by nature’s diversity and complexity. I am currently working exploring, for an exhibition at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, themes related to trees, memory, shadows, the origin of drawing, and Shaker culture. I love New England, historically and environmentally. I grew up and live in Connecticut and over the years have spent a great deal of time in Maine, looking for remote populations of Arctic Char in lakes of the North Woods, writing about the eel fishery for my book of 2010 on Eels accompanying commercial fishermen on a swordfish harpoon

boat in the Gulf of Maine and for many other reasons. In May 2025 I painted a 90-foot mural outside the Farnsworth Museum of Art called Gulf of Maine Pictographs."

Prosek's work has been shown at the Royal Academy of Art in London, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Yale Center for British Art, the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, The Addison Gallery of American Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the New Britain Museum of American Art, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, the North Carolina Museum of Art, the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. and the Yale University Art Gallery, among other institutions.

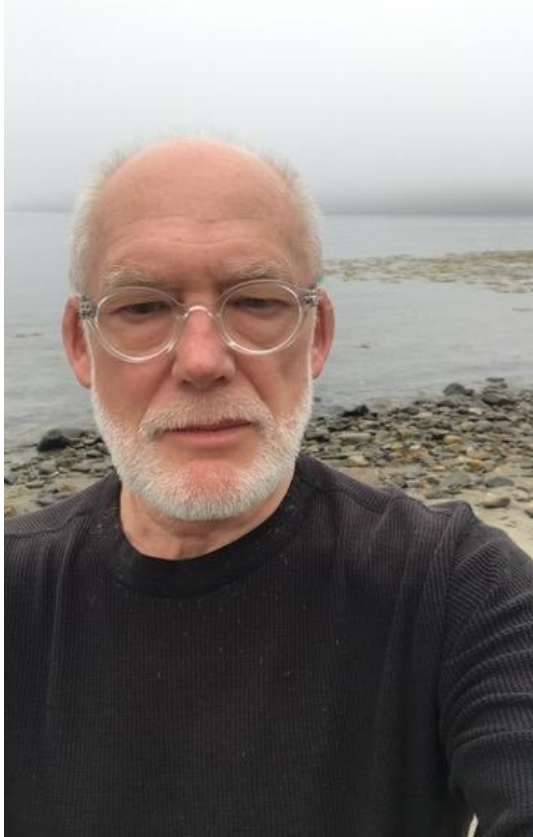
He has been an artist-in-residence at the Yale University Art Gallery, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Addison Gallery of American Art.

Prosek is the author of over a dozen books and has written for the New York Times and National Geographic Magazine. In 2003 he won a Peabody Award for his documentary about traveling throughout England in the footsteps of Izaak Walton, the seventeenth-century author of *The Compleat Angler*. He co-founded a conservation initiative called World Trout in 2004 with Yvon Chouinard, the owner of the Patagonia clothing company, which raises money for cold-water habitat conservation through the sales of T-shirts featuring trout paintings. (Since the start of the program in 2005, the World Trout Initiative has given \$4 million to over 200 fish conservation groups.) In 2012 Prosek was awarded the Gold Medal for Distinction in Natural History from the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

His book, Eels: An Exploration, from New Zealand to the Sargasso, of the World's Most Amazing and Mysterious Fish, published in September 2010 was a New York Times Book Review editor's choice, and is the subject of a documentary for the PBS series "Nature" that aired in 2013.

The catalogue from his exhibition "James Prosek: Art, Artifact, Artifice", at the Yale University Art Gallery published by Yale University Press was awarded the Gold Medal in the Fine Arts category of the 2021 Independent Published Book Awards.

Prosek is a curatorial affiliate, as well as on the board (Leadership Council), of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale, a member of the advisory board of the Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies, and the board of the Connecticut Chapter of the Nature Conservancy.



Born in Scotland in 1953, **David Wilson** is known for his non-representational, yet familiar, landscapes, which contend with history, half-remembered dreams, and the natural world.

Wilson's evocative paintings challenge the viewers to consider the nuances and shifting perspectives just below the surface of his work.

Wilson credits his drive to become a painter to the artists in his family. Alexander Stewart, his great-grandfather, ran away from home and worked as an itinerant house painter before attending Edinburgh School of Art. His grandfather, Ian Stewart, worked as an artist and etcher and was one of the founders of Scottish Studios and Engravers in Glasgow, Scotland. This history informs Wilson's work today. Critic Richard Martin writes that

“Wilson's paintings have a quality of seeming resemblance, of suggesting places of sites seen, and yet never being quite capable of being pinned down geographically. But they are enthralling, for we are certain that we have seen them before and the invention of the artist is as familiar as a personal recollection or a family album.”

Wilson attended life drawing classes at the Glasgow School of Art before enrolling at St. Martin's School of Art in London, studying with Gillian Ayres and John Hoyland. A teaching assistantship allowed him to continue his studies at the School of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University, where he earned his MFA.

Influences on Wilson include illuminated manuscripts, Mughal painting, and the all-seeing eye of Surrealism. The work of painters William Blake, Casper David Friedrich, Charles Burchfield, and Marsden Hartly inform his work, as well as the memories of his native Scotland and the landscape of his current home along the craggy coast of Maine. For the past thirty years, Wilson primarily worked on small pieces, paintings not much larger than postcards. An epiphany occurred while painting a stage set and his most recent works have grown considerably in scale, perhaps to encompass the expansive Maine landscape and unseen lands beyond.

Wilson's work will also appear in the 2025 Center for Maine Contemporary Art Biennial.