

PETER WATTS

VIBRATIONS OF COLOR, recent paintings
June 22 - July 15, 2012

PETER WATTS has lived a life experienced deeply in nature, ensconced in the vine-covered woods of summer and the snowy, star-lit skies of winter. He lives deep in the woods of the Cape Cod National Seashore. He bikes daily and observes Nature's forms and patterns: the filigree of tree branches against the sky, the play of light on the ground in the midst of a pine forest, the curl of a wave as it lands on the beach. Watts has spent most of his adult artistic life developing a deep understanding of the landscape he has lived in and painted for decades creating his own personal iconography in his painting. "At one time," notes

Watts, "I was more interested in the landscape itself. Now, I look at how an abstract element of a landscape feels." Watts does not painstakingly reproduce an image, but develops a personal vision of it drawn from his impressions of the environment around him.

For Watts, these images are part of the larger fabric of Nature. "I am interested in Nature's changing patterns and the patterns that repeat themselves." Ripples in the sand at low tide are like the ripples of a clam shell. Interlocking branches in a grove of locust trees are like a forest of deer antlers. These patterns also relate to Watts' view of the world through the lens of botanical archaeology. A riot of lilacs deep in the woods is the marker of where a home once stood. A pine needle and moss lined pit is the old



Low Lands, oil on canvas, 30 x 32"

cellar. A stand of pines on top of a knoll is a former pasture returned to seed, surrounded by the oak forests that will one day conquer it. "History gives me ideas."

Watts does not only search for lost history in nature, but he also envisions its future. He represents Wellfleet on the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Council and has worked for years with the Seashore and the town on the Herring River Restoration Project. He imagines the serpentine streams of the tidal flats returning, weaving through the marsh grass in infinitely various repeating patterns. These patterns recur in his studies of the deep forest at different times of day and night. They recur in the undulations of the ocean and the plant life in the forested dunes. Watts will often do a series of paintings, one small and one large, and "leapfrog" between them, exploring technique to develop effects and colors in larger and smaller ways. "It is a very satisfying system of working. Sometimes it ruins a painting and sometimes the elaboration of patterns becomes quite abstract."

Peter Watts first came to Cape Cod as a student of Laforce Bailey in 1954. Living at first in Provincetown and working at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Watts moved to Wellfleet in 1970, with his young bride, painter Gloria Nardin. In 1978, he joined the Board of the Fine Arts Work Center, and in 1980 he became a Trustee of PAAM from which he has recently retired. The public was treated to a major career survey of Peter Watts' art in 2010 at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.



Winter Moon, 2010, 24 x 26"



Yellow House, 2012, oil on canvas, 24 x 26"