

From the *Whims* of a *Wave*

Sara Jane Doberstein brings the often unnoticed sea life found at the ocean's edge into the glittering spotlight.

The ocean provides both the canvas and color palette for artists to portray and reflect the innate allure and majesty of the natural world. Sometimes, it also provides gifts and treasures which enhance, and sometimes become, the subject matter for an artist. Sara Jane Doberstein is such an artist—finding the whimsical, often overlooked parts of a seaside environment that remind us of the multitude of ways beauty can be found just underfoot.

Doberstein grew up in Canada, along the banks of Georgian Bay. “I’ve gravitated towards the arts since I was a child, and my supportive parents have been commissioning my paintings since I was 10,” she shares. “During my first year at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, British Columbia, I fell in love with oils and deepened my focus on painting. I understood pursuing a fine art career would require dedication and sacrifice, and have now been working as a full time, professional artist for 25 years.” Doberstein is a signature member of Oil Painters of America, American Women Artists, and American Society of Marine Artists. Her work has been included and achieved awards in prominent juried exhibitions across North America, including earning the Grand Prize at the American Women Artists, Rockwell Museum Show. This piece is now in the permanent collection of the Arnot Art Museum in Elmira, New York.



Afternoon Delight, 24" x 30"



Summer Dreaming, 24" x 48"

Much of Doberstein’s work depicts various shells, flotsam and jetsam from the sea, tossed up on the shore in beautiful vignettes, highlighted by the extended, glittering sea behind them. This provides the viewer an almost natural frame, as the ocean, out of focus in the background, draws the eyes to the centerpiece. “Surrounding my shells with out-of-focus backgrounds creates an almost abstract quality that keeps the eye on the details of the primary subjects and the intriguing appearances of light,” illustrates Doberstein.

Choosing such a specific subject of her paintings came as a natural discovery for Doberstein. “I’ve been painting shell clusters for over two decades,” she says. “One morning, many years ago, out on the beach at sunrise, I laid on the sand arranging shells for a composition and looked up and beyond to watch the sun and surf. The motivation to include the

full scene with the shells from that low vantage point was a revelation—the perfection of a setting of shells in their environment.

“My paintings are inspired by many visits to East Coast shores,” continues Doberstein. “I am intrigued by stones and shells rolling in with the surf and resting between tides. I work with reference photographs, shells collected to stock in my studio, and my cornucopia of remembered scenes. As in a traditional still life, I compose, add, and edit to achieve the ideal composition and color harmony for each painting.”

The settings Doberstein depicts are never the same. “Cape Cod beaches abound with shells, incredible light and atmosphere,” Doberstein emphasizes. “Each beach has distinct characteristics—the color and graininess of the sand, the amount and variety of shells, the color of the

water, the slope of the shoreline. With scallops entangled in seaweed or covered in barnacles, Wellfleet’s Indian Neck Beach has become an absolute favorite. The gently moving bay provides soft, rolling water for the background and enticing bubbles surrounding the shells.”

Some of Doberstein’s artwork transports her—and us—to relive a specific moment in time. “Bay Scallop (12”x16”) and Sandy Souls (16”x48”) are from Indian Neck in Wellfleet,” says Doberstein. “These are set during the hot, hazy days of summer when Wellfleet Bay was so warm that when I laid down in the shoreline, I could hardly tell I was in the water. The stunningly brilliant sun danced across the bay and shimmered so brightly one needed to squint. These paintings were created to share the stillness of a hot summer afternoon at the beach, with salt air and the sound of the gentle waves softly lapping at the shore.”

Representing a different season and temperature at the seashore, “Blue Haven (36”x36”) and Summer Dreaming (24”x48”) depict a crisp clear day, with the cloudless deep blue sky reflecting off the water.

Sandy Souls, 16" x 48"



Doberstein shares, “The soft waves provided precise bubbles in which the shells nestled, all combined to create the aura of spring, with mild days ahead.”

Not only are shells a central topic of Doberstein’s artwork, but a variety of other life that gathers at the water’s edge brings inspiration

and unexpected perspectives of which to capture. “Cape Winds (6” diameter) and Second Wind (6” diameter) feature gulls that flock around the docks at the Chatham Harbor just waiting for the fishing boats to start unloading their harvests,” Doberstein describes. “The birds are a true joy to see and

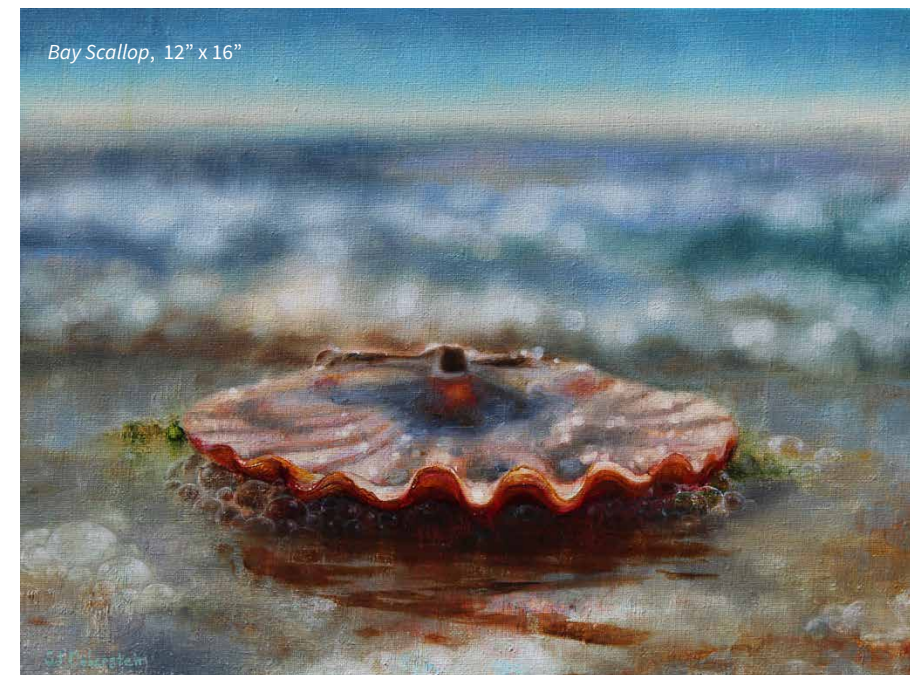
to paint, especially on pilings that enhance the marine atmosphere. They call and fly in a frenzy, knowing they will get the scraps, delightful to catch in flight.”

Taking the time to get to know and explore each, and every nook and cranny of the Cape seashore allows Doberstein to take note



Blue Haven, 36" x 36"

Ursula, 12" x 24"



Bay Scallop, 12" x 16"



Ursula, 12" x 24"

of the marine creatures—and humans—that make their home there. “Mayo Beach in Wellfleet is littered with fascinating oysters, snails and horseshoe crabs,” Doberstein reveals. “I’ll also find seals and gulls at Chatham Harbor, all waiting for the fishing boats. Stone arrangements and castles left by visitors at Ballston Beach in Truro encourage me to pay homage to art created by others. Moving on to Dennis Port, one finds luscious tones of violet and pink, quahogs and healthy patches of the rare lady’s slippers. It is a blessing to find endless and diversified along Cape Cod shores.”

Reminding us of the aspects of the beach in our backyard that we take for granted seems to come naturally to Doberstein. “I have a deep love, admiration and respect for the sea and all the beauty it shares with us,” she reflects.

Sara Jane Doberstein’s work can be seen exclusively on Cape Cod at Addison Art in Orleans or online at addisonart.com.

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