

Cleber Stecei

Across a yellow-green marsh at the edge of the wood, a white birdhouse stands alone, reflecting shafts of sunlight. The dark shadow from a heavy cloud blots the foreground, in stark contrast to the radiant marsh. Above, the sun struggles to retain its prominence against impending weather, clinging bright yellow to cotton candy clouds. It's easy to see why birds such as purple martins would want to build their homes here. And while scenes such as this could inhabit any number of locations across Cape Cod, this particular one is the distinctive work of Centerville-based painter Cleber Stecei.

White Birdhouse, a 24" x 18" oil painting, is a vivid representative of Stecei's latest collection at Addison Art Gallery in Orleans. Completed entirely within the past year, the paintings primarily depict land and seascapes, some with old homes and barns, ancient cranberry bogs, and marshes. Stecei has also included distinctive still lifes, such as *Couple of Buoys*, which captures two lobster buoys in deep, anti-fouling red, upon a sky blue field.

Stecei moved to the Cape at age 19, but he grew up in Maringa, Brazil, a planned city founded in 1947. He discovered art and abstract painting in his home town, yet the Cape's natural beauty and history captured his imagination. He began painting the vistas here and has kept up the practice for more than two decades. However, his range is not limited to landscapes. He explains, "As my paintings have done quite well recently, I'm planning to continue capturing the marshes, woodlands, shores and beaches that draw people. For my own growth, and collectors wishing to expand beyond these loved subjects, I will explore unique still life subjects and perhaps, once again, delve into portrait painting." Helen Addison, who has exclusively represented him for his entire career, adds, "Cleber is an amazing portrait artist. His commissioned portraits are highly valued and will surely be cherished for generations. His portraits of his daughter have sold within days of being completed. I would imagine it is difficult for him to part with them."

Stecei works on location—*en plein air*—and from photographs. He enjoys both and says, "My *plein air* work has more spontaneity than my studio paintings. Studio time allows the time for contemplation, layering, detail. My larger paintings are done in the studio, using a small *plein air* study and a reference photograph, to achieve a balanced work extracting the colors of a field painting, and a good drawing and composition from a photographic reference.

Sketching, painting *plein air*, studio days—it all informs and builds toward finished works."

Stecei has received multiple awards, including "Best in Show" from the Cape Cod Art Association, and was the artist chosen by the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod to create a painting for their "Pops by the Sea" concert in 2016.

One key to Stecei's deep connection to the Cape has been the community that he has joined and helped build here. Much of this has come through his association with Addison. He says, "I am fortunate to be able to paint with a bunch of Addison artists—Paul Schulenburg, Maryalice Eizenberg, Jonathan McPhillips, Andrea Petitto, Jonathan Earle. We paint together *plein air* and meet up at the gallery where we share ideas, suggestions, and often demonstrate painting for the collectors. While some think of the life of an artist a lonely profession, I have found great friendships and companionship with my fellow artists and the Addison staff. Addison holds over twenty gatherings a year, so we have the pleasure of seeing each other often. It's like a clubhouse, and the collectors are members, as well." 🏠

This summer, Stecei's one-man show, "Collecting by the Shore," will open at Addison Art Gallery on Saturday, July 25, with a painting demonstration at 4:00, followed by a reception 5:00 to 7:00.

~Chris White



Quiet Embrace • oil on canvas • 24" x 24"



A Grand Day • oil on canvas • 24" x 18"



Cranberry Bog Walk • oil on canvas • 18" x 14"



Delightful Place • oil on canvas • 16" x 12"



Couple of Buoys • oil on canvas • 20" x 16"