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Reimagining a classic summer cottage

BAR HARBOR HAVEN
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SOFT SEASCAPES

Julie Houck, Lully Schwartz, and Holly Ready paint incandescent seaside scenes in subtle tones of pink, blue, gray, and yellow. Their palettes evoke the serenity of the ocean and the majesty of nature’s light.

Julie Houck | Lully Schwartz | Holly Ready
As a landscape painter, Houck revels in the infinite possibilities for inspiration in nature. “Unlike a still life or a portrait, the landscape is always changing,” she says. “You could paint the same scene each day for a year and come away with 365 different paintings.” Houck is also influenced by artists like Mark Rothko, as evidenced by her facility with balancing varied hues and the swaths of color in her strikingly expansive skies. “In order to gain the luminosity in my skies, I will often do 40 or more passages of paint,” she says. “I tend to work on five or more pieces at a time and rotate my painting sessions.”

With a foundation in classical atelier training, Houck is particularly interested in how light interacts with form. “My current work is focused on the elements of the landscape—light, mist, fog, weather patterns, and sky—rather than a mere rendering of the actual scene,” she says. “This is a more reactive view that captures a scene’s essence in lieu of what is the visual norm.” Daybreak, inspired by the morning light in a cove near South Thomaston, has an air of tranquility. The piece is dominated by the sky: voluminous clouds are just beginning to break apart to reveal a peachy pink sunrise. The light catches on wave crests, which dance in whitish curls in the foreground. Daybreak depicts a quiet moment that is nevertheless full of promise.