

Decor Maine

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LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

The STYLISH GETAWAYS ISSUE

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MAINE STAY:

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reimagining the Maine getaway

A KENNEBUNKPORT
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made for gathering

A GEORGETOWN
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Fishing shack silhouettes
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Plus!
ALEXANDER
WIDENER
reveals 7
FAVORITE THINGS





The loft-like studio space in the upper story of the home's adjacent barn was finished by Greta's husband Mike, to give her a spacious place to paint. **(OPPOSITE):** Greta in her studio holding a ball of used washi tape from making paintings.



STUDIO VISIT

Looking Sharp: Midcoast artist Greta Van Campen's hard-edge paintings capture the natural geometry of Maine

by **ALLISON PAIGE** photographs by **DAVE CLOUGH**

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homaston-based painter Greta Van Campen's hard-edge landscapes feel uniquely suited to capture the topography of Maine's conifers and granite

cliffs. The saturated tones of her seascapes and sherbert-banded sunrises seem assembled of clean fragments, like tumbled glass in a kaleidoscope. Tension between the organic world and her precise lines creates a mesmerizing balance. Greta graduated cum laude from Bowdoin College with a B.A. in Visual Arts and has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions and group shows in

Maine and throughout the country. Represented by Dowling Walsh Gallery in Rockland, her most recent solo show, "Haven," was in 2024.

AP: Greta, you come from an artistic family, both your mom and dad are painters. Was becoming a painter an inevitable genetic shoo-in?

GVC: My parents are both incredibly talented and my sister and I were so lucky to grow up in such a creative environment. Growing up with artists who made work all the time instilled the mindset that art is just part of life. My parents had studios at home. Most family trips

were to places where they had exhibits or to cities to visit museums and pick up art supplies. Creativity and art were engrained in every aspect of family life. They both gardened and my mom painted the flowers she grew while we played outside. I learned that an artist's income is not guaranteed. There are good years and bad years, good months and bad months. You have to keep making and pushing your work. Growing up with a firsthand view of that career path gave me a realistic understanding of what it takes to be an artist, and it helped me define what success is. The richness in being an artist isn't in the amount of money you make; it is that you get to live a life doing what you love.

AP: How did you land on your signature hard-edge style?

GVC: I used to do a lot of plein air oil landscape paintings, and hard-edge, abstract geometric acrylic paintings in the studio. In 2011 I raised money through Kickstarter and embarked on a cross-country journey during which I painted in all 50 states. During this time, I started putting the two together into hard-edge landscape paintings, and my current style took shape. I often joke that it was both of my parents' styles coming out in me and blending together, but I think there is some truth to that too.

AP: What's a typical day like in the studio?

GVC: I'm fortunate to have a beautiful studio attached to our house. I used to work in the front parlor of our 1854 home in Thomaston but outgrew that space and rented a studio for a while. My partner Mike finished the upstairs level of our barn so I could have my dream year-round studio. Now that we have two kids (ages 4 and 6), my studio days are dependent on what else is happening. Typically, Mike leaves for work when the kids and I are getting up. I make breakfast, pack lunches, and get them to school. I take the dogs for a walk, meeting a friend at a beach or walking with my parents on their property. I'm including this in my studio day because I'm also gathering inspiration for my paintings. When the dogs are good and tired, I come home and get started in the studio. Usually there is a painting or two in progress that I start plugging away at. I don't draw before painting. I use tape to mask off areas, and the piece comes together

over time. I'll also check emails and do various office work and household tasks while I wait for layers of paint to dry. By 3pm it's time to pick up the kids and that's usually the end of my workday. I've never been a late-night artist; I need the daylight to think and see straight!

AP: Do you primarily work in acrylic, or do you explore other mediums as well?

GVC: I do a lot of watercolor studies when I'm on site, but my hard-edge pieces are always in acrylic because



ABOVE: Greta at work on a new piece. **(OPPOSITE), LEFT:** *Sunset, Warren Island*, acrylic on panel, 20 x 30 inches, 2025, currently at Dowling Walsh Gallery.

“Growing up with a firsthand view of that career path gave me a realistic understanding of what it takes to be an artist, and it helped me define what success is.”

– GRETA VAN CAMPEN



Greta's studio features exposed beams and the only wood stove in their home, making it one of the coziest spots, she says.

the process involves a lot of layering and acrylic has a shorter drying time. It's been a while since I got my oil paints out, but I sometimes miss that medium. I used to do more sculpture and printmaking and would like to find my way back into those mediums again. I loved all the tactile processes involved in printmaking and the element of surprise at the end when you pull a proof.

AP: Your latest solo show, "Haven," at Dowling Walsh, contained land and seascapes as well as familial subjects. Are you concentrating on representational work?

GVC: I've always been interested in figurative work. Some of my earlier shows at Dowling Walsh included works that depicted my sister, dad, and dog. It's a fun challenge to turn figures into hard-edge paintings and try to capture their essence in this very unnatural way. It's especially fun when it's someone I know really well. I couldn't part with the painting of my daughter picking raspberries in my parents' garden. Her posture was spot on and the whole scene was so close to my heart, I couldn't let it go. I kept it!

AP: What are you working on currently?

GVC: I recently started a project of daily studies on paper. They are for sale on my website at an affordable price. It's something I've been wanting to do for years, and with the cost of living rising, it's a way to get a little more regular income and to make sure I'm finishing something small every day.

AP: What's next?

GVC: I'll have a solo show at Dowling Walsh Gallery in 2026 and I'm excited to be working on some island themed pieces for that show. The winter months are a good time to put my nose to the grindstone and the direction and theme for this new body of work will take shape as I go.

AP: Thank you so much for sharing your studio with us, Greta! ■

A small watercolor study from Swan's Island.



(Clockwise from L-R) **1.** Greta entering her studio from the stairway. **2.** One of Greta's studies, 1/6/26, acrylic on paper 10 x 7 inches, part of her daily series, available on her website. **3.** Her workspace with paints and brushes and tape. **4.** *Tishie Blues*, acrylic on panel, 15 3/4 x 19 3/4 inches, 2025, was included in the CMCA "Art You Love" benefit auction. **5.** A bookcase at the top of the studio stairs houses small paintings of Greta's alongside her painted blocks. **6.** *Noa Picking Raspberries in Mimi and Buppo's Garden*, acrylic on panel, 36 x 36 inches, 2024, depicts Greta's daughter in her parent's yard. "Her posture was spot on and the whole scene was so close to my heart," Greta says. Photo courtesy of the artist.

