

Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 6 2026

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

The INTERIORS ISSUE

MEET
**FIVE DESIGN
TALENTS**

SHAPING THE WAY MAINE
LOOKS INSIDE

Step Inside:

SISTER PARISH'S
ISLESBORO HOME

& A MONUMENTAL CAPE ELIZABETH
RETREAT *with an Intimate Soul*

Sarah with *Maine Summer Dinner 4*, a painting that captures the joy of preparing a meal for summer visitors.

Celebrating the Everyday:
**THE ART OF
SARAH STEEDMAN**





above: Paints and brushes await.

Sarah Steedman's vibrant paintings celebrate nature's abundance and the comforts of home. Influenced by folk and outsider art traditions, she uses flattened perspective, vivid color, bold shapes, and visible brushstrokes to create richly textured compositions. Her tablescapes depict the domestic realm, alongside wildlife and the cycles of growth, ripening, and bloom, gleaned from her long career as a Master Gardener. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Arts from Tulane University and trained in Agroecology at UC Santa Cruz. She worked for over 30 years as an urban organic gardener in Chicago, and for chef Rick Bayless as an ornamental gardener and vegetable producer. She moved to Maine in 2022, where she lives in Portland and is a member of Running with Scissors Art Studios. Sarah is represented by Moss Galleries.

AP: Sarah, while you clearly have an expert's knowledge of flora and fauna, your still lifes feel lively rather than academic. Do you value expression over verisimilitude?

SS: What I'm looking for with all my paintings is to have an emotional connection. If it's not actual representation, that's okay with me. I don't want it to be a photograph. I want it to be relatable while also invoking curiosity and imagination, and hopefully a connection. Style-wise, what I'm trying to do is loosen up. I want to have some areas that are slightly unfinished or slightly unresolved.

AP: Your tablescapes abound with plenty—flowers, fruit, textiles, and creatures overlap and coexist. How do you choose what to include?

SS: The big picture of what I'm thinking about is celebrating contemporary life. Some of the artists that I really love are ones that celebrate. This whole series right here is for [a show at] Bellflower; what I wanted to do is have beer picnics. The earlier paintings featuring lobsters were more a reflection on the bountifulness of this area and how I just wanted to celebrate it. I love Bonnard and talk about loose! He also flattened the perspective. I've always, always, always loved his paintings, but who doesn't?

AP: Last year you debuted a series inspired by Lily King's *Heart the Lover* that became illustrations for a deck of playing cards to accompany the novel. How did this collaboration begin?

SS: Lily's daughter, Calla, used to have the studio right next to me. That's how we met. Then when Lily decided to have a deck of cards—because the book is based on a card game—she asked me if I would design it. She has certain animals within her other books that have carried forward. Geese are one. So, she already had some elements that she wanted. We did badgers and owls and dolphins. She was really fun to work with and she's a really nice person.



opposite: *Best Friend Picnic*, 2026, oil on wood panel, 24 x 24 inches. "I loved painting the mash-up of pattern, color, and line," says Sarah. "Kind of chaotic, but not unlike a picnic outside because you never know what might happen!" above: Outside Running with Scissors Art Studios in East Bayside.

Your tablescapes abound with plenty—flowers, fruit, textiles, and creatures overlap and coexist.



A detail from *Maine Summer Dinner 4*, 2025, which celebrates what Sarah calls “the bountifulness of Maine.”
opposite: Sarah’s light-filled space at Running with Scissors, where painters, ceramicists, printmakers, and others form a supportive and inspiring community.



AP: Your paintings have a layered, ornamental quality that feels joyful and abundant. Are those feelings you hope to elicit from your viewers?

SS: Yes, definitely. A feeling—some kind of emotion. Hopefully it’s a happy emotion or a happy memory, something from childhood or something that you want to continue to remember. That’s kind of my driving reason for painting. Other than I just have a compulsion to do it. I have to be creative. I have to be doing something with my hands. Ever since I was little.

AP: Usually, you paint with oil on canvas or wood. You have a series painted on vintage fabrics, lending additional texture and decorative richness. How did you land on this choice?

SS: I have always loved fabric. I taught at a Waldorf school for a little while doing hand work, knitting and crocheting. My grandmother was from Germany, and my mom was born in Switzerland; they came over during the war. So that tradition of handwork has been in my family forever. When I first started to do paintings in Chicago, when my kids were getting a little bit bigger and I felt like I could turn the dining room into a painting studio, I was sewing together vintage fabrics, stretching them on canvases and then painting imagery on top. A lot of that was vases and flowers. The imagery of gardening or plants or insects was coming in. I liked combining the imagery with vintage fabrics—the handwork, outsider art, and folk-art traditions—elevating what had already been created by someone else.

AP: Do you have a guiding philosophy for your work?

SS: I think that emotional connection is really the guiding philosophy for me. That’s really my desire, and what drives me is to make work that resonates with the viewer.

AP: Can you share what you are currently working on?

SS: I am working on these soil paintings for a show at the George Marshall Store Gallery. They came out of thinking about my time when I was at UC Santa Cruz. From the very beginning, they talked about how important the soil is and how the soil is the foundation of the health of all plants. I started painting these paintings and they were really dark, because there’s no light coming down into the soil. Then I thought, well, that doesn’t mean there couldn’t be this world under there that is colorful, and who’s even under there? To them, it’s not a dark world, it’s an interesting world.

AP: What’s next?

SS: I’m excited about what’s ahead. If I had any advice for young artists, it’s: just do it. Just do it. I wish I had the epiphany: I don’t need a two-hour block; I can just do a little bit of art every day. It doesn’t have to be a black-and-white thing. You don’t have to wait to have a studio. You don’t have to wait until you have the time. You can just do a little bit of art every day. Like, don’t stop doing art. Don’t ever stop.

AP: Thank you so much for sharing your work with us, Sarah! ■