

PREVIEW: *Maine*

VICTOR LEGER: CAPTURING THE ENCHANTMENT OF SCHOODIC

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Realism is alive and well in American art and, more specifically, in Maine, where the tradition is strong, from Church and Homer to Hopper and the Wyeths and beyond. Today, realist practice in the Pine Tree State is remarkable and wide-ranging: Lois Dodd, Linden Frederick, Janice Anthony, Alan Magee, Alison Rector, David Vickery, Joel Babb, and Sarah Knock come to mind, each a brilliant limner of whatever prompts them to paint.

Add to this cohort Victor Leger, a Connecticut-based painter who spends time in downeast Maine, in particular, the Schoodic Peninsula part of Acadia National Park. In the show Leger offers 15 meticulous landscapes painted en plein air. He

brings an immediacy to his images such that each painting is, in his words, “like a window on a wall opening into nature.”

Like many of his predecessors, Leger loves the Maine light. In several landscapes, he renders the beauty of sunlit days, of islands, sea and

sky enveloped in a luminous atmosphere.

The aptly titled *Transcendentalism* offers the visual equivalent of the kind of divine experience of the everyday Emerson and his brethren embraced.

Low-lying islands raise

their pointed firs into the flawless heavens while Mount Desert Island hovers in the background.

Leger has a special passion for trees, treating them like respected elders. *A Study in Courage* is a cropped rendering of the torsos of two trees in fall plumage. The title of another painting, *The Prophet*, lends a biblical element to a study of a coastal tree that appears to point toward the horizon. Some of these arboreal studies bring to mind the paintings of Theophil Groell (1932–2004) who brought a similar focus to trees on Deer Isle.

Just as Blake could see a world in a grain of sand, Leger finds music in tide pools. The stunning *Symphony # 3* captures the shadows and reflections found in a rock-bound cache of tidal water.

Leger places extra-wide frames on some of his paintings, which at times can seem to overwhelm the image within. On the other hand, they also enhance the aforementioned window effect, drawing us to look out on a glorious world.

—Carl Little



Victor Leger, *The Prophet*, oil on panel, 21 x 25 x 2" framed. Courtesy of Littlefield Gallery.