



ARTIST OF

Jessica Lee Ives translates her experiences into free-verse paintings

BY CARL LITTLE



(Above) Ives is an avid long-distance swimmer and has painted many images of people swimming from different perspectives. This 10" x 10" oil on panel is titled *Swimmer Self-Portrait: Stripes*. (Below) *Almost There*, 10" x 22" oil on panel, shows passengers on the *Hardy III* headed to Monhegan.

CLICKING THE “search all paintings” tab on the home page of the website for artist Jessica Lee Ives opens a link to a word cloud of diverse subjects and categories. Activities like surfing, kayaking, swimming, fishing, and hockey bump against place names such as Screw Auger Falls, Costa Rica, and Acadia.

Images pinned to the wall of her studio in Damariscotta reflect a similar diversity. Ives hangs paintings that are still in progress to that six-foot span, as many as 20 at a time, in order to get a sense of how the works play off against each other. Last March, the wall included light-filled images of apprentices

working on boats at the Carpenter’s Boat Shop in Pemaquid; deckhands and passengers on the *Hardy III*, which travels between Round Pond and Monhegan; and people on Monhegan.

These new images are a departure from the more recreational subjects in her previous paintings. They are a collaboration of sorts with her husband, Jonathan Ives, who teaches at the Carpenter’s Boat Shop and is a captain of the *Hardy Boat Cruises* that operate out of New Harbor.

The paintings, many of them small, resonate with bright color, blues of water and sky, reds of clothing, greens and oranges.

An athlete who enjoys swimming, hiking, mountain climbing, and paddle boarding, Ives paints people experiencing the outside—swimmers cutting across the water, a surfer bearing his board toward the waves, snowboarders resting on the slopes, a man casting a fly over a river. The works are like free verse, expressive yet disciplined, and always based on places where Ives has spent time.

The paintings of swimmers relate to Megunticook Lake in Camden, where she spent her formative years. Born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, she lived in west central Ohio until third grade when her family moved to the Camden area. Over the years, Megunticook has