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Neil Welliver, president's choice.

The Visual Arts Gallery at Florida International University Frost Art Museum
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NEIL WELLIVER

President's Choice

Cover: Pool on Outcropping

NEIL WELLIVER

President's Choice

February 23 - March 20, 1981
Florida International University
Visual Arts Gallery, Tamiami Campus

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Preface

In the light of the large retrospective exhibition of the work of Neil Welliver organized to travel throughout the United States, and the concurrent exhibition of new work at Fishbach Gallery in New York, this present exhibition might seem repetitious. That it is not so is due to several factors: the prodigious productivity of the artist, and the simple matter of geography. The last is involved to the extent that any exhibition in New York or Los Angeles is still a substantial distance from most people in Miami. For this reason, I do not feel that any exhibition that brings the work of an artist to this area for the first time can be thought to be repetitious.

It has been the mission of the Visual Arts Gallery at F.I.U. to introduce to South Florida many of the major artists and contemporary art movements. We continue this tradition with Mr. Welliver's exhibition.

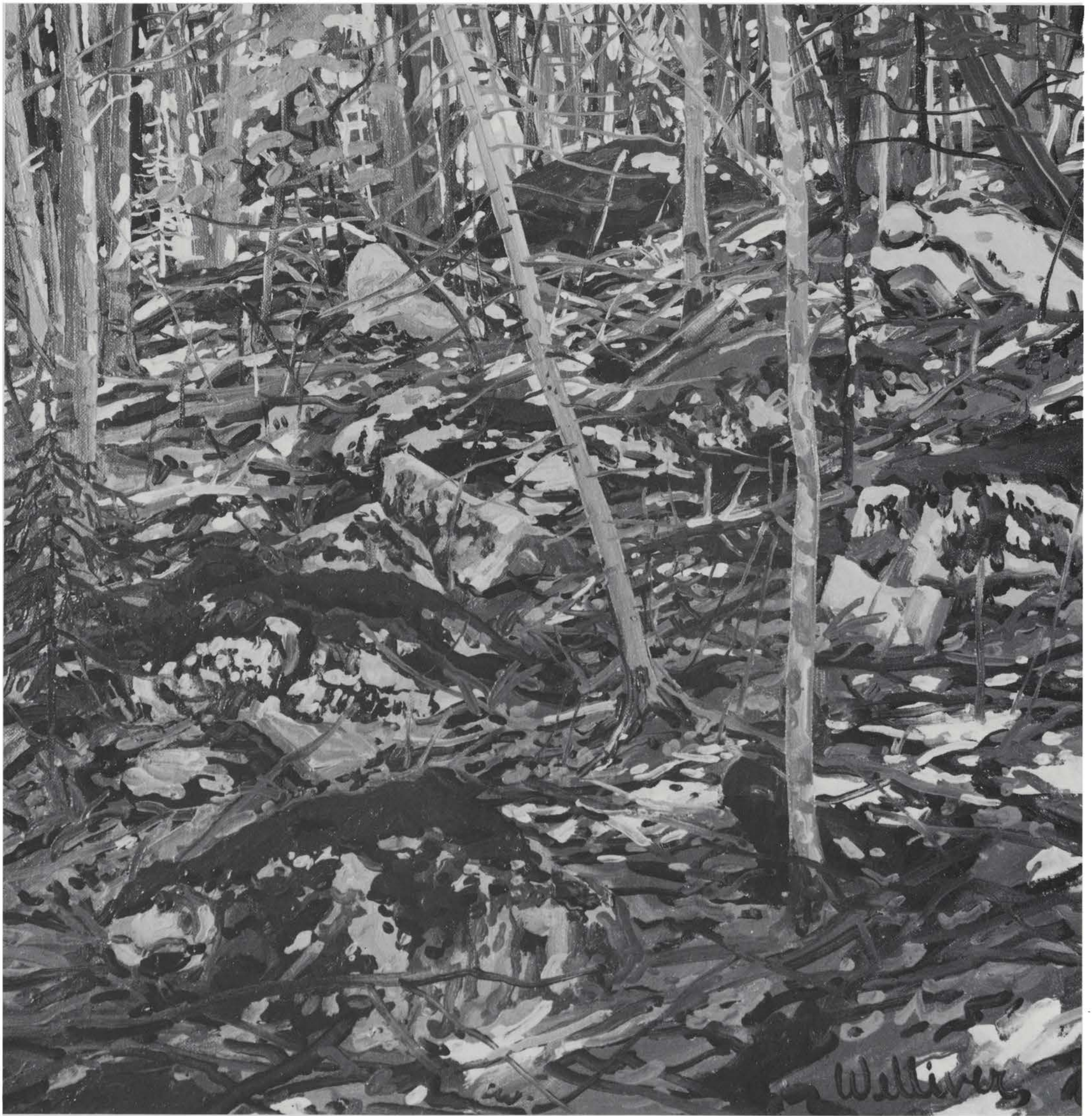
I would like to thank the artist himself for his fullest cooperation and help. His personal involvement and intense interest have made this exhibition possible.

We are grateful to Andrew Morgan for his sensitive catalogue introduction on Mr. Welliver's work. His knowledge and lifelong involvement with European and American art, as well as his personal knowledge of Mr. Welliver and his work have placed him in the unique position of giving the exhibit a personal as well as contextual background.

The Gallery is indebted to Dr. Gregory Wolfe, the President of our University, for his continual enthusiasm. Annually, President Wolfe lends his special support to one of our major exhibits. He has selected Mr. Welliver's work as this year's "President's Choice" because he feels that it will be of great interest to the growing art community of South Florida.

A special thank you to Ms. Renee Cooley, Curator, who tirelessly dedicates herself to the success of each exhibit.

Dahlia Morgan
Director
Visual Arts Gallery



Late Light

Introduction

The big exhibits in South Florida have featured minimal, conceptual, photo-realist, video, pop and, most recently, super-realist and idea art styles. Art in Public Places programs have spawned a network of cold steel, eye-beam giants. The art press has devoted little attention to the art of painting after 1960. There is no doubt that the popular culture is wedded to process. Photo mechanical tools, air brush, art by telephone and other mass-production methods do, indeed, reflect the world in which we live. During the last two decades undergraduates have continued to make paintings. The poor souls probably don't read *Artforum*. But almost all of the graduate students (M.F.A.) know the scene: urban, instant art, aggressive image, machine made, documents, installations, post-modern, heroic scale: technology. Is there a place for man after the machine? Is it just possible that man can continue to hand-craft and formalize his natural passions? Is there still a body of original images to be discerned and shaped through drawing, song and poetry? Can the artist still celebrate man and his natural environment?

During the last five years, there is growing evidence of a resurgent art of painting. The art world has, almost in a flash, become diverse and, even, pluralistic. It is an ideal time to look at the work of Neil Welliver. This exhibit coincides with an installation of large oils at the Fishbach Gallery in New York City and arrangements for a soon to be launched traveling retrospective.

Neil Welliver is an authentic painter. He works before nature with authority. His talent is complimented by order, discipline and heroic energy. He produces a great quantity of drawings, prints, watercolors and oils each year. In my judgement, he is the major force in American painting today. Neil has long been identified with New England, specifically Maine. However, his aesthetic

roots are in modern painting—Abstract Expressionism in particular. While this artist is most comfortable tramping in the Maine woods, he is not a transcendentalist. There is very little of the 19th century in his work.

I believe that Welliver—along with Philip Pearlstein, Fairfield Porter and David Park—have charted the course for modern, representational painting in the U.S. since 1950. Their influence pervades most viable representational painting today. They represent a continuing awareness of visual world during a generation of neglect for painterly images—a time when figurative painting was almost a forbidden experience in the American art establishment.

Neil Welliver's work draws one into the action of painting and the action of nature. My first encounter, some years ago in New York, involved a large (10' x 14') painting that felt for all the world like a Jackson Pollock. The paint was juicy, fluid, spontaneous and consisted of what appeared to be no more than six color mixtures. On second focus, a very specific landscape jelled: a sharp, complex network of light, shadow, branches, trees and brilliant reflections of snow and sky. One of the vital things that Welliver has helped re-invent is body contact with nature. His use of paint reflects immersion, partnership and visual empathy. It is not tradition that calls him. It is an almost involuntary need to observe and participate in the natural world of which he is a part. Welliver's painting reflects a direct and tactile interaction with nature. There is no photographic detachment. His painted surfaces team with both essence and particularity: the universal stuff and *his* moods. His paintings are filled with kinetic signals and symbols. They can be seen as abstract forms but they *have* to be seen as revelations of the unique environment within which Welliver works and lives.

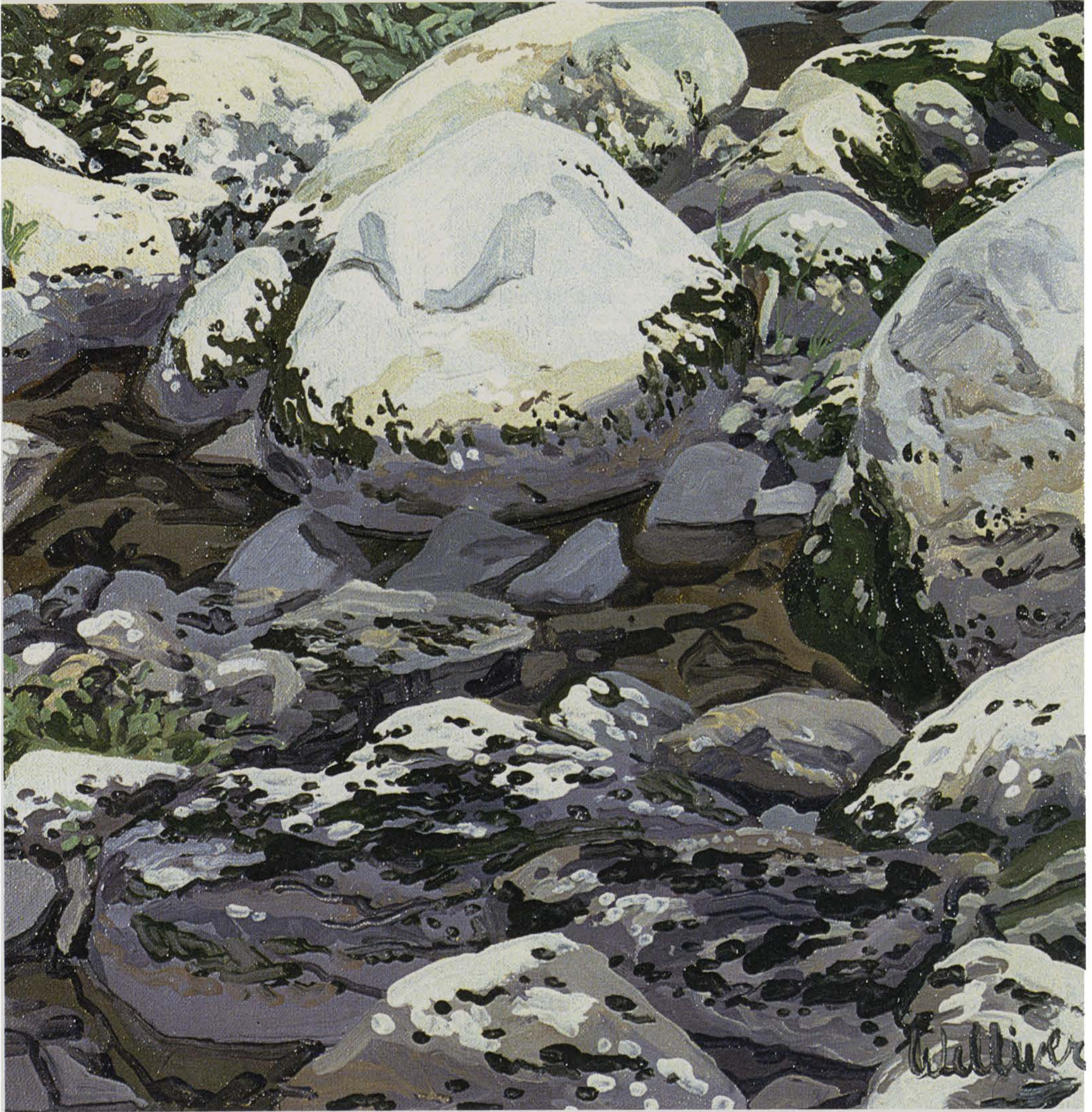
It is difficult to separate the man and the artist. Some fifteen years ago he began to accumulate property in Lincolnville, Maine. He assembled woods, streams, re-

born timber and neglected farmland—eventually 1200 acres hidden from tourists and the picturesque sea coast. On this land he built domestic shelters, out buildings, power windmills, raised a family and farmed. He continues to reshape and rebuild his life and property when necessary. Welliver's nature is, I believe, fiercely competitive and assertive. He is a man of military bearing and presence. That presence projects a calm and absolutely controlled personality. His character is the embodiment of hard work, self-sufficiency and strong willed accomplishment. His aesthetic nature is purposeful, conservationist and economical. His farm and his woods suggest simplicity, environmental preservation, natural beauty, cultivation, awesome wilderness and painstaking management. Neil Welliver lives and works the year round in Lincolnville. He teaches graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania a few days each month. Some of his special friends have become his neighbors. He attends chores, jogs, participates in local government, reads voraciously and has dozens of projects going in his studio. Where does he find the time?

Welliver walks, watches and works miles in every direction from the house. In June, his concentration is so great that he will draw while surrounded by a cloud of black flies. In January, he will camp in the woods while painting the blue shadows on the snow. When I tramped through those woods after him, last summer, I kept seeing "Welliver" everywhere. He takes you *inside* the woods, under the streams and close to the center of his natural vortex. One begins to feel a part of Welliver's visual, painterly world. There is no sitting off on a lofty hill. You are thrust inside the shadows, branches and reflections of Welliver motifs. One is inserted into the surface of paintings. They seem inseparable. His work describes the place. It reveals the action of abstract elements at work on a flat surface. The painted image externalizes the unique and powerful nature of the man.

Andrew Morgan

Andrew Morgan is a painter and Professor, Department of Art, University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida.



Dry Brook

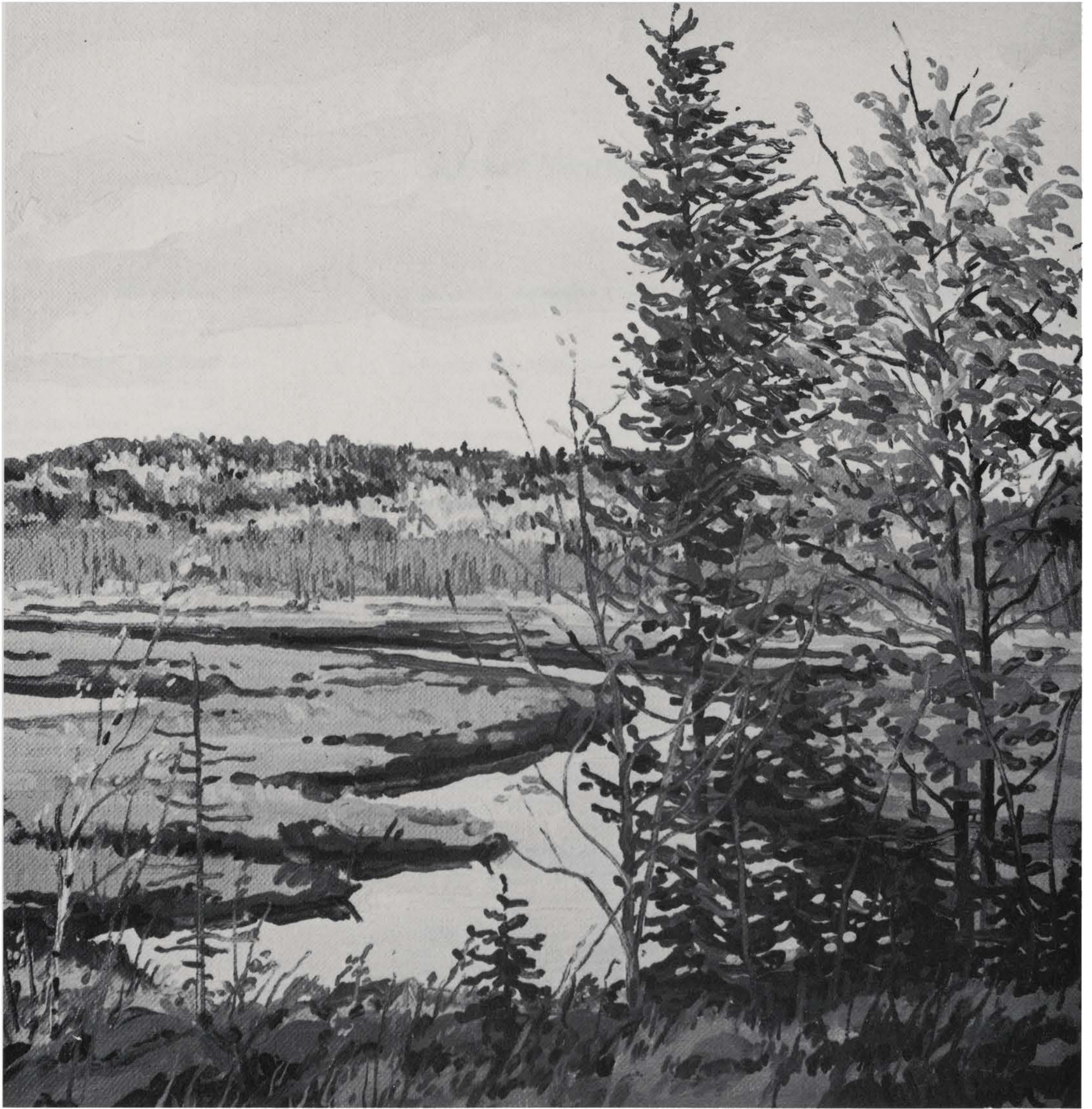
List of Works

Oil Studies

1. **Late Light**
oil on canvas
18" x 18"
2. **Reflected Boulder**
oil on canvas
12" x 12"
3. **Detail of Blue Pool**
oil on canvas
12" x 14"
4. **Dry Brook**
oil on canvas
14" x 14"
Collection: Mr. & Mrs. Fred Wiseman
5. **Small Island at Moosehorn**
oil on canvas
12" x 14"
6. **Hemlock Stand**
oil on canvas
12" x 12"
7. **Prospect**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
8. **East Slope**
oil on canvas
18" x 18"
9. **Fractured Light**
oil on canvas
18" x 18"
10. **Drought, Big Flowage**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
11. **Megunticook**
oil on canvas
18" x 24"
12. **Shadow & Reflection**
oil on canvas
12" x 14"
13. **Pool on Outcropping**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
14. **Osprey Nest**
oil on canvas
17" x 18"
15. **Moose Pool**
oil on canvas
12" x 12"
16. **Shadow on Briggs Meadow**
oil on canvas
14" x 14"
17. **Reflected Pool #1**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
18. **Last Light**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
19. **Synthetic Reflections**
oil on canvas
18" x 18"
20. **Pickrel Weed, Moosehorn Flowage**
oil on canvas
12" x 14"
21. **Brigg's Meadow**
oil on canvas
20" x 20"
22. **Light Study**
oil on canvas
12" x 12"
23. **Floating Tree**
oil on canvas
8" x 9"
24. **Muddy Water**
oil on canvas
12" x 12"
25. **Mt. Katahdin**
oil on canvas
9" x 10"
Collection: Eli Welliver
26. **Sun on Brigg's Meadow**
oil on canvas
12" x 14"
27. **Light Study**
oil on canvas
12" x 12"
28. **Reflected Pool #2**
oil on canvas
14" x 14"
29. **Step Ledge**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
30. **Reflected Pool #2**
oil on canvas
14" x 14"
31. **Step Ledge**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"
32. **Maine Landscape**
oil on canvas
18" x 20"

Prints

33. **From Zeke's**
color lithograph
20" x 28"
34. **Immature Great Blue Heron**
etching handcolored w/watercolor
24" x 26½"
35. **Brown Trout, State II**
etching and aquatint
22" x 31½"
36. **Trout I**
etching handcolored w/watercolor
9½" x 11½"
37. **Smelt**
etching with handcoloring
18" x 20"
38. **Nude**
etching handcolored w/watercolor
9½" x 11½"
39. **Salmon**
etching handcolored w/watercolor
24" x 32"
40. **Big Flowage**
color woodcut
20" x 20"
41. **Canadian Geese**
soft ground etching,
handcolored w/watercolor
24" x 29"
42. **Brown Trout**
etching handcolored w/watercolor
22" x 31½"
43. **Big Flowage**
woodcut printed in black
20" x 20"
44. **Trout & Reflection**
etching handcolored w/watercolor
24½" x 32"
45. **Canadian Geese**
lithograph
9½" x 9½"
46. **Nude**
etching
9½" x 11½"
47. **Trout I**
etching
9½" x 11½"
48. **Cedar Water Pool**
linear lithograph
24" x 32"
49. **From Zeke's**
lithograph
20" x 28"
50. **Osprey Nest**
colored woodblock
34" x 32"
51. **Moose**
etching
9½" x 11½"
52. **Brigg's Meadow**
serigraph
40" x 40"
53. **Si's Hill**
serigraph
40" x 40"
54. **Greer's Bog**
serigraph
40" x 40"
55. **Maiden's Cliff**
serigraph
40" x 40"
56. **Duck Trap**
serigraph
40" x 40"
57. **Brook**
serigraph
40" x 40"



Brigg's Meadow



Immature Great Blue Heron



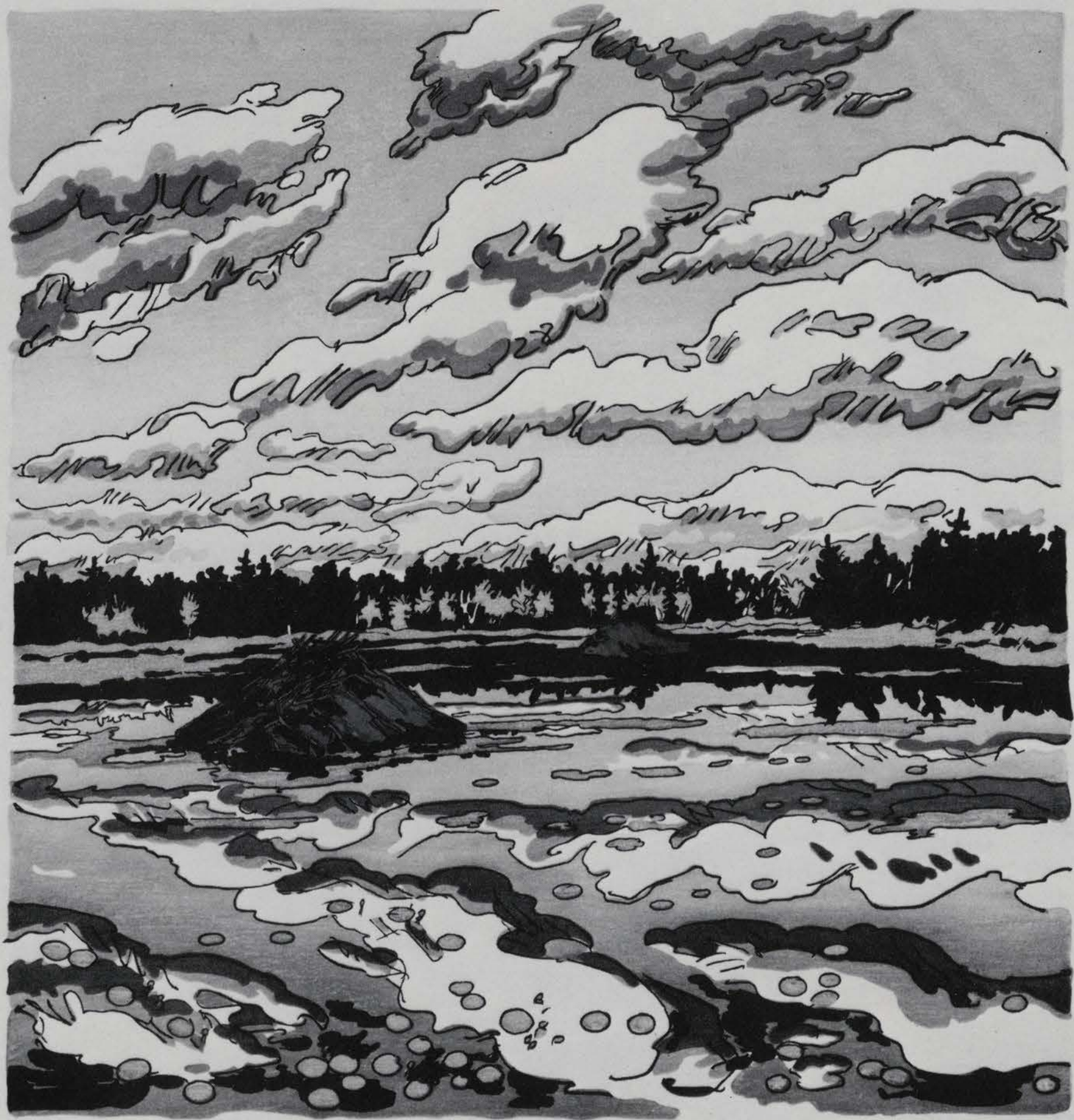
Small Island at Moosehorn



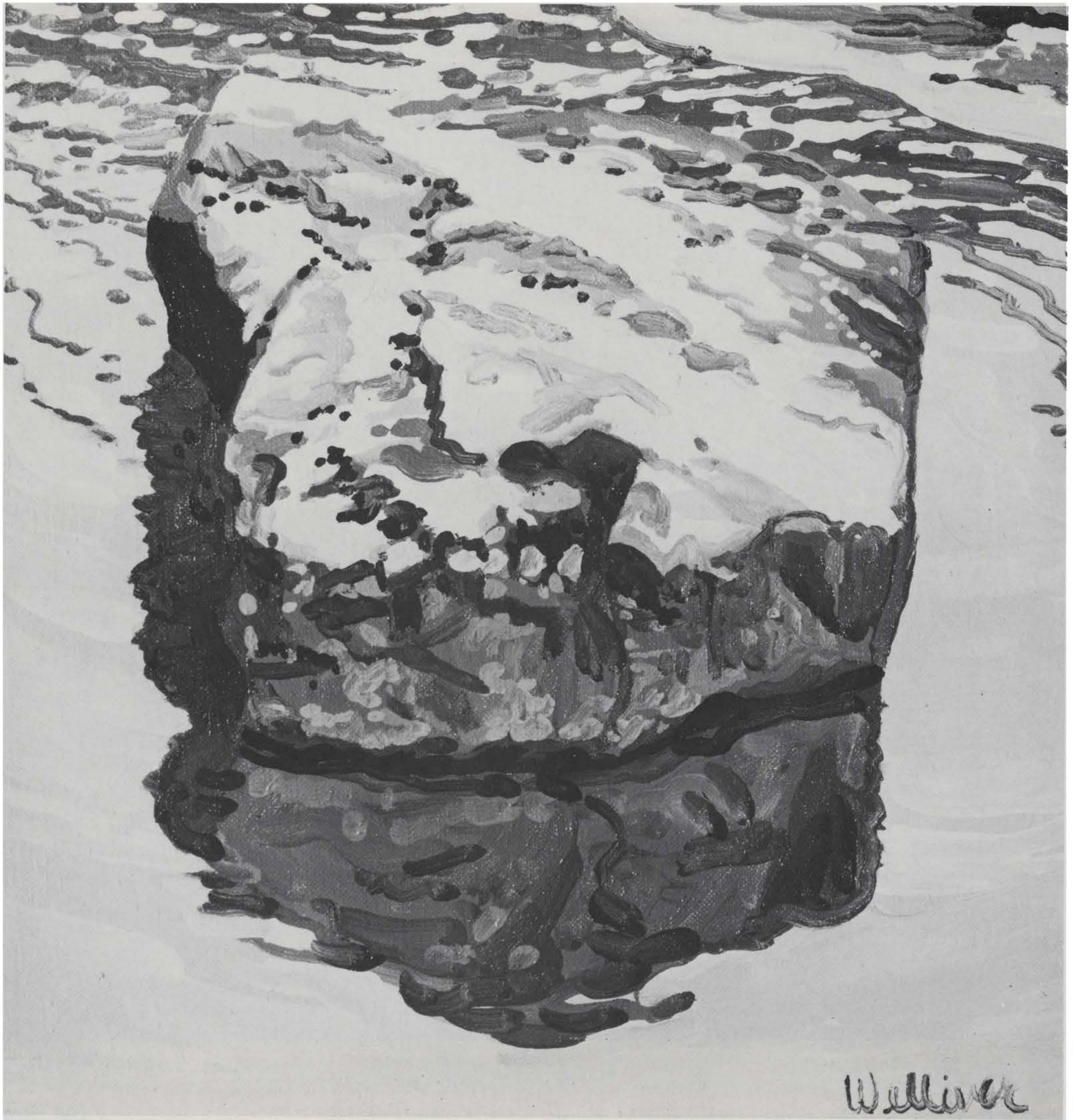
Brown Trout, State II



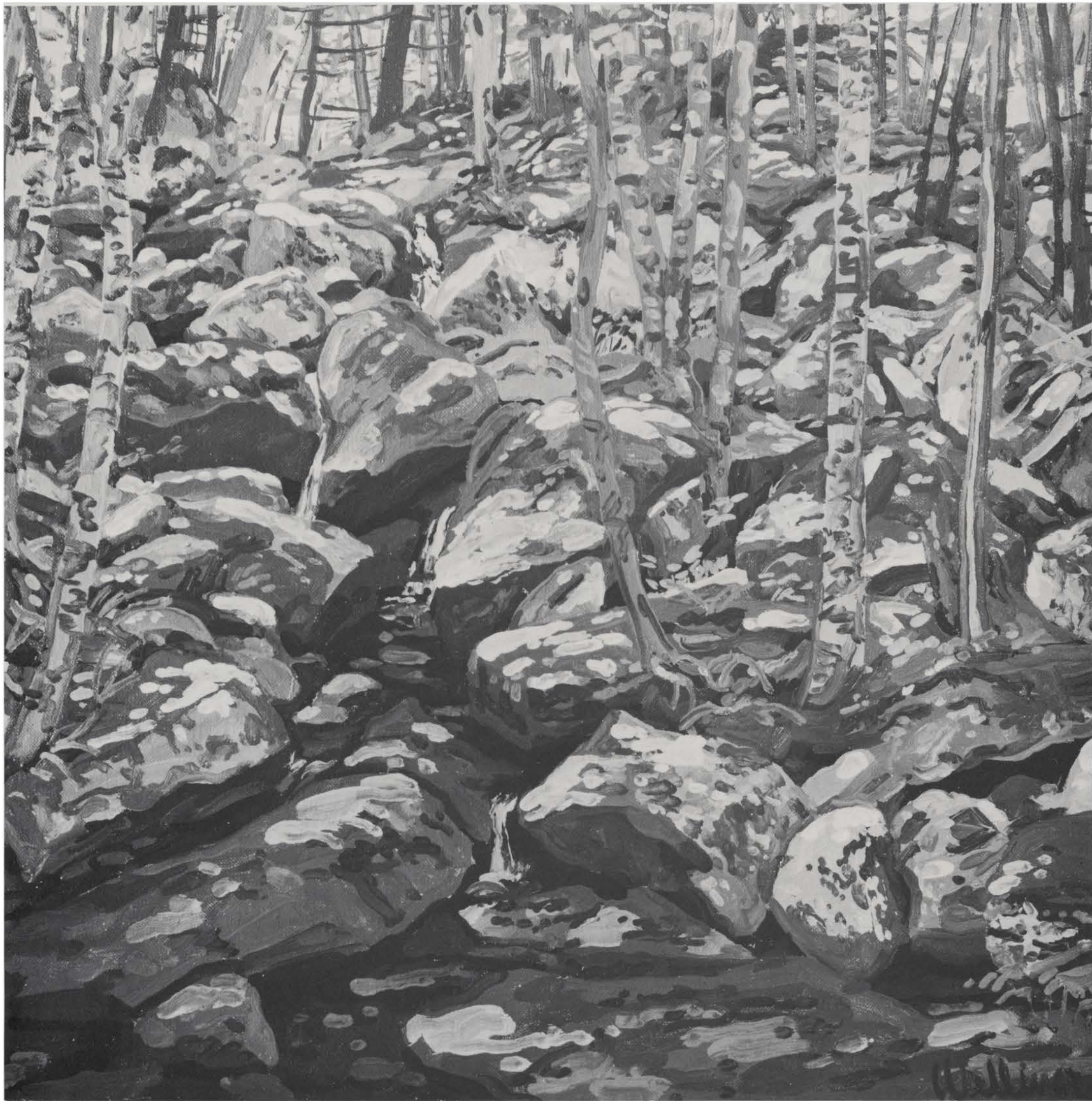
Osprey Nest



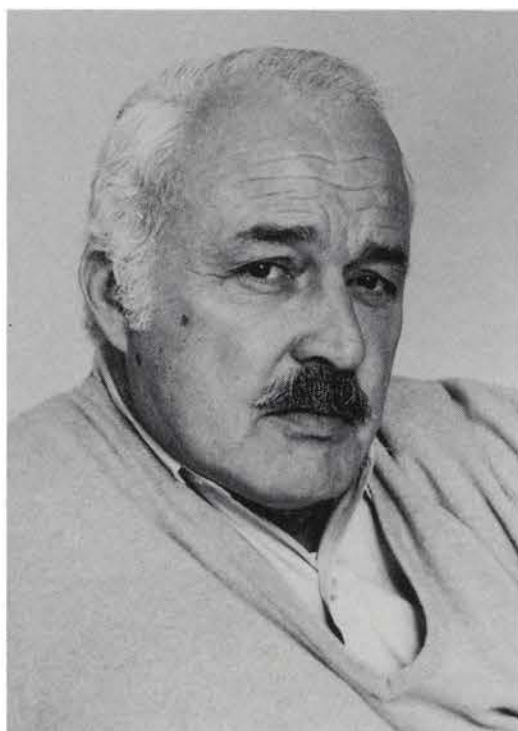
Big Flowage



Reflected Boulder



Fractured Light



Biography:

1929

Born in Milville, Pennsylvania

1953

B.F.A., Philadelphia Museum College of Art

1955

M.F.A., Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

One Man Exhibitions:

1960

Mirsky Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts

1962, 63, 64

Stable Gallery, New York

1967

New Haven Gallery, Connecticut

Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania

1967, 68, 79, 70

Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

1969

McLeaf Gallery, Philadelphia

1971, 72

John Bernard Meyers Gallery, New York

1973

Parker Street 470 Gallery, Boston

1974

University of Rhode Island, Kingston

1974, 76, 79, 80

Fischbach Gallery, New York

1976

Treat Gallery, Bates College, Maine

1977

Munson Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut

1978

Brooke Alexander, Inc., New York

Public Collections:

The American Federation of the Arts, New York
The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland
Bowdoin College Art Museum, Brunswick, Maine
Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts
The Brooklyn Museum, New York
The Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio
Colby College, Colby, Maine
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa
The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
The Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York
New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey
New York University, New York
The North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina
The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, California
Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts
Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, Illinois
The Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, Utah
Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York
The Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro, North Carolina
The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Reflected Pool #1

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