

GEORGE MASON

A Year in the Watershed

*This is the language of Visual Inquiry.
Outward signs may be evidence of what is unseen yet present,
or just as likely conceal magical thinking and self inflation.
Either way, its best to continue.
Questionable offerings, are offerings, nonetheless.
Doubt is never eliminated.*

—George Mason, *Journal Notes 2016*



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on the cover
Invitation, 73" x 68" x 3", 2016



What is splendid is near.
—George Mason, *Journal Notes 2016*



Gallery Notes

Nancy Glassman

Caldbeck Gallery Associate

Rockland, Maine

WHEN VISITORS ENTERED THE CALDBECK GALLERY IN ROCKLAND, MAINE DURING THE MONTH OF MAY 2016, IT WAS A BIT LIKE STUMBLING UNEXPECTEDLY INTO A CHAPEL. WORKS BY GEORGE MASON HUNG QUIETLY ON THE WALLS, ROOTED AND STILL.

There were comments such as, “Luminous,” or “It glows!” People wanted to know, what exactly they were looking at, and were curious about materials and method. They broke into smiles when encouraged to touch, responding with a sense of relief and delight. “Oh! That does change the experience! I thought it was metal and rigid!”, or “I thought it was made out of leather!” Then, of course, there was the four-year-old boy who needed no prompting to play hide and seek among the panels.

As a Caldbeck Gallery Associate, I had time to live with this exhibit and explore each piece over the course of the month. There was a lot to consider with the color relationships, the varying widths and lengths of hanging panels, and the juxtaposition of rich pattern and surface. Some panels were more flexible than others. Some hung from the back of the armature, and some were in front,

◀ *Pageant* (detail)

leaving gaps or portals and creating shadows. Breezes did, in fact, move them in slow and languid ways. They did not flutter. Their weight and gravitas confirmed the intuitive logic of referring to the work as “relief tapestry”.

I did sometimes think of ancient stone ruins momentarily revealing their forgotten calligraphy after a strong breeze lifts the blanket of vines. Or I conjured up a woodland scene and in my mind’s eye joined that four year old and moved into and through the spaces, wondering what I would discover and whether anyone could see me as I peered out from within.

NOTE: *All pieces are made of Hydrocal plaster, burlap, casein paint, and encaustic.*



Pageant , 39" x 9' x 2½", 2015



K2 Family Foundation

Margot Kelly

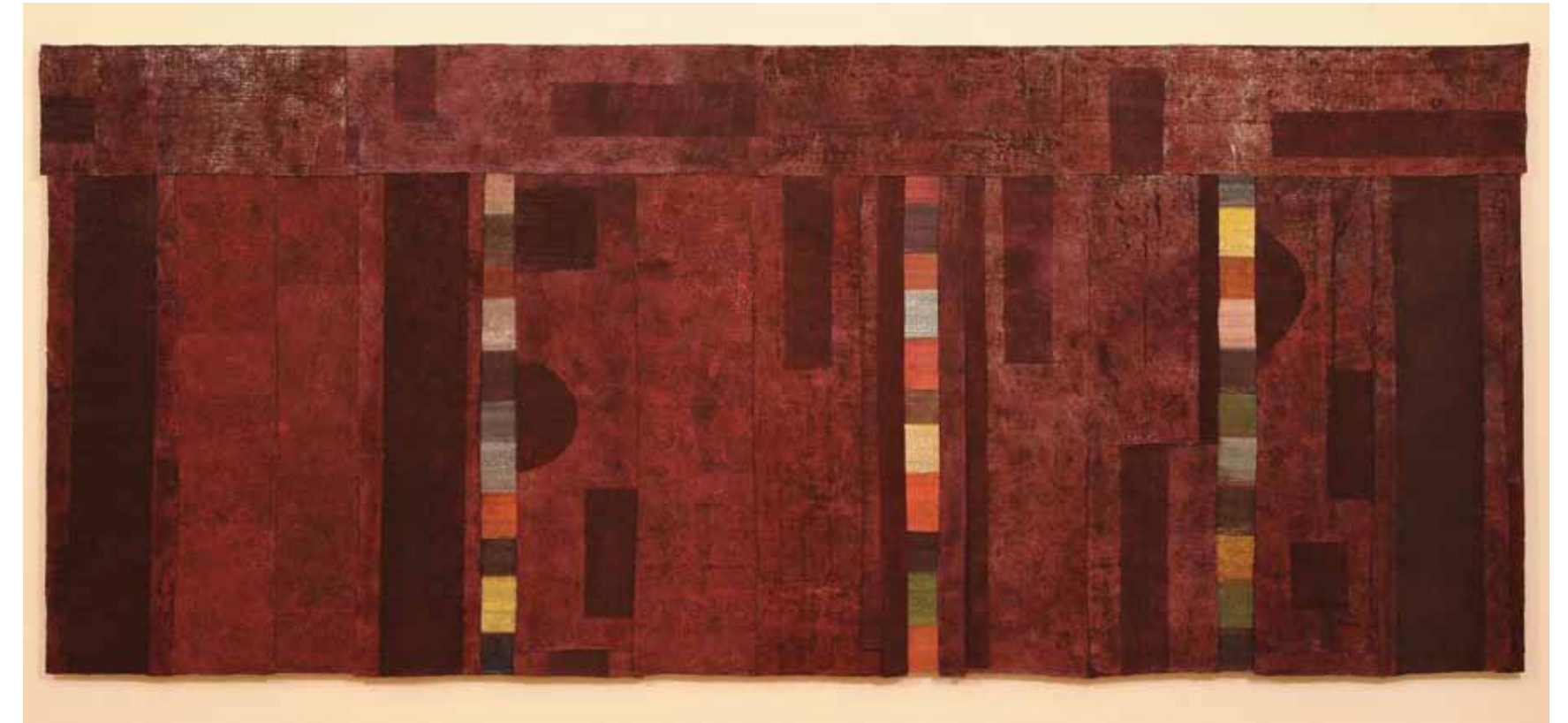
Executive Director

Port Clyde, Maine

FOR A DECADE, THE K2 FAMILY FOUNDATION HAS PARTNERED WITH OTHER organizations to sponsor artist-in-residence programs in parks and land trusts. Most recently, we've worked with the Georges River Land Trust, a group that protects lands throughout a Midcoast Maine watershed, and encourages residents to steward their property and enjoy the abundance the area offers.

We love what having a long stretch of time to immerse in a single place can make possible for an artist. Some will shift medium or direction, others will take greater risks than usual. All see and feel freshly. But we also value

◀ *Aubergine* (detail)



Aubergine, 87" x 17' x 3", Installation for Salt Bay Chamberfest, Summer 2015

what the collaboration among artists, land stewards, and community makes possible for people in the communities in which these residencies take place. Community members share their sense of place with the artists, and the artists share their work with the community. All celebrate the way a place can help forge connections among people who care about it.

Having George Mason as the most recent artist-in-residence on the Georges River Land Trust holdings has been a great treat. Because he spread his time out over the course of an entire year, the land had time to insinuate itself powerfully into his heart and work. And he had time to allow its influence to flower in surprising and beautiful ways.

Study with Stripes (detail) ►



The Georges River Land Trust

Pamela Dewell

Executive Director

Rockland, Maine

THE POWER OF THE ICONIC LANDSCAPE WHICH EMBRACES THE ST.

GEORGE RIVER CONTINUES TO DRAW THE ADVENTUROUS, THE CREATIVE,

and those who value the natural world. Flowing almost 60 miles from

its source at St. George Lake in Liberty, Georges River nourishes a

watershed characterized by woodlands to the north, a farm belt strapping

its center and an estuarine complex rich in biomass at sea level following

a drop in elevation of 500 feet. The tidal portion of the river between

Warren and the Muscungus Bay never looks the same way twice. Infinite

combinations of tide, wind and sky manipulate the river which in turn

changes the land, and the flavor of our experience of it.

A celebration of all that flourishes here would not be complete without the artistic works which chronicle flora and fauna and the man-made world and a defining way of life. It is a rich tapestry, full of movement and color and light and sound, but stillness and peace, too. It is the kind of place that we pack back to other places – a stone from the beach, pieces of sea glass, a pocketful of winks.

How lucky we are to have artists whose ability to weave the fabric of our watershed into a record that will capture a certain time in a certain place, forever! The Georges River Land Trust could not be more cognizant of the area's significance to artists and we continue to expand our efforts each year to better illustrate the importance of one to the other.

Through an important partnership with the K2 Foundation, the Georges River Land Trust has been fortunate to work with area artists through the establishment of an Artist in Residence Program. We are very proud to have hosted George Mason through this program and hope that you enjoy this compilation of his work which was inspired by special places along the St. George River. We are grateful to George not just for creating these special pieces, but for his willingness to share his time and thoughts with our friends and supporters, too.

We look forward to growing our Artist in Residence Program at the Langlais Sculpture Preserve over the years to come. Thanks to a new partnership with the Kohler Foundation and Colby College, the Georges River Land Trust will soon provide new opportunities to live, work and create in an artist-built environment, and invite you to join us in celebrating art and nature in the watershed we call home.

Aubergine and To Mend 3, Studio Installation ➤





Crossing to Avalon, 73" x 70" x 3", 2016

*We write from the near side
with such longing about the Great Beyond.
The loveliness of our poetry
is small consolation for not offering ourselves.
We are fierce to imagine letting go
and equally fierce not to surrender.*

—George Mason, *Journal Notes* 2016

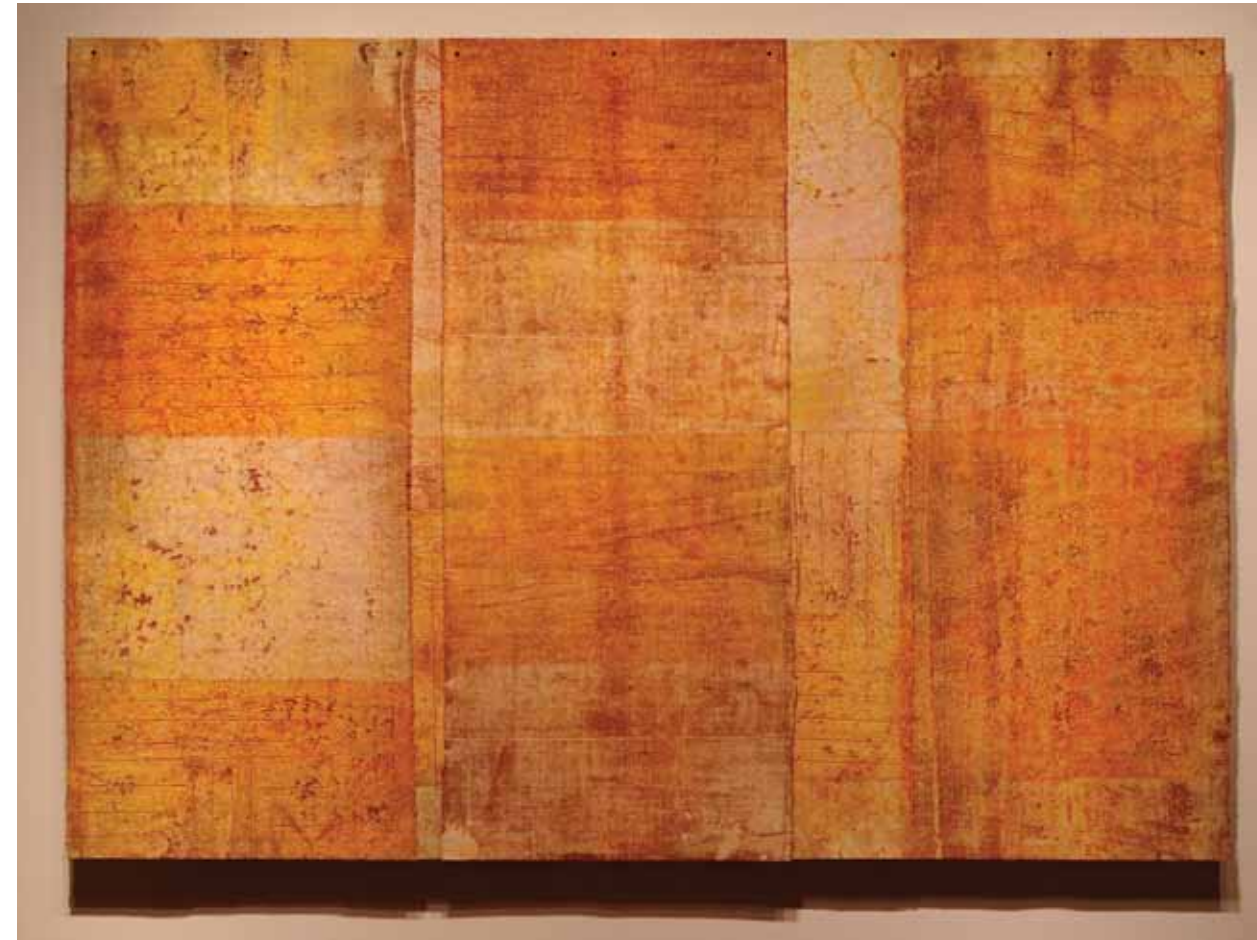
Avalon Group, 73" x 18' 4" x 3", 2016 ➤





Cascade, 73" x 70" x 3", 2016

◀ *Cascade* (detail)



Unspoken, 42½" x 60¼" x 2", 2016



Study with Stripes, 17¾" x 45¼" x ¾", 2016

*Watch with wonder as thought exhausts itself,
and in defeat is made pliable.*

—George Mason, *Journal Notes* 2016



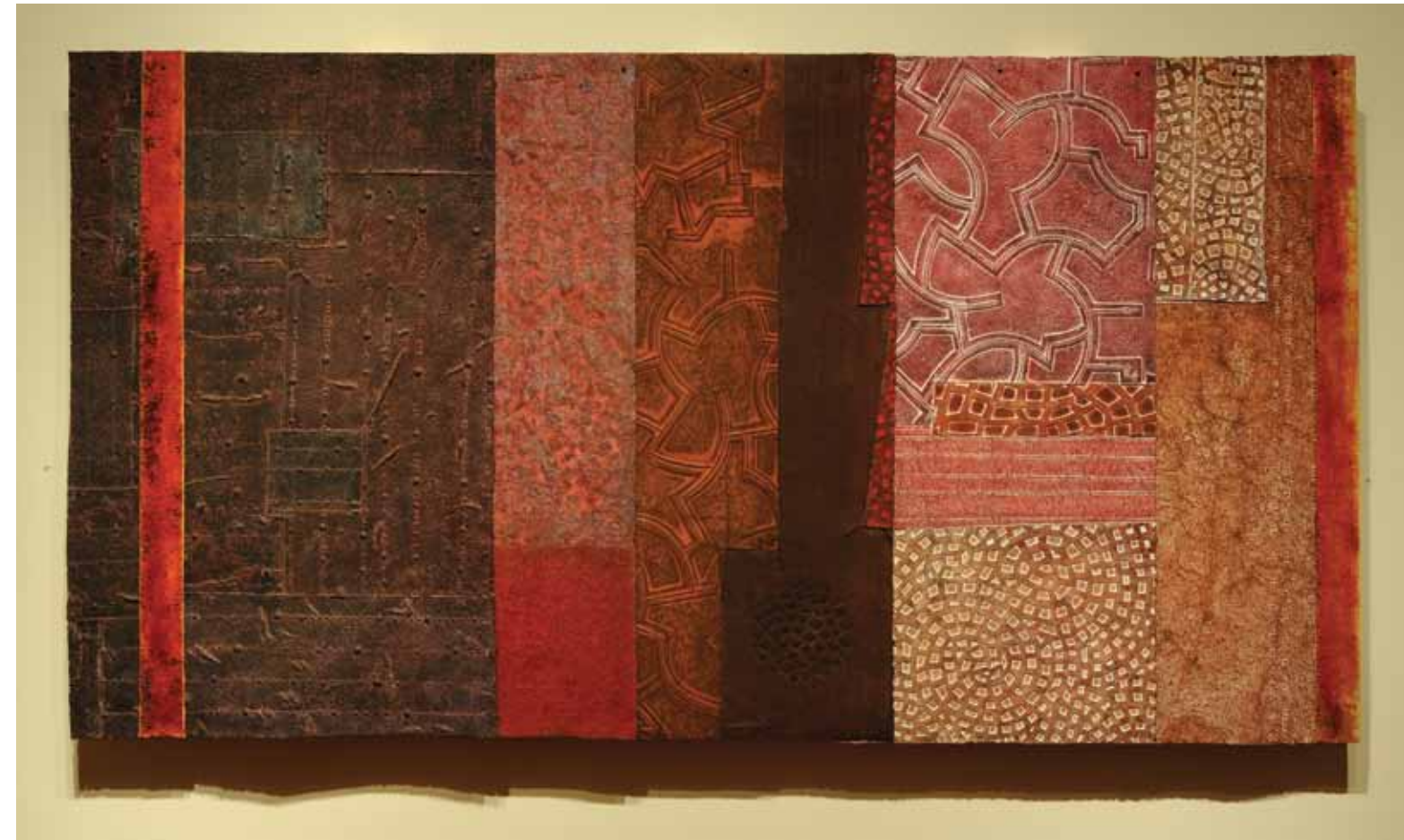
Divide, 32½" x 35½" x 1½", 2016



Mantlepiece, 17¾" x 74" x 3½", 2016

Revelation has no witness. Even "Yes" separates.

—George Mason, *Journal Notes* 2016



The Hours, 32" x 60" x 2¼", 2016



Unspoken (Long), 30½" x 88½" x 3", 2016

*Color and texture are an
'inscrutable fact', not a metaphor.
Art can live as primary experience,
and nourish without narrative.*

—George Mason, *Journal Notes* 2016



Pillars, 33½" x 50" x 2", 2016



Study, 17¾" x 40" x 2¼", 2016



Warm Tones with Blue, 52" x 50" x 2", 2015



The Assembled, 53½" x 50" x 2", 2015



Procession
39" x 12' x 2½"
2016



◀ *Procession*, 2016 (detail)

Artist Statement

I AM ASKING WHETHER THE VISUAL INQUIRY CAN BE A RELATIONAL VEHICLE that builds community and honors place. I am noting that putting work in unlikely places affords the audience opportunities for an utterly fresh response. I am seeing that light and shadow, color and texture can nourish without telling a story. I am suspecting the object may not be the Art.

I create conditions/experiments that I then follow with great curiosity. This appears to involve ‘listening,’ and following the thread of what is observed. The materials I experiment with include plaster, clay, burlap, pigment, casein paint, and encaustic. Light, shadow, texture and relief, and the primacy of both color and gravity, continue to capture my attention.

When material and hand align, prayer emerges in the noting of it, and the body registers ‘True.’

—George Mason, *Journal Notes* 2016



About the Artist

GEORGE MASON has a background in ceramic architectural tile and his work is steeped in the exploration of materials and history. Richly textured and saturated with color, the largest of his “relief tapestries” are pieced together panels that occupy entire walls.

Mason began to combine encaustics with layered paper cut outs while teaching in Jerusalem, Indonesia, and India. Eventually, these works led to a multi faceted question that challenged the artist

to synthesize several divergent interests. He asked, “Is it possible to create large dimensional works, outside the frame and highly textural, that hang with authority yet surrender to gravity with grace?”

A recipient of 3 National Endowment for the Arts awards, and a founder of Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts, Mason has taught at Cranbrook Academy of Art, the College of Ceramics at Alfred University, Ohio State, U.C. Boulder, and Haystack.

In his home state of Maine, he has shown at The Portland Museum of Art, The Center for Maine Contemporary Art; with solo shows at The Farnsworth Museum, and the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Mason has completed 30 Percent For Art architectural ceramic projects for schools in Maine and New York City, including a commission for The Federal Reserve Bank in Atlanta, Georgia.

George Mason lives in Damariscotta Mills with Susan Weiser Mason. They have two grown children, Zoe and Aaron.



Acknowledgments

GEORGE MASON was the Artist in Residence with the Georges River Land Trust from May of 2015 through May 2016. He explored the pristine Georges River Watershed on his own and with members and friends who introduced him to their favorite spots. He is deeply grateful to those who shared with him in this way, and to the GRLT and the K2 Family Foundation for making this residency possible. The work of these organizations encourage all of us to be increasingly “susceptible to beauty”.

A special thanks goes to the Caldbeck Gallery for providing such a wonderful and lively venue for the final show, *A Year in the Watershed*.

*Art invites us to move beyond art;
to relinquish any presumption
that it's even possible to stand outside
the circle of inclusion.*

—George Mason, *Journal Notes 2016*



*This work is of the Watershed world, not about it.
A primary experience of color, texture, and gravity.*

*Not a recapitulation of place.
It's own place. It's own encounter.*

—George Mason, *Journal Notes* 2016

for more on George Mason, visit
www.georgemasonart.com