



MARGERY GOSNELL-QUA

A Day at the Beach

By Meg Daly

There is a lovely moment in Margery Gosnell-Qua's YouTube video about her painting, *Sailing Lesson, Windy*. As the camera traverses the pinks, blues, greens and other bright colors in Gosnell-Qua's abstract work, the artist takes the viewer inside her process. What started as a small watercolor study of sailboats on Tiana Bay became an enormous 66-by-82-inch oil painting about life's turbulence and beauty. "I've painted this composition in a number of sizes and media, which seemed calmer," Gosnell-Qua narrates. "At a certain point in the series as boats navigate on a turbulent sea, a ferocity emerged."

An exhibition of Gosnell-Qua's recent work is on display at George Billis Gallery in Fairfield, Connecticut, through July 30. The show includes an array of summer paintings—beachgoers, sunbathers and sailing. Set on Long Island, New York, the scenes are exuberant, brimming with relaxation and play.

Gallery owner George Billis says his clients respond to Gosnell-Qua's bold brushstrokes and lush coloration. "Her use of scale and her carefully thought-out compositions create pictures that express



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a sophisticated freshness," he says.

The artist has lived on Long Island her whole life. She knows the beaches and bays intimately. Her paintings sometimes feature her twin sons when they were teenagers, sailing or on duty as lifeguards. While the subject matter may be personal to Gosnell-Qua, the artworks are open-ended and accessible for all.

"I'm conscious of the universal as well as the personal in my paintings," she says. "The painting doesn't have to be of my boys, it's just that they were there."

Her sons are now adults and live in Denver. She paints them as a way of staying close to them, as in *Guards Resting*. In this luxuriant, energetic painting the guards are on equal footing with the rest of the beachgoers. Gosnell-Qua notes that what she intends to capture is what is in motion. Her process shifts from being about rendering an exact scene to interacting with the paint itself to see what it can convey.

For example, she may start with the stance of a figure. "But what about the paint strokes that run through his figure and run past him to make an after image?" she says.

Paint enables her to show what is moving, which is "everything," she says. "Air, people, the ocean, the light bouncing off the water as it comes in and out."

Gosnell-Qua prefers to work from small watercolor studies she does on site rather than photographs. She says a camera doesn't capture the color or depth that she needs to proceed with a larger work.

"You can't copy your study because the art isn't in the study," she says. "The study reminds you so you can extract the scene from your memory and stored senses."

Using her watercolor study as a guide, she will begin an oil painting but "not being too serious" with it. If she likes that version, she will start on a larger canvas. If she likes that she keeps going. There are breakthroughs along the way. For instance, a finished painting of sunbathers in conversation may only have been a small part of the original composition.

Gosnell-Qua is an artist's artist. Life and painting are completely intertwined for her. On road trips, when everyone else piles out of the car at a rest stop to stretch their legs, she gets out her paints. When she sees a landscape or moment she likes, she has to paint it.

"It's about being in love with the moment," she says. "And being so excited that you have to paint." ●

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Sailing Lesson,
Windy, oil on
canvas, 66 x 82"

2
Guards Resting, oil
on canvas, 36 x 36"

3
Beach Conversation,
oil on canvas,
36 x 36"

4
Sailing at Moriches
Bay, watercolor and
ink, 22 x 30"

George Billis Gallery 1700 Post Road • Fairfield, CT 06424
(203) 557-9130 • www.georgebillis.com