

TAMALIN BAUMGARTEN

# Island Light

**T**he Cuttyhunk Island Artists' Residency is held in a sprawling, 100-year-old house on an island off the southern coast of Massachusetts. In 1957, Tamalin Baumgarten's grandfather bought the house which had been an inn for many years. It has since returned to its former life. Tamalin founded the artists' residency in 2017 with the dedication "to providing artists the time and setting to refocus their energy on their creative process within a supportive community environment, while enriching the cultural vitality of Cuttyhunk Island."

Tamalin, herself, paints scenes of island life and its pristine white buildings in the luminous atmosphere of seaside light. "I aspire to leave out details," she says. "I can get at the essence of a scene more easily if details are left out. I try to hold onto a minimalist quality."

She paints from photographs, but with her long association with Cuttyhunk, she explains her paintings "are often inspired by memory. I might not be on the island when I'm painting. I have the feeling of the space memory of being there. I use a muted palette to get a more serious, pensive, introspective feeling as in Emily Dickinson's poetry.

"I don't want my paintings to be exact representations or copies of photographs. Abstracting is a way of getting a deeper feeling, more of the emotion behind the scene. The abstract elements are subtle, geometric forms that contribute to a dynamic composition."

She paints on smooth wood panels, the gessoed surfaced sanded to be almost like glass. She paints the gesso with a toned ground, light to dark, warm to cool depending on the subject. She allows the ground color to show through the many succeeding layers of transparent paint. At times, the entire sky in a painting can be the toned ground. She also paints with soft brushes to leave few brush strokes.

Her *Cupola Study*, however, was done in plein air with rapidly applied paint. The cupola of the Cuttyhunk Fishing Club is a sort of sundial. Tamalin, whose middle name is, appropriately, Soleil, comments





**1**  
*Meeting House Entry*,  
oil on panel, 6 x 8"

**2**  
*Sailboat Study no. 2*,  
oil on panel, 6 x 8"

**3**  
*Cupaola Study*, oil on  
panel, 5 x 5"

**4**  
*Window Light*, oil on  
panel, 12 x 16"

3



4

on the quality of sunlight on the island. "I'm drawn to the magic of light. On Cuttyhunk there's a lot of open space and no tall buildings to block the sun. You see it rising over the water in the east and setting over the water in the west. Sunlight hitting any object makes it more intriguing. When I look out from the inn at the cupola across the street I can tell the time of day when I see the shadows circulating around it."

The soft geometries of *Meeting House Entry* in the enveloping moist air evoke a feeling of being there—sturdy structures built among the fluidity of nature.

Her first exhibition at George Billis Gallery in Fairfield, Connecticut, opens August 17 with a reception from 4 to 7 p.m., and continues through September 30. ●

**George Billis Gallery** 1700 Post Road Fairfield, CT  
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