

America's take on Maine

By Dagney C. Ernest | Aug 28, 2013

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America Martin is pictured in a short Vimeo film.



ROCKLAND — For a third consecutive year, rising contemporary artist America Martin is coming from L.A. to Midcoast Maine for a show at Rockland's downtown Carver Hill Gallery. This time, she will be filling both floors with her big, bold paintings and drawings — and her subject matter is Maine.

“America's Maine,” which also includes images from collaborative cinematographers Ross Richardson and Rachel Elias, will open Friday, Aug. 30, at Carver Hill, 338 Main St. Martin will be on hand for an opening reception from 5 to 8 p.m., as well as for an artist's talk and Q&A session Saturday, Aug. 31, at 1 p.m. Refreshments will be served at both events.

The Colombian-American Martin grew up in Hollywood, first coming to New England, via a scholarship to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The previous eight years, she had apprenticed with Vernon Wilson of the Art Center College of Design in California, getting a foundation in the masters that informs her work. She had begun taking drawing lessons at age 9 — at which point, she had been working as a child actor for half a decade,

[Enlarge...](#) appearing in television and movies.

“We were poor growing up, and one day I saw a girl in beautiful clothes and when I asked about it, they told me, ‘she’s an actress.’ Well, I thought I’d like to have a dress like that too. My older brother had done some acting, and I tried it too,” she said.

At age 16, Martin “decided to fall in love with art.” Her acting had enabled her to help out her mother, and provide good schooling for herself. She devoted herself to art and it has become her life. Martin works in a studio in Silver Lake, a Central Los Angeles neighborhood that serves as a hub for the indie music scene. There she has room to explore ... and she needs it. Martin works large, with big strokes and bright color, and has done from the first time she had the space.

“My first studio was in a garage and I only had one wall. I had to wait for paintings to dry! Once I got the opportunity to have a larger studio, in 2006, I wanted to make everything as big as possible,” she said.

Martin said creating art for her is a real visceral experience — “It’s more fun when you use your whole arm, your whole body” — and that she considers herself very lucky to be able to do what she loves. Among her collectors are actors Danny DeVito, Kirsten Dunst, Ted Danson, Juliette Lewis, Simon Helberg and Giovanni Ribisi.

This has been a busy year that has included being a part of the spring Affordable Art Fair in New York City and showing this summer in California, New Mexico and now, Maine. A second book is in the works; her first, “Insouciance: A Retrospective In Print,” was published by Snail Press in 2010.

The work Martin is shipping across the country to Rockland was inspired by her explorations of Maine last summer, when Carver Hill owner Jana Halwick drove the artist around the area, introducing her to favorite places.

“I also rented a car and drove around and got lost! I went to Islesboro and I kept stopping every few yards to stare at something. Mainers are lucky to be living in such a beautiful spot,” she said.

Photos and short videos documented these explorations, something Martin is doing more with these days for an upcoming multimedia project about the people of L.A. She said she has always had a deep respect for people who work with their hands and especially found fishermen “really going at it, blow for blow with the seas” inspiring.

She also was impressed by the artists working on the Midcoast. She spent a long breakfast discussing art with Belfast’s Harold Garde; and is fascinated by Cushing’s Lois Dodd.

“I just love her work,” Martin said.

The paintings on canvas, on the first floor, and works on paper, on the second, that Martin will show at Carver Hill also are inspired by a certain palette that Martin absorbed from her Midcoast adventures.

“There are three, really: myriads of greens; the grays and blues; and also a sort of lilac,” she said.

Most of all, Martin said this new body of work is a reflection of her sense of the rhythm

and pace of life on the coast of Maine, very different from the West Coast and other places she has spent time.

“It’s an interesting thing; people in Maine are dialed right into the rhythm and the pace of the place they live their lives, more than into the things that they do in their lives ... I can’t wait to get back there,” she said.

“America’s Maine” will hang though Oct. 8. Current gallery hours are Mondays through Saturdays, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information, call 594-7745; or visit americamartin.com and carverhillgallery.com.

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Dagny has been providing Courier coverage of the local arts scene since 1985 and has helmed the multi-paper A&E section since it debuted in 2003. She has been a local performing artist, community and professional, for almost 30 years and spent a decade writing, producing and announcing on-air for several Midcoast radio stations. When not in the NewsNest, Dagny likes to be in motion.

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