

Maine Home

June 2012

+DESIGN



Timeless Design

The transformation of an
island carriage house

Designing for 4 generations
on Goose Rocks Beach

The winners of the 2012
AIA Maine Design Awards

+ The MH+D Home Show Guide

BY BRITTA KONAU

ELOQUENT OBSERVATION

The earliest known still lifes were found in ancient Egyptian tombs. The depicted objects were believed to materialize in the afterlife of the deceased. Over the centuries since, the still-life tradition has developed an intricate iconography of meaning and is still very much alive today. Painters Barbara Applegate, Stephanie Bartron-Miscione, and Tina Ingraham are part of a long line of artists working to reveal the secret life of objects.



BARBARA APPLGATE
STEPHANIE BARTRON-MISCIONE
TINA INGRAHAM



STEPHANIE BARTRON-MISCIONE

Stephanie Bartron-Miscione was born in Chicago and received an AA from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, as well as a BS and an MFA from the University of Oklahoma in Norman. She now divides her time between Brooklyn, New York, and Deer Isle. Her still lifes will be featured in a show opening June 21 at the Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, which represents her work. Bartron-Miscione also occasionally shows at the Gallery at Frenchman's Bay in Somesville.

Although Stephanie Bartron-Miscione now focuses on still lifes exclusively, there is just as much visual drama in her more recent work as there is in her painterly abstractions from the 1980s. Inspired by the casual still lifes of shells and beach stones so ubiquitous in houses along the coast, Bartron-Miscione arranges crustaceans, flowers, plants, and other objects selected for their association with coastal living to generate powerful images of her idea of Maine.

With the occasional help of a magnifying glass, the artist studies every last detail of her subjects. Working only with natural light, she uses graphite, colored pencil,

watercolor, gouache, pastel, pen and ink, and acrylic on paper to create extremely meticulous representations that she calls "slow realism." She succeeds at capturing the forces of nature and bringing them into the domestic sphere—not on a grand scale, but in the intimate details, such as the specks in a flower's petal or the varied shades of color in a lobster's shell. The artist also merges nature with her studio space in a literal way. Paying close attention to reflective surfaces, many of her objects incorporate a reflection of the artist's surroundings, as in *Very Cherry*. This watercolor captures not only the gleaming smoothness of the cherries' surface and the multiple shadows they cast but

also the reflection of the studio windows. "Still life has so many opportunities to say things with optics," Bartron-Miscione says. For her, the painting within a painting tells a second story, and a very personal one. For Bartron-Miscione, phenomena that she pays such close attention to in the studio—such as reflectivity, transparency, and translucency—also attain metaphorical significance. Timelessness and fragility are also values suggested by the texture and the relative softness or solidity of her subjects—all of them traditional still-life concerns that extend into life.