

In Oregon and Maine, some of the country's best craft artists are learning and plying their trades. At the Oregon College of Art and Craft, fiber student Cyan Bott created the perfect visual kickoff (right), *Heirloom (Betsy, Jasper, Dad, Me)*, 2006, made of hand and machine quilted cotton muslin and steel wool, for our travel from one coast to the other.

As far as their landscapes go, the two Portlands feel as if they were separated at birth: evergreens running toward the water, quiet faraway lakes, people dressed primarily in outdoor gear.

The two Portlands are far apart—about 3,000 miles apart, in fact. One looks right, toward Europe, one toward Asia and the Pacific Rim. One is lobster-themed, the other more about Dungeness crabs. They are both good places for good coffee and good locally brewed beer, and, as far as their respective landscapes go, they feel as if they were separated at birth: evergreens running toward the water, quiet faraway lakes, people dressed primarily in outdoor gear. Aside from the obvious resource-oriented labor similarities (lumber, fishing), they are also places where traditional crafts and new ones—and that heady combination of both—are everywhere.

The second Portland was named after the first, the second being Portland, Oregon. Asa Lovejoy and Francis Pettygrove owned a prime parcel in what would become downtown Portland. Pettygrove was from Portland, Maine, and Lovejoy was from Boston, Massachusetts. It's a famous and probably apocryphal story (and forgets the fact that the place was likely already named by the people who already lived there, the Multnomah and the Clackamas): to name the town to be they flipped a coin in 1845. Pettygrove won, obviously. As far as the similarities go, the lumber business was a driving force in the settlement of both places. In both Portlands, you look around and see rolling hills. You go to farmers markets and eat berries, blueberries in Maine—the smallest and tiniest and most beautiful blueberries—and, in Oregon, marionberries, the larger-than-a-raspberry purple blackberry that is everywhere in the summer. You go to coffee places that were the forerunners of those fueling today's coffee mania, that were once small and local, and in some instances still are—like Stumptown Coffee, where they brew the stuff as if the free world depended on each cup.

They are also both far away, a key similarity that also points to their key difference. On one side, Portland, Oregon, is an outpost, as far as United States geography goes: the first big city after Saint Paul, Minnesota, if you are traveling west from Portland, Maine, and the only major city between San Francisco and Seattle, an 800-mile distance. Likewise, Portland, Maine, is at the southern beginning of the Maine coast, that last stretch before Canada and the Maritime Provinces, which are like another universe in terms of distance. They are far in different ways, though. Portland, Maine, is not as far away as Portland, Oregon, from the metropolises—four hours from Boston, eight from New York—but it feels much

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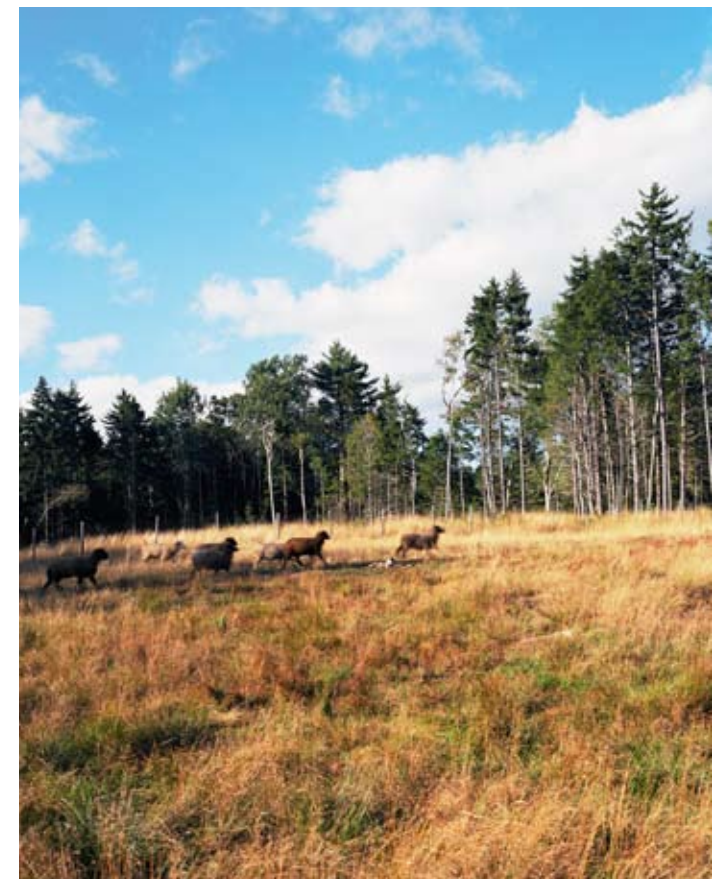


Opposite Page: At the WoodenBoat School in Brooklin, Maine, students and teachers have been gathering for the past 27 summers in appreciation of wooden boat building. With faculty like builder Harry Bryan, the school has become one of the world's top maritime educational centers.

This Page: Angela Adams (below left) has been creating textiles, glassware and furniture with her husband, Sherwood Hamill, in Maine for most of her life. While her work has found its way far from Portland, it always carries some of the rugged Atlantic coast with it (bottom left).

Handwoven Swans Island Blankets (below right) are created from fleeces from Corriedale sheep raised on farms all over Maine. The fleeces for winter blankets come from a small flock of untended sheep on Nash Island (bottom right) that are shorn each June to insure softness and strength.

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farther, given its population (64,000), and given the fact that the roads of Maine are so roundabout, running around coastal coves, around hills running in the long northwesterly stretches. You can't get there from here, goes the Maine saying, and even with a newish superhighway it's still blessedly true.

Angela Adams—a Maine-born designer, who with her husband, Sherwood Hamill, works in Portland and lives on an island off the coast—explains Maine's preponderance in craft: “We have been building boats and houses, quilting, hooking rugs, knitting sweaters and socks, and stitching bait bags for the lobster traps for generations. Mainers are very resourceful, and we like to work with our hands. Most of us spent our childhoods tinkering around in boathouses or workshops with our parents and grandparents.” In the past few years, Adams and Hamill's businesses—furniture, custom rugs, paper goods and glassware—have boomed, and their work now paradoxically often takes them far from Portland; some of their pieces are no longer even made in Portland, but they still manage to maintain what you might call a homemade confidence, whether they are working in wood or 1950s-esque plastics.

Distance insulates the craftsman. You can feel it driving

farther north along the coast, stopping in Rockport and Rockland, to look at furniture and boatbuilding, stopping outside of Belfast, where at Swans Island Blankets you can watch the looms spin, the fibers dyed naturally, the wool of the sheep who graze untended right now on Nash Island, a long boat ride from the mainland. Sedgwick, on the edge of the mainland, feels like the edge of the craftsman's world—at the Reach Road Gallery, for instance, the printmaking shop and home of Holly Meade, and at the one-man publishing house, Pushcart Press, where the publisher, Bill Henderson, himself built a three-story tower on a blueberry hill and lived to write a book about it. In the next town, the little village of Brooklin, onetime home of E. B. White, you can sense it in the studio of Sihaya Hopkins, a maker of glass beads who had moved from the Alaskan bush to Maine. Her parents had wanted her to experience civilization—and only to Alaskans could Maine be anything approaching the rat race. And at the WoodenBoat School, overlooking Eggemoggin Reach, watching boat builders watching boat builders.

Insulate comes from the Latin word for island, insula, and leaving Eggemoggin Reach in search of the famous Haystack Mountain ▶

This Page: Eck Follen (below left) is a studio furniture maker, professor at the Rhode Island School of Design and a member of Haystack's Board of Trustees who can also often be found teaching courses there. Architect Edward Larrabee Barnes designed the

Haystack campus in Deer Isle in 1960, and to this day his studios provide shelter from the foggy Maine coast (bottom left) and continued inspiration. At the Dowstudio gallery (below right) not far from Haystack, Ellen Weiske and Carole Ann Fer open their doors to artists

who work in all mediums (top right). At Haystack, special retreat sessions like New Works (opposite page) are held that encourage people who have taught at at the school to continue their making. The sessions are limited to 55 people and provide open studios and

technicians to assist with projects. Painter Joel Carreiro (front), fiber designer and weaver Rebecca Goodale (far left), painter Susan Webster (middle left), calligrapher Jan Owen (middle right), writer Dennis Gilbert (back left) and painter Alan Bray (back right) all

took advantage of this offering in the fall of 2007. The teachers' varied backgrounds point to Haystack's (and Maine's) unique approach to both education and life.

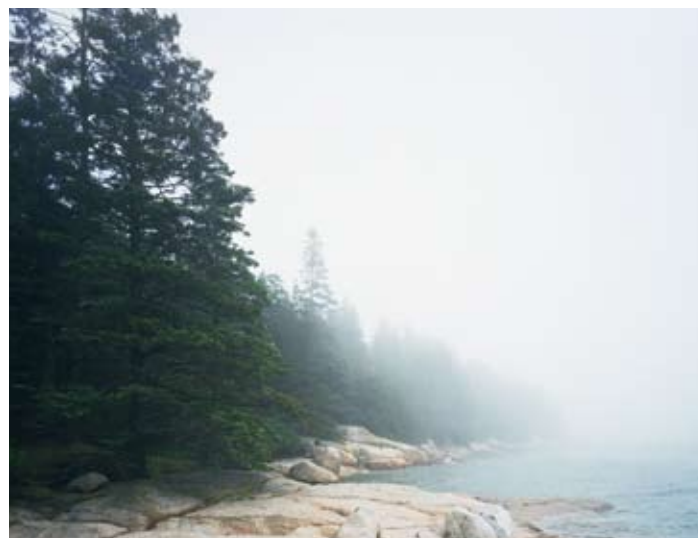
School of Crafts on Deer Isle, it all makes sense. Past an old granite quarry, past beautiful coves, then up a forested hill that looks out on the litter of islands off the coast, people stay at Haystack for two-week sessions in the little, anonymous cedar-shingled buildings. Touring the studios, you see a metal crafting session led by Wendy Ramshaw from England, who was elected Royal Designer for Industry in her homeland, and in 2003, honored as Commander of the British Empire for services to art. Then a sculpture class led by John Garrett, who had taken his students to the Stonington dump to acquire materials. Or if you timed it right, you could have sat in on a recent lecture by Lewis Hyde, a professor at Kenyon and Harvard, on the beauty of doing the same thing over and over. With tree-cornered views of the islands of Penobscot Bay, the place itself makes you feel qualified to make something even if you've never felt qualified before.

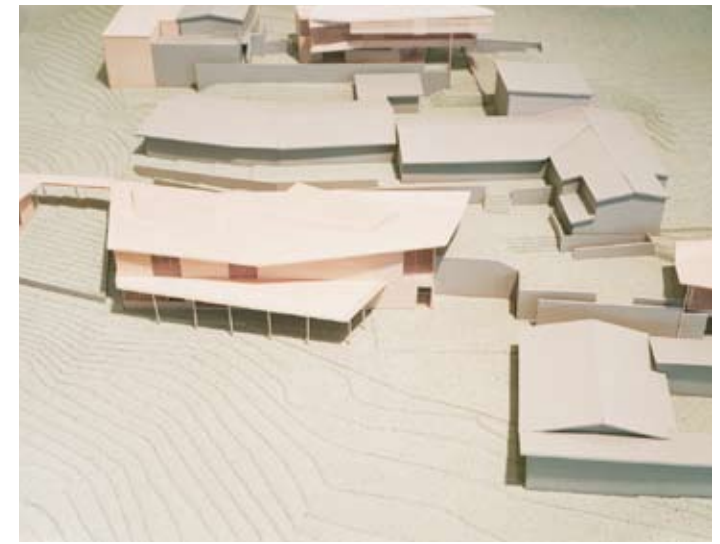
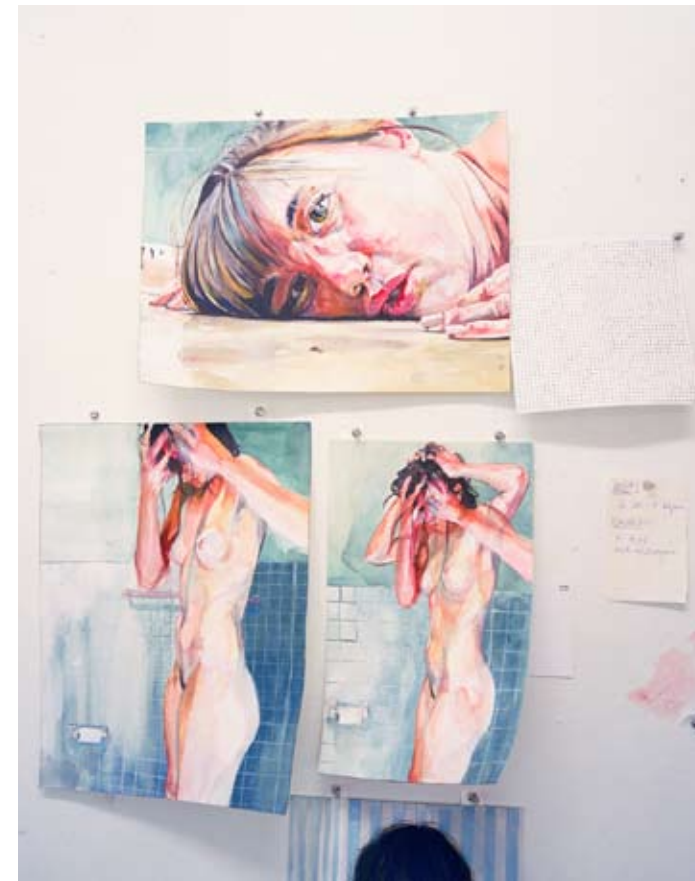
On the way back, in the little town of Deer Isle, there is Dowstudio, a craft gallery run by Carole Ann Fer and Ellen Weiske, two Maine transplants—a Boston-born potter and a Detroit-raised jeweler, respectively, who put this sense of the self-sufficient in perspective. "It's that fine line between surrounding yourself with

stuff and finding things with meaning," Fer says. "We came up here having fallen in love with the area, with the island—it's a visual response from the heart and the spirit."

On the other side of the country, in Portland, Oregon, any talk of almost anything must start with the food—even (and maybe especially) any discussion of craft. Craft is everywhere in Portland—in its most explicit versions, such as at the monthly craft fairs on Sunday in the basement ballroom of the ultracool Doug Fir Lounge. But it's also at the farmers market: beautiful Italian artichokes, boxes of mushrooms that are as delicate as origami (maitake) and as big as Maine lobsters (lobster mushrooms), and the guy from Viande Meats & Sausage with the pheasant and porcini pâté, the duck and orange pâté, each exquisitely composed.

Food matters, and Portland's place as a craft hotbed is a result of the long-standing attention to the quality of everyday life. People have taken the attention to materials and skills and applied it to the workaday—in areas ranging from bike lanes to locally grown organic greens. The Zen attention to the materials of daily life in a big city has attracted much of the nation's craft community. Thus, the Museum of Contemporary Craft in its new home, ▶





OREGON a 10-minute walk from the farmers market, with its exhibit, “Craft in America,” culled from the recent PBS series of the same name, where you’d find a quote from, of all people, Jimmy Carter: “For me craft recognizes and communicates so much about us as a country—our identity and our legacy. Handmade quilts and coverlets, pottery, furniture, glass, jewelry, and religious objects are as important to our society as the writings of our historians, poets and statesmen. They are a record of who we are as a nation.”

But the museum isn’t in a barn. It is, like Portland’s craft scene, contemporary, angular, glass—in a word, cool, which speaks to the kind of craft that is happening here. Craft is not knitting alone in Portland. It’s the Bullseye Gallery—part of the Bullseye Glass Company—showing artists like Jun Kaneko, Ted Sawyer and Sylvie Vandenhoeck. It’s the Laura Russo Gallery showing artists like Tom Cramer. Or it could be the Pulliam Deffenbaugh Gallery showing work by ceramist Adam Silverman. Whatever it might be, “It’s not macramé,” says Jeremy Kaye, a creative director at Ziba Design, “but it’s not so slick that they’ve forgotten the materials and the process.” Ziba is a design and consulting firm in Portland that has been assisting the Oregon College of Art and Craft as they

reinvestigate their mission in their 100th year. There will be new buildings on campus by Charles Rose Architects, but there is also a rededication to the theme, at a time when a lot of schools are dropping craft as a degree, dropping the word even from their name. Some of the school’s potential new slogans include: Craft is about the making and We will lead the conversation about craft. “In order to break the rules you have to understand the process first,” Kaye says. “Frank Gehry couldn’t create what he creates if he didn’t understand the materials and the process,” he says. “It’s about working from the inside out.”

“The Pacific Northwest really recognizes the importance of materiality,” OCAC’s president, Bonnie Laing-Malcolmson explains. The reason, she says, has to do with Portland’s relationship with the outdoors. “It’s just easy to be close to wood and clay and just that sense that there’s a history of Native American craft in the Columbia basin.” The students see craft as an end and sometimes as a means. “Students here are really interested in learning craft to make art,” she says. She stresses location. “You can be in this place where you feel like you’re on a beach working your tail off, but in the next second you can be at this very urban gallery opening.” ▶

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Oregon College of Art and Craft student Jonathan Langston poses in front of the just-underway Charles Rose Architects additions (opposite page). The architect’s model of the structure is above (top right). Artist-in-residence programs help the school stay current by hosting artists like

Annie Heisey (paintings, top left). With the help of Ziba Design’s Elizabeth Blades and Jeremy Kaye (above left), the school is creating a new logo and bringing a new outlook to craft in the 21st century, rededicating itself to the field while others abandon it. OCAC’s president,

Bonnie Laing-Malcolmson (above), stands in front of past artist-in-residence Cynthia Davis’s woven piece made from reassembled maps.



Bullseye Glass Company employee Walter Drake (top left) often stops by the Bullseye Gallery to see his handiwork, as used in pieces like Jun Kaneko's kiln-formed glass installation *Mythology*, 2006. At the Museum of Contemporary Craft's "Form Animated"

exhibition (left), Karen Aqua's *Yours for the Taking* was created with ceramic artist Jeanée Redmond using stop-motion and drawn animation. Portland's Stumptown Printers (top) and Ira Ryan Cycles (above) help maintain the city's thriving independent spirit. Back at the

Bullseye Gallery (opposite page) Kaneko's kiln-formed glass installation *Africa Reflection, Blue, Red, Yellow*, 2007, keeps visitors transfixed.

In both Portlands, downsizing your job—i.e., not getting a corporate gig—is still considered upsizing your life. In these two coastal outposts, it's easy to find people who embody this philosophy. People like Kevin Sandri, who plays guitar with Foghorn Stringband, an old-time band that has led the old-time music revival in Portland—that is, music making via traditional music making techniques. A chef as well as a musician, Sandri is in the process of starting up a food cart, and he talks excitedly about Sicilian street food as if it were a new hedge fund. The printing—menus, logos, etc.—is being handled by Stumptown Printers, the printing press co-owned by Foghorn's bass player, Brian Bagdonas, who with his partner, Rebecca Gilbert, and brother, Eric, run an offset printing place with nothing digital about it. The Foghorns plastic-free CD covers are hand-made marvels, reminiscent of the LP past, but cheaper. For the craftspeople, for the printers, for the musicians, for a guy cooking with whatever food is in from the local farms, it's all about what's available. It's all about taking what's already out there and making something good out of it, which is that ultimate craft, come to think of it, of living—something the two Portlands not only understand but exercise. +

Gimme more Maine!

- www.angelaadams.com
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Gimme more Oregon!

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