



SEA & SKY & SOLITUDE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Alexandra de Steiguer

Pucker Gallery | Boston

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS ARE HAND-PRINTED BY THE ARTIST ON GELATIN SILVER PAPER.
DATED TEXT EXCERPTS ARE FROM THE ARTIST'S WINTER JOURNAL, WHILE ON THE ISLES OF SHOALS.



17 DECEMBER, 2011

... I just stood looking out over the sea, leaning on my tripod like a staff, feeling so close to everything. Sometimes you just don't want to disturb those moments with an activity — no matter how interesting.

COVER: Shoals — Rock Pool #1, 1998 | 7.5 x 9" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS13
ABOVE: Shoals — Rocks and Water #24, 2006 | 14 x 18" image; 23 x 27" mat | AS50



SEA & SKY & SOLITUDE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Alexandra de Steiguer

FORMED CENTURIES AGO AS A ROUGH, ROCKY outpost for early European fishing camps, the Isles of Shoals has a rich history. Since the early 1600s, thousands have been drawn to its shores — explorers, fisher folk, pirates, artists, scientists, clergy, philosophers, politicians, and more — people from all walks of life and all ages.

As they are merely nine islands — none larger than a New England farmstead — being “on-island” feels like being in a separate world, with the “real” world laying six nautical miles away. For the last century, the not-for-profit Star Island Corporation has welcomed people to gather annually on Star Island, living and meeting in twenty-nine historic buildings. Surrounded by open ocean, teeming with wildlife, its landscape and seascapes unique and inspiring, Star Island exists to free all who come to renew their spirituality, explore matters of consequence, and gain knowledge about the world as it might ideally be.

During the summer months, thousands of guests — individuals and families — form and re-form a community, strengthening their connection to one another and to something within themselves as they explore the arts, natural history, international affairs, religious education, yoga, contra dancing and more.

And then they leave, bringing a part of the Shoals' magic back to their off-island worlds. The islands are closed-up for winter.

And this is when Alexandra de Steiguer arrives. Alex has been Star Island's winter caretaker for over seventeen years, keeping vigilant watch over what many have come to call their “Spirit's Home.” And she takes photographs.

Much about the Isles of Shoals is only fully in focus during the winter months, and I can feel how well Alex captures the essence of that. While she is in residence, the only traces of people are fond memories and bright hopes, but those traces are somehow an evocative part of the island, even in the middle of winter. And just as the time of year has no dominion over that spirit, the Isles' rugged winter beauty has a similar way of infusing the summer months with wonder. Chronology is obscured, and Alex's works capture this sense of timelessness in telling ways.

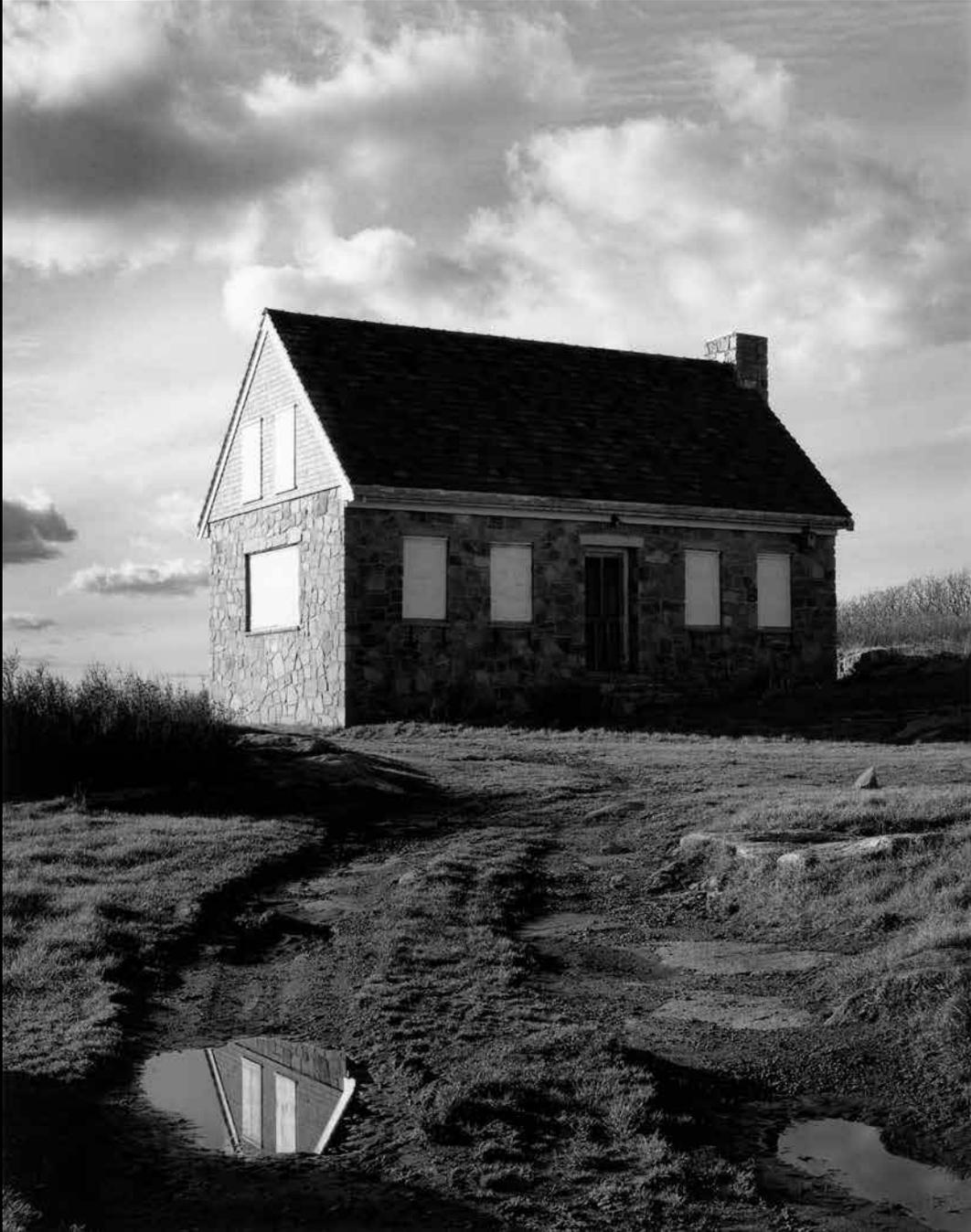
Winter at the Shoals is a magical time, alternately tempestuous or thick with the quiet peace of solitude. In a sense, Alex carries Star's century-old tradition of summer-time philosophical and spiritual inquiry into the amazing and unique world of Star's winter — in her solitude keeping alive a flame of thought which will be rekindled into a roaring blaze by the larger community with every coming summer. Her photographs are pure expression of Star Island's spirit and its timeless mystery.

—Joe Watts

Chief Executive Officer, Star Island Corporation



The Sea Exhales, Star Island, 2008 | 9.5 x 7" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS32
It Flew over Lunging Island, 2008 | 7.5 x 9.5" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS31



6 DECEMBER, 2013

I don't like to make the subject of a photograph into an abstract that viewers can then interpret any way that they like. Instead, my subject is exactly what it is, and to me that is constantly fascinating, constantly unique and — though recognizable — ultimately some part of it will always remain unknowable.

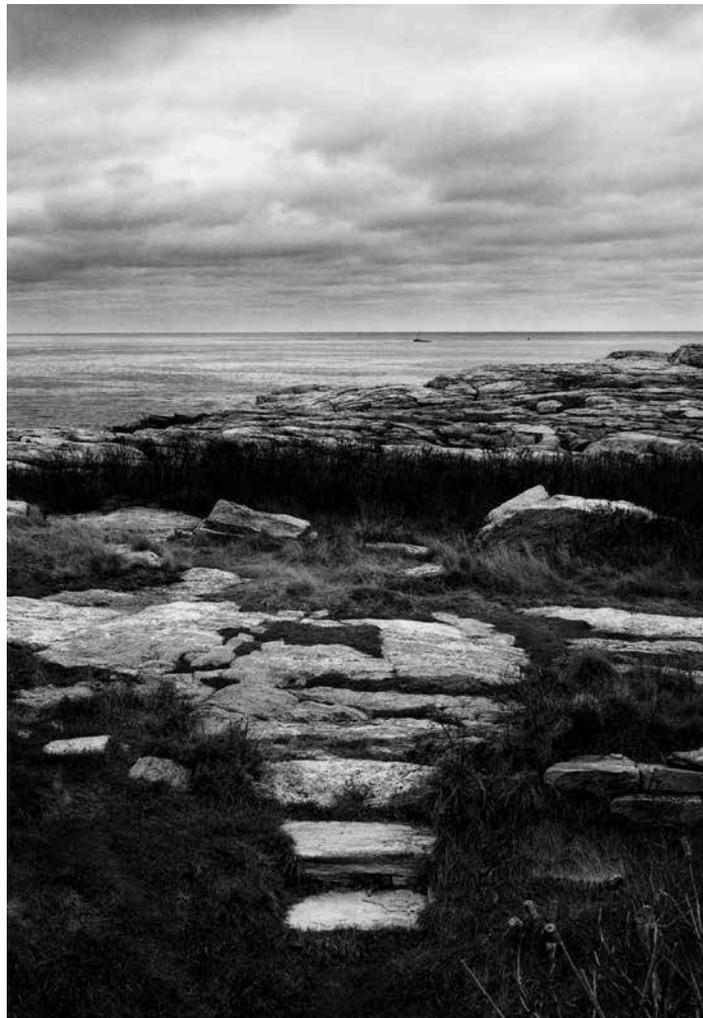
Vaughan Cottage, 2009 | 9.5 x 7.5" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS8



28 JANUARY, 2009

After listening to all the sounds for a while, it's funny how clear everything looks when you finally open your eyes.

Front over Smuttynose, 2008 | 9.25 x 7.25" image, 18 x 14" mat | AS21



Far and Farther, 2004 | 6 x 9.5" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS16
Redemption, 2003 | 9.25 x 6.5" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS20



Windblown #5, Self Portrait, Star Island, 2006 | 9 x 7" image; 18 x 14" mat | ASI5
Shoals — Breakwater, 1998 | 7.25 x 9" image; 14 x 18" mat | ASI



28 NOVEMBER, 2005

Every now and then I like to think about my own finiteness, because it makes me feel more awake, and strangely... less limited.



12 FEBRUARY, 2008

Funny how birds know just when to flap and when to glide. Gliding affords more time to look about. I think I spend winters gliding and the rest of the year flapping.

Still Life Standing, 2004 | 8.75 x 7.5" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS10



Shoals — Rocks and Water #16, 2001 | 8 x 7.5" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS7
Southeast Point, Star Island, 2003 | 6.75 x 8.25" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS26

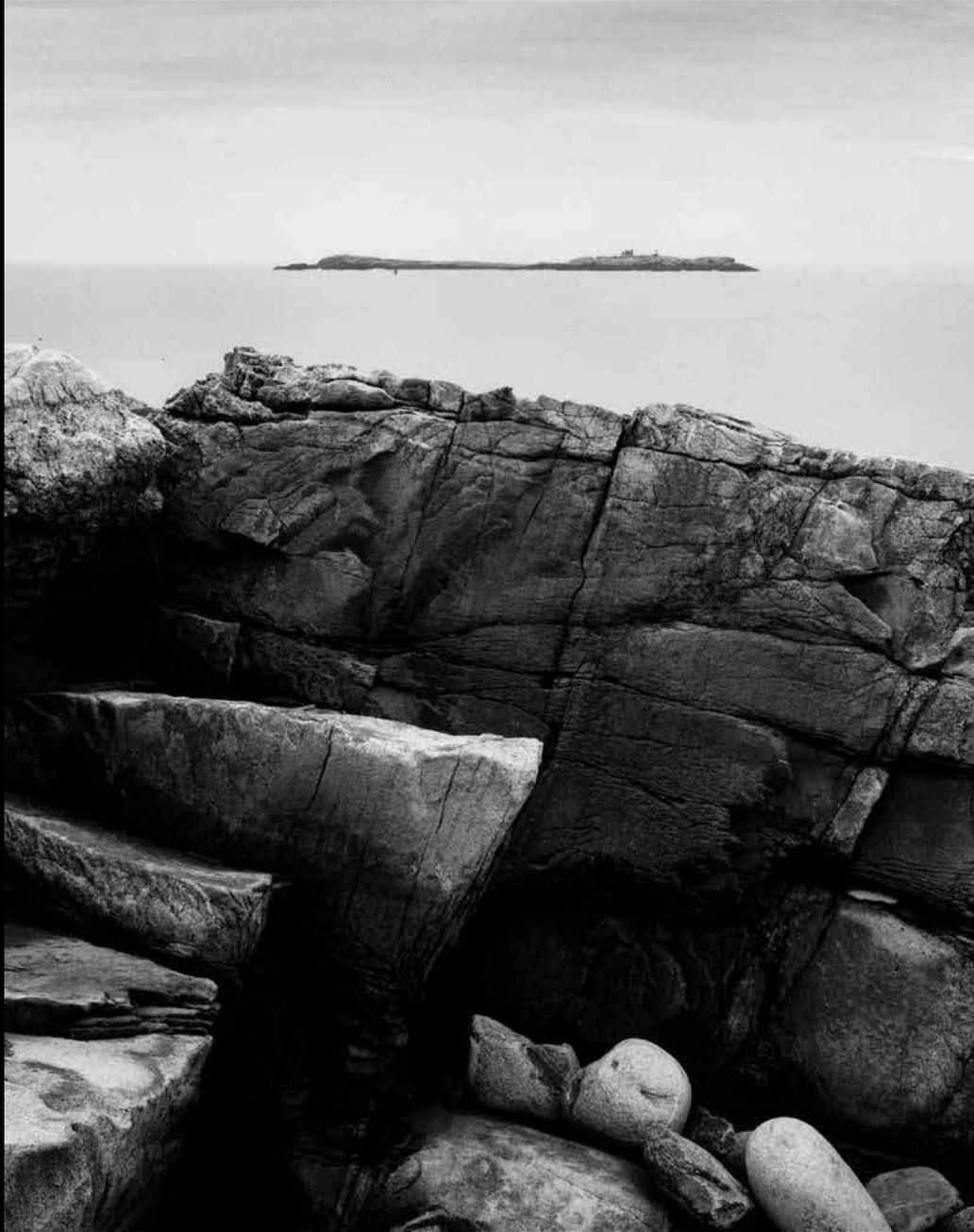


Haley House #2, Smuttynose Island, 2005 | 9.5 x 6.75" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS25
Windblown #4, Star Island, 2005 | 7 x 7" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS36



27 JANUARY, 2012

Clouds of spray pop up behind Cedar and then fall slowly away. It never moves as fast as you'd think drops of seawater would move. I wonder if your state of being can cause gravity to have a greater or lesser effect accordingly? Sometimes it seems so. I think time is similarly effected. One day they will discover that time, gravity, attention, and attitude are all closely tied up with each other in meaningful ways...



16 JANUARY, 2007

It's a whole, absolute, and complete set of islands — all to myself. It's rugged and wild and fearsome, and it's soft and flowing with sea smoke, enshrouded in its own world. And it's mysterious, and it feels like home. There's something so right about it all. It's complete opposites and everything in between, total chaos and sweet harmony.



Storm Wave #2, Star Island, 2008 | 7.25 x 7" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS34
Sea Smoke and Wave, 2003 | 7.5 x 9.5" image; 14 x 18" image | AS23



Tree, Star Island, 2006 | 9 x 7.5" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS33
Time Layered, 2005 | 7.5 x 9.5" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS19



18 JANUARY, 2014

Silence is always deeper when I'm alone. I'm just one person away from not being here at all.



17 DECEMBER, 2013

We can never actually see the big picture — it stretches back through time to a possible beginning, it stretches forward again and outward, leaving us in the dust and the distance. It can never be fully seen. But sometimes — very rarely, but in small, incredible moments — it can be felt.



Juniper, Star Island, 2000 | 6.5 x 6.5" image; 14 x 15.5" mat | AS45
Stories: Chapter 10, 2010 | 7.25 x 7.25" image; 14 x 15.5" mat | AS47



Shack, Cedar Island, 2002 | 7 x 6.75" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS42
East Ledges, Star Island, 2009 | 7.5 x 9.25" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS17



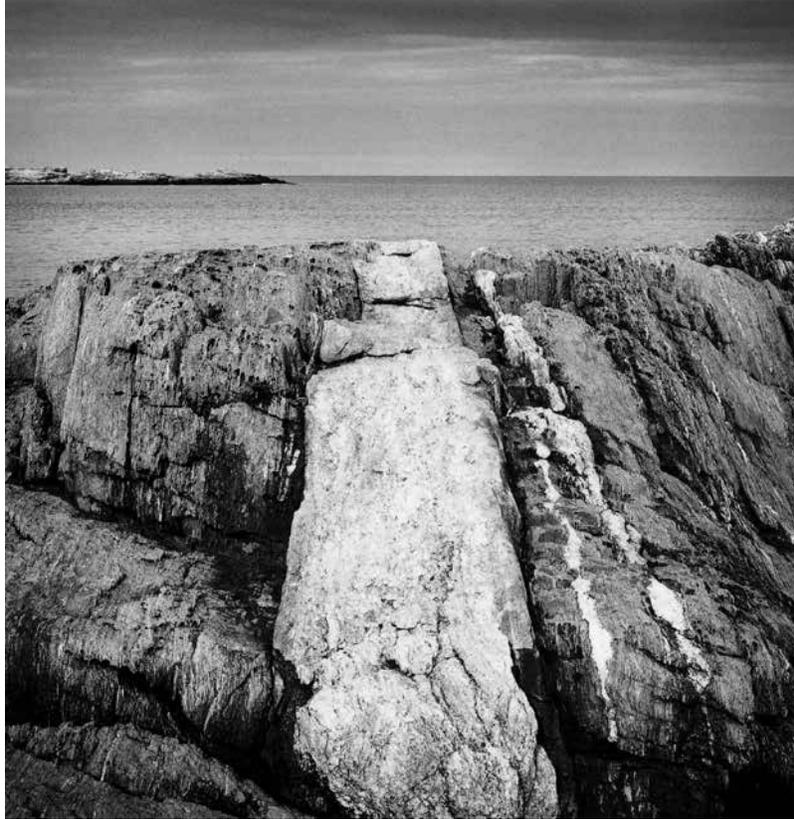
25 DECEMBER, 2011

I never ever do a scene like this justice with my camera. Each time I look up from the ground-glass after carefully composing something, the full scene hits me like a ton of beauty, and my little composed snippet seems so small and un-impactful. It's not even "the finger pointing to the moon." It's more the hangnail on the finger pointing to the moon. And that's to take nothing away from what's in front of my lens, it's just that my lens narrows its context, its all-important context.



26 JANUARY, 2007

Over time, I discovered that my images are more about connection and less about isolation. I almost always include that bit of sea or sky, that distance that puts the object in context. Isn't it strange that isolating myself allows me to see and feel the connections more strongly...



To the Edge, 2005 | 7.5 x 7.25" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS35
Shoals — Rocks and Water #22, 2004 | 7.5 x 7.5" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS39



House and Shed #5 — Shoals, 2004 | 7.5 x 9.5" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS30
Windblown #1, 2004 | 7.25 x 7.25" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS41



17 DECEMBER, 2011 | *I dreamed of islands and then never woke up.*

Island Path, Star Island, 2006 | 9 x 7.5" image; 18 x 14" mat | AS11



13 FEBRUARY, 2011

I'm in the zone. The alone zone. Rain patters against the windows and streaks downward. The wind whistles softly, hauntingly, the harbor is dark gray, the mottled forms of geese wander the wet grass.



Wind Works, 2001 | 6.5 x 6.75" image; 14 x 15.5" mat | AS43
Stories: Chapter 15, 2010 | 7.25 x 7.25" image; 14 x 15.5" mat | AS48



Stories: Chapter 8, 2010 | 7 x 7" image; 14 x 15.5" mat | AS46
Emergent, 2003 | 7 x 7" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS40



17 DECEMBER, 2011

For so long I've been sitting here, simply observing, thoughts coming and going like gusts of wind. A gull eats a fish it has found inexplicably on the lawn, like it has stumbled upon treasure, finally swallowing it whole — straight on — after first checking all the angles. Ducks and purple sandpipers vie for a spot on the same low-tide rocks. The sharp wind-gusts slowly change direction across the harbor; south giving way to west, and the foghorn on White gets louder. I feel so still, and centered, as if these things sustain me as much as my breath, my beating heart.



19 JANUARY, 2014

That's one of the pleasures of being alone – you can lose yourself, there's no one to point out the fact of you.



Shoals — Rocks and Water #19, 2002 | 7 x 6.5" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS37
Cloven, 2001 | 7 x 6.5" image; 15.5 x 14" mat | AS38



BIOGRAPHY

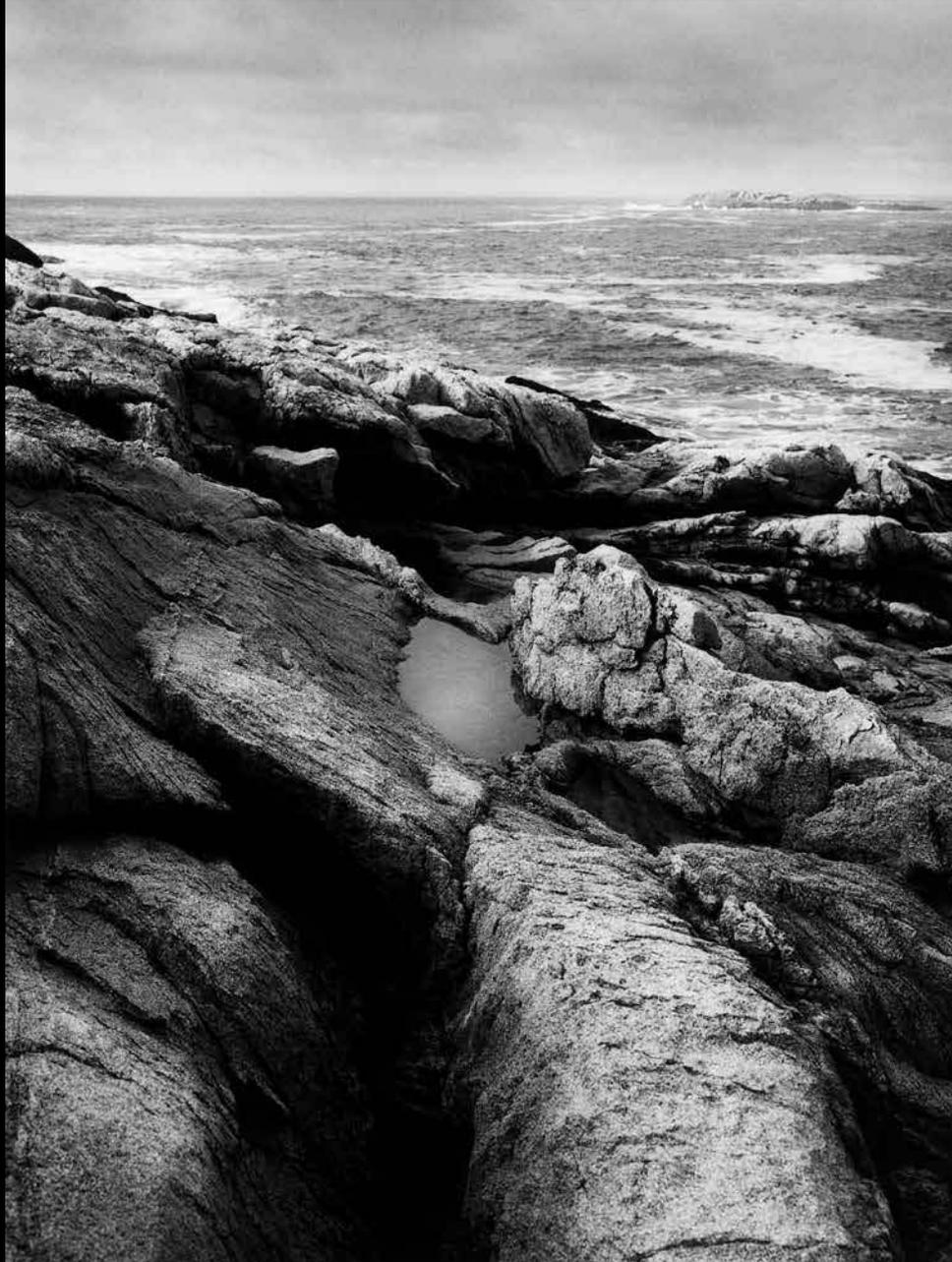
Alexandra de Steiguer

Alex first began photographing while crewing aboard research and educational ships, starting with a stint on an old barkentine out of Gloucester, Massachusetts. For nine years, countless sea-miles and many memorable storms (the “Perfect Storm” of 1991 included), she variously worked as bosun or deckhand, or studied marine biology and oceanography. Initially moved to merely chronicle the beauty of the experience, Alex soon became inspired to enter into a comprehensive self-study of art, eventually discovering expressions of her own home-grown philosophies in the work of other artists and thinkers, particularly in that of the Romantics and Transcendentalists, and within the philosophical traditions of the Far East.

For the past eighteen years Alex has been photographing the Isles of Shoals in winter. Closing up her tiny, solar-powered home in the woods of New Hampshire, she moves nine miles off the coast and onto a small group of rocky islands in the stormy North Atlantic. There, as the winter caretaker, she is the island’s sole resident for five months. Her images pay tribute to the wild elements that claim the Isles’ shores and reflect connections within the natural world, and the transitory and humbling nature of our residence in it.

Her work has been exhibited in galleries throughout New England, and she is a two-time artist fellow of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. Alex creates her images using medium-format film and personally hand-prints each image in her traditional darkroom.

Self Portrait and the Sea, 1999 | 6.25 x 9.25" image; 14 x 18" mat | AS14



2 DECEMBER, 2011

I could feel the soft, chill breeze against my side, how my legs were tucked beneath me there on the roof, how I was looking outward from these eyes. I somehow imagine that this is how animals are at all times — highly aware of their environment, and of themselves — physically — within it, their relationship to it. I think that they are more physically aware of being alive than we are. We understand it, but they seem to know it.



9 JANUARY, 2004

*The sea, like a witch's cauldron,
exhaled the spirits of the night.*



ARTIST STATEMENT

Alexandra de Steiguer

NINE MILES OFF THE COAST OF MAINE AND NEW HAMPSHIRE, THE ISLES OF SHOALS ARE wind worn, wave-washed, and completely deserted for New England's five coldest months when they are my home. I am the winter caretaker and have spent eighteen winters living alone among the islands.

The sea sweeps along the rocks at the tide's dark edge, softening and blurring their contours. Though ancient, the high ledges carry lightly the weight of time, spreading it throughout centuries of incremental wear.

I live here insignificantly. But the effect of this experience upon me and my work as an artist is oceanic. Impossible to contain, it courses through my images, journal entries, composed songs, poetry, and most recently, a book. After so many winters on the island it's not surprising that all of my work seems to point toward the same indescribable thing — what the Romantics would see as the sublimity of vast open space, of the sea, of time itself, and what that perspective might mean to us.

In winter, with nothing to tie it to a certain age, my storm-swept rock in the sea becomes an island of possibility, of grand scope. It is a place that hints at the bigger picture.

Looking Seaward, Self Portrait, Star Island, 2013 | 10.25 x 13.5" image; 18 x 22" mat | AS4

Credits: Design: Leslie Anne Feagley | Editors: Destiny M. Barletta and Tess Mattern
© 2015, Pucker Gallery | Printed in China by Toppan Leefung Printing Co.

PUCKER GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1967 BOSTON

PUCKER GALLERY

240 Newbury Street, 3rd floor

Boston, MA 02116

Phone: 617.267.9473

Fax: 617.424.9759

E-mail: contactus@puckergallery.com

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Please visit www.puckergallery.com to view current and past exhibition catalogues, experience audio tours, and subscribe to the *Artwork of the Week* and *Pottery of the Week* e-mail lists.

GALLERY HOURS

Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM

Sunday 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM

We offer one free hour of validated parking at the 200 Newbury Street Garage. The garage driving entrance is located on Exeter Street between Newbury and Boylston Streets. The nearest MBTA stops are Copley or Hines Convention Center on the Green Line.

Pucker Gallery is a member of the Boston Art Dealers Association and the New England Appraisers Association.

SEA & SKY & SOLITUDE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Alexandra de Steiguer*



DATES:

16 May 2015
through 12 July 2015

OPENING RECEPTION:

16 May 2015
3:00 to 6:00 PM

The public is invited to attend
and the artist will be present.

Haley House #1, Smuttynose Island, 1999
9.5 x 13.25" image; 18 x 22" mat | AS6