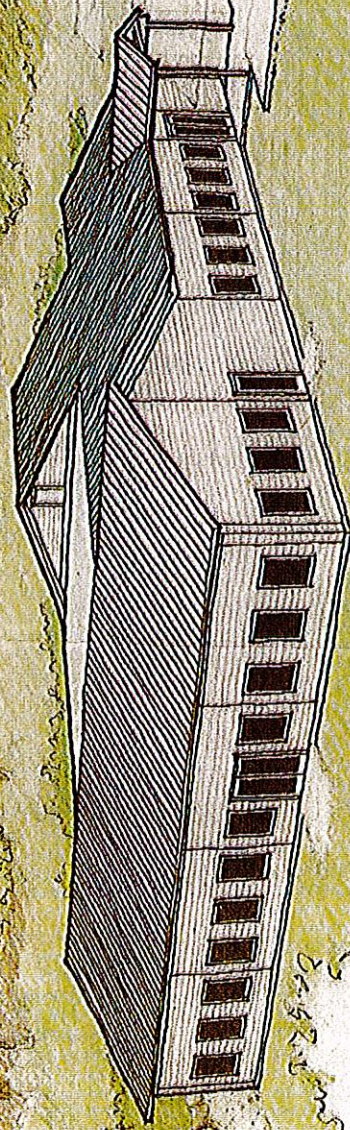




Watershed Center
for the Ceramic Arts

An artist rendering of the Windgate Studio, from architect Jane Gleason of Greywork, LLC of Massachusetts.

Watershed's moment

The Edgecomb ceramic arts center is taking advantage of inactivity on campus to move forward with its master plan to create a new year-round studio.

By BOB KEYES
Staff Writer

When people describe an old barn as rustic, that often means drafty, damp and falling down.

That was certainly the case with the old studio at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Edgecomb, which before becoming a gathering place for artists, served as a gathering place for chickens. It was a chicken barn before it was a ceramic studio, and despite substantial improvements over the years, it was always a rustic old barn at heart, uninsulated with gravel and dirt floors and drafty windows and walls. The weather was the same inside as out, and mosquitos thrived on the blood of artists.

The old two-story studio is gone, taken down this fall with the absence of activity on campus because of the pandemic. The beehive kiln remains, a cultural relic from the days when the Watershed site was home to a brick-making operation in the 1970s. But new buildings are rising, and when resident artists arrive in 2021 (pending the pandemic), they will have a 5,000-square-foot year-round studio with easy access to raw materials, kilns, a glaze room, plaster room and spray booth, all on the same level – and with cement floors, weather-tight windows and walls and a modern air-filtration system.

"It is going to be a facility designed for this day and age that we are in, to keep clay particles out of people's lungs, and other things, too," said Lynn Duryea, one of three artists who helped establish Watershed in 1986. "This will allow Watershed to move in a wonderful new direction. We have every

intention of keeping our core mission and core residencies in the summer and fall, but we would like to provide a space for artists working on larger commissions and larger projects. It will allow us to operate year-round, with more guests and more workshops. We've never been open during the school year. Now we'll be able to bring students in for visits and field trips in the winter."

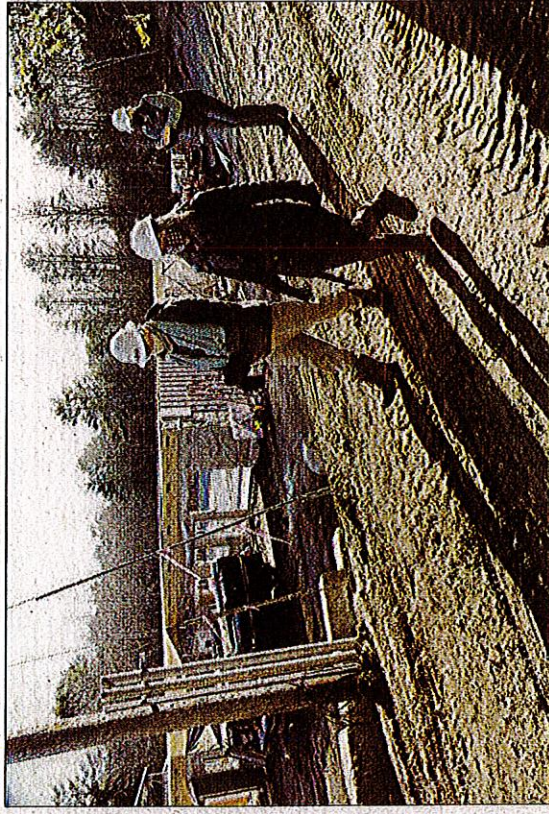
What will not change is Watershed's commitment to resident artists and the community that has grown around Watershed's 35 years. Watershed started small and remains small, with 15 artists in residence for two weeks at a time, in spring and summer. In the fall, the residencies are smaller in number and longer in duration. "We're small-scale, and we intend to keep it that way," said Duryea, who was among a group of about 10 artists that first year. "At Watershed, people who are just out of grad school could be working next to legends in our field. That is unusual."

There is room for 24 artists, housed in six buildings, connected by catwalks. The cabins were built in 2001-02 and insulated in 2014. They are heated and ready for year-round use.

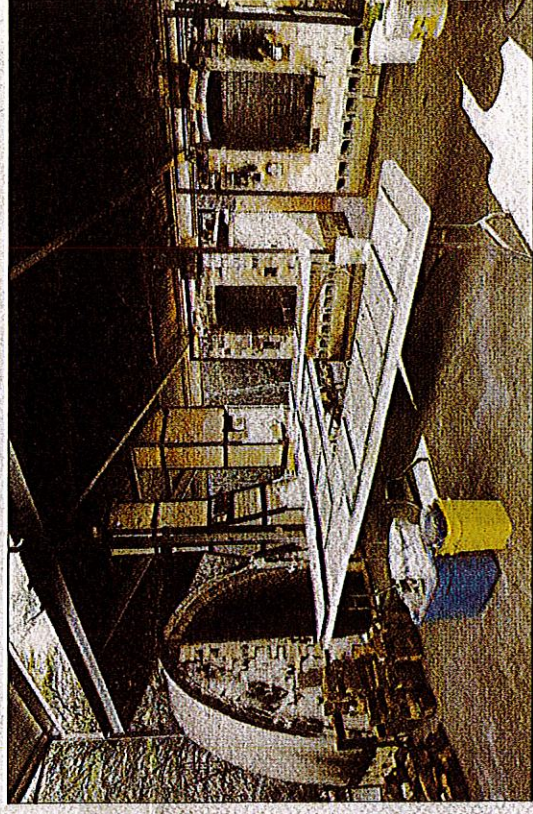
Soon, there will be a year-round studio to match.

About 3,000 artists have studied at Watershed over 30-plus years, usually with 15 or so artists at time. They come from across the United States and other countries, immersing themselves in their work and the environment. With the campus improvements, Watershed will continue hosting small groups in residence, but will offer residencies beyond summer months. At first, the new residencies will be in the spring and fall

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Photos by Shawn Patrick Ouellette/Staff Photographer
George Mason, Fran Rudoff and Lynn Duryea on the site of a major renovation at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts.



Kilns on site at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts.

THEATER REVIEW

One man ably reimagines 'A Christmas Carol'

Portland Stage premieres the reworked holiday classic in person and streaming on demand.

By STEVE FEENEY

After many disappointments, businessman Ebenezer Scrooge decided to avoid all the "humbug" that lies, thumps at him and so it

ART REVIEW

Caldbeck holiday show conveys sense of this place

The Autumn Group Show runs through Jan. 16 in Rockland.

By JORGE S. ARANGO

For centuries, the natural beauty of Maine has presented artists with infinite pictorial possibilities. From the incomparable realistic seascapes of Winslow Homer and John Marin's more impressionistic arrangements of

magic of a transient moment within it. For me, the standouts of the exhibition are those that are less literal and convey a more intangible, evanescent sense of place. The artists in this grouping who do that best are those who explore that shifting, nonspecific space between representation and abstraction.

Bayard Hollins's "Lil' Bit Stormy"

WATERSHED

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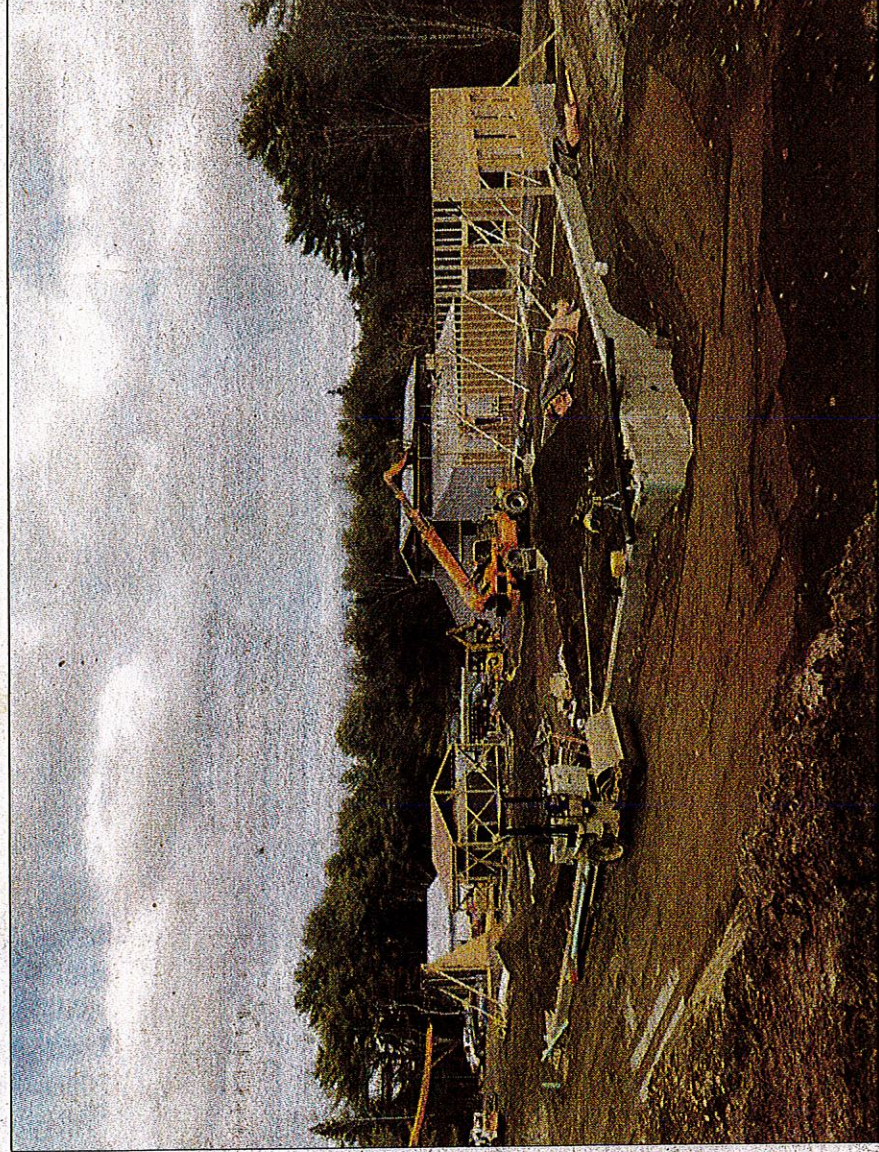
and will grow to year-round with time. Two-week residencies cost \$1,600, and that includes studio, lodging and three meals a day, along with open access to the studio. And while most residencies are first-come, first-served, they are competitive because slots fill up quickly and are geared toward self-motivated artists accustomed to working independently without instruction.

Located about a mile from Route 1 and surrounded by the Sheepscot River, the Watershed campus, which straddles Edgecomb and Newcastle, has been a beehive of activity this summer and fall. With all residencies and workshops canceled, Watershed's leaders took advantage of the pandemic pause in programming to accelerate a campus improvement project that was already underway. Instead of an international community of artists working with glacial marine clay, construction workers under the direction of the general contractor JF Scott Construction out of Winthrop spent the summer and fall flexing their skills with steel, timber and concrete.

Work on the new studio should be completed in May. In addition, Watershed has built a free-standing studio annex with heated storage for material and equipment, a place for maintenance work, and flexible space for short-term public programs and workshops.

This was all part of a master plan funded by the center's capital campaign, Watershed NOW. It began in 2018 when Watershed bought and renovated the Joan Pearson Watkins House on adjacent property. That 1912 home and 22 stunning acres are now home to Watershed's new Barkan Gallery, administrative offices and a gift shop that sells the work of Watershed artists. The purchase expanded Watershed's footprint to 54 acres of fields and forests, with paths connecting the house and studio complex and the promise of sculpture walks and outdoor public art.

The studio project had been targeted for 2021, but the pandemic pushed Watershed to accelerate the plan, said executive director Francine



Photos by Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts

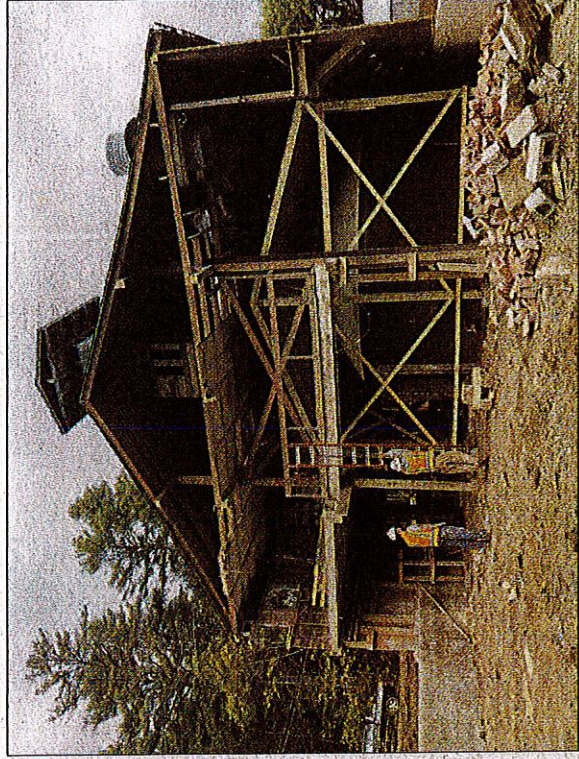
The campus at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Newcastle is undergoing a transformation during the pandemic, with a new studio building rising in place of the drafty original building.

Rudoff. Watershed received \$2 million from the Windgate Charitable Foundation for the campaign that included a \$1.5 million challenge grant. When the pandemic hit, Watershed asked Windgate if it would advance the funds while the fundraising for the match continued so Watershed could move forward with construction while the campus was dormant.

"They did that. They were great," Rudoff said. "So in some ways, COVID allowed us to fast-forward everything, and donors came forward. ... We have about \$500,000 to go."

The new studio is named in appreciation of Windgate. Beth McLaughlin, chief curator at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts, visited Watershed this past summer during a family trip to Maine. She loved what she called the

"the rustic, bohemian vibe of the campus and the buildings. I had long heard about the 'Watershed magic' and could see it was true — there is a palatable ethos there of all the makers that had created and convened in the space over the years." She also noticed that some of the buildings needed repair and were largely



Before the original studio was taken down, workers build a new shed over the beehive kiln at Watershed Center for the Arts. The kiln, which is no longer fired, is part of the new campus design.

unheated, and much of the studio didn't meet requirements for accessibility.

Given Watershed's role in the development of ceramic artists, the campus improvements are welcome and monumental in their impact on the clay community, she said. "The capital improvements will greatly ex-

pand Watershed's capabilities to offer a comfortable, cutting-edge environment for makers of all abilities to come together and focus on their ceramic practice. It will allow Watershed to extend its season beyond the summer and fall, which is huge from both from a revenue-generating perspective and a community-building one.

More operating months means more creative opportunities for artists and their careers," she said. "As important, Watershed will be able to accommodate artists of all abilities with a fully accessible studio."

Jennifer Zwilling, curator for the Clay Studio in Philadelphia, lamented the loss of the original buildings, but said the benefit of having accessible, weather-tight working space is worth the cost. "It will be a huge paradigm shift for them to have safer, more accessible and efficient studio spaces," she said.

As with McLaughlin, Zwilling visited the campus this past summer for the first time. She felt a little like she was traversing sacred turf. "Walking around, I had a really strong sense of the history of the place and how infused it is with the creativity of all the people who have been there before. At same time, there's so much energy around bringing it into its next phase, and bringing it to the next level it can be," she said.

Watershed's reputation is international, she added. "I'm not exaggerating when I say that when Watershed is on the resume of an artist, you know they have gone through a rigorous selection process and an exceptional experience. ... It's one of the top four ceramic organizations in the country, and it has an international reputation."

The pandemic may bring other changes to Watershed. Its signature event is Salad Days, a spring fundraiser that involves a buffet picnic lunch of locally grown and prepared food, served on a ceramic plate made by artists who apply for the honor of being a Salad Days artist. It's prestigious and as hands-on as can be. Duryea observed wryly, "If we could have devised the worst possible event (for a pandemic), it was Salad Days — touching plates, touching food and 300 people in a tent."

With the pandemic posing an uncertain future, Watershed is banking on the bounty of the clay and the opportunity to work with artists in all four seasons. "A lot of people need healing right now," Rudoff said. "Clay is one of those mediums that allow people to process their feelings and work through their feelings by touching the material."

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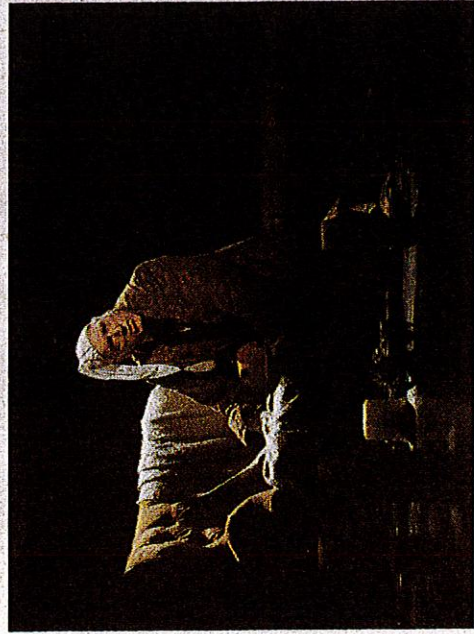


Photo by Mical Hutson
Joel Leffert plays all the characters in his reimagined "A Christmas Carol" at Portland Stage.

THEATER

Continued from **Page E1**

he takes the lead role as well as all the others, is a fascinating feat of acting compressed into about 80 minutes. The theatrics of quick character and scene changes may dizzy some detail-oriented viewers. But, in the end, the message of this holiday favorite is ably conveyed and provides a cozy warmth, like Scrooge's stove when he finally allows some extra coal to be added.

Laughs, both direct from Dickens' writing and from Leffert's interpretation, lighten all the thrills, chills and moral messaging that have washed the



"Lil' Bit Stormy," 2019, oil on canvas, 36 x 60 inches, Bayard Hollins. Courtesy of Calbeck Gallery

"Pier and Tree," 2017-2018, acrylic and oil on canvas, 12 x 12 inches, Kayla Mohammadi. Courtesy of Calbeck Gallery

started producing nostalgic images from his coming-of-age as an artist. Even though "Seaview Motel (Woman/Phone Booth/Truro)" is not an image specific to Maine, what it transmits about the spirit of New England summers is as true of the seasonal experience of Ogunquit or York as it is of Cape Cod. There's a lot more here

