

# The lure of the landscape

## South Wharf Gallery welcomes painter Anne Baldwin Butler

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Amid scrub oak, pines and views of Hither Creek, painter Anne Baldwin Butler has found her sanctuary.

Having coffee one foggy morning last week in the second-floor living room of her Madaket home, Butler said she hopes people will see her love of the island reflected in her paintings. Each work begins with an image that speaks to her and then evolves as she uses color to create mood and sustain emotion, she said.

"Capturing the feeling of atmosphere, color and light allows me to share my deep love of the landscape with the viewer," she said. "What I'm trying to convey is my love of Nantucket."

Butler, who moved to the island last week from Saratoga, N.Y., timed her arrival to coincide with tomorrow night's opening of her first show at the South Wharf Gallery. The reception from 6-8 p.m. Friday is followed by an informal

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Right photo by Alicia Hull, left courtesy of South Wharf G

Left: Anne Baldwin Butler's painting "Brief Yellow Light, Clark's Cove" is part of her show opening Friday at South Wharf Gallery. Right: Butler at home Madaket with a painting of Hither Creek shrouded in fog. Butler recently joined South Wharf Gallery and moved to the island permanently.

artist's talk at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

Some of her paintings are more forms and silhouettes than anything definitive, because often she paints in the evening after a day of leading students on her Sketching Tours of Nantucket.

"I often will get forms rather than light. I love the power of the form," she said, pointing to one canvas that's recognizable as the big tree outside the entrance to Bartlett's Ocean View Farm.

Amid the forms and images, Butler has developed a signature of sorts. Using her whole shoulder like she does sometimes when she sketches, Butler puts the paint on the canvas with a brush, then pushes it around the canvas with an oil bar, lending color, focus and motion to the forms and shadows. She's even started mixing in a little gold here and there.

"I love integrating everything I've learned and you can get a tremendous amount of energy in a painting that way," she said.

She's also trying to convey new meaning to things

we see every day. "What artists do is give the viewer a peek at something they consider ordinary but when it's put into paint it becomes extraordinary," she said.

Until now, Butler spent summers on the island running her seasonal sketching tours, and the rest of the year teaching elementary school art in Saratoga. She is the author of "Saratoga Sketches," a compilation of favorite Saratoga scenes introduced in May 2004.

Since retiring from teaching she's been able to spend more time on the island, but still not enough to keep up with demand for her sketching tours and commissions.

"It's been very hard living in two places," she said, while her boyfriend, Jim Sutherland, unloaded paintings from the moving van outside.

Sketching Tours of Nantucket, which Butler started in 1997, spawned a line of custom note-cards inspired by customers who admired the elegant, exacting way Butler sketched houses.

Another offshoot of Butler's island business is Sketching Tours of Paris,

which she takes every year with a group of students. Nantucket resident Mimi Merton is a regular.

"From Nantucket to Paris, sketching and painting with Anne has been a pure delight," Merton wrote on the invitation for Butler's show. "She has taught me to see as an artist sees, and what I have learned from her has been invaluable."

Butler said Nantucket has been very good to her.

"It's something about what I offer or what I can give, but Nantucket seems to work so much better," said Butler.

Despite being one of many looking for an "affordable" house to buy, she has faith in the island. "I am constantly reinforced by the support of the island," she said.

Butler visited Nantucket for the first time in 1996 when Ed Derocher, a designer from Saratoga, offered her a show in his gallery on Old South Wharf, the Shanty Gallery. Last weekend marked the 10th anniversary of that show, she said.

Butler's work has since been featured by the Artists'

Association of Nantucket, where she is a member and where she also teaches a color-mixing class. Showing at South Wharf Gallery is a big accomplishment at this point in her painting career, she said.

"I always dreamed of being in her gallery," Butler said of owner Mary Beth Splaine.

Splaine said she looks forward to seeing what Butler produces now that she's moved to the island full-time. "I'm looking forward to seeing her settle down and really paint," Splaine said recently.

Butler's 27-year-old daughter, Amanda, designs shoes for Anne Taylor Loft in New York City and her son, Seth, is a painter in Glens Falls, N.Y.

*The South Wharf Gallery hosts an opening reception of Anne Baldwin Butler's paintings from 6-8 p.m. Friday, June 10, followed by a talk with the artist at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, June 11. For more information call (508) 228-0406.*