

“North Jetty II”

David Bates, American, 1952 –
Palm Springs Art Museum; Gift: Steve Chase
Acrylic on canvas
1989 Gulf Coast

From a childhood spent visiting the swamps and wetlands of the Texas Gulf Coast, David Bates developed a lifelong love of the Gulf region and its inhabitants. He describes this environment as “a mysterious place – an artist’s paradise.”

While studying art at Texas Southern Methodist University Bates met his future wife, artist Jan Lee McComas who was influential in introducing him to American Folk Art. This would remain an important component of his work.

He was accepted into a program for aspiring artists with the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and after returning to Texas he received his MFA from SMU. He went on to teach art appreciation and life drawings at various Texas community colleges. Drawn to the Gulf Coast since childhood, much of his free time was devoted to sketching the environment and its inhabitants.

David Bates was influenced by Impressionist painters and Texas regional artists. He also attributes much of his style to the influence of American Modernism, particularly the art of Marsden Hartley (1877 – 1943). Being considered an accomplished draftsman, there is a graphic quality to his work. In a podcast for the Modern Museum of Art Fort Worth Bates stated that his work has an architectural quality. He sketches on site and later completes his painting in the studio. One gets a 1930’s poster feel to his work by the way he uses bold colors and flattens and elongates the surfaces, reminding me of the graphic quality of Rockwell Kent and the neo realistic posters of the 1930’s. Bates’ love of all things in nature is reflected in his admiration for the aviary studies of Audubon and his series of life studies of the regional birds and wild life of the Gulf.

In the 1990’s Bates began to experiment with sculpture and assemblages. After the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans Bates was inspired to begin a series of portraits depicting the suffering and destruction of the local inhabitants.

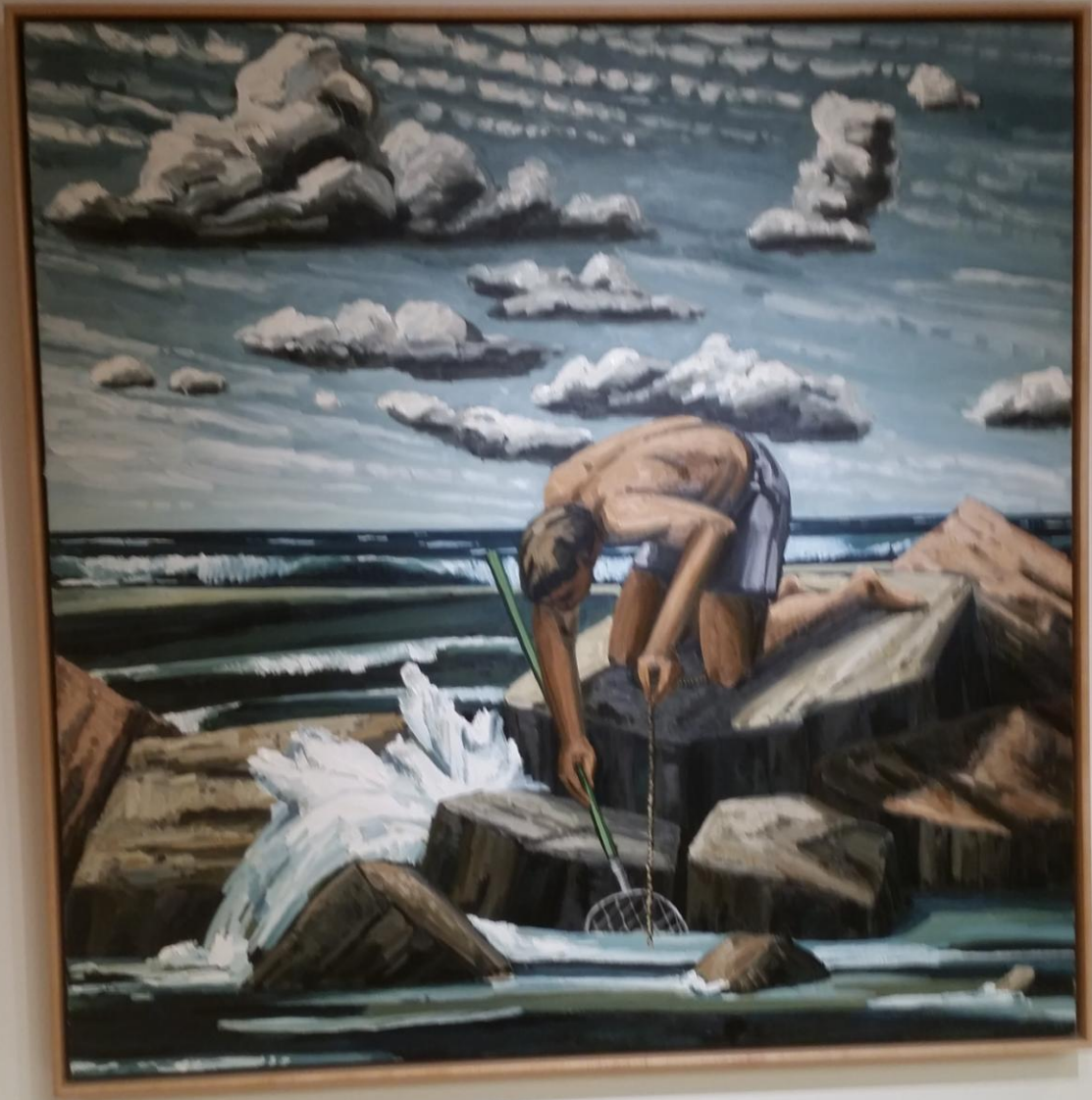
The bold color, size, graphic rendering, and subject matter drew me to “North Jetty II”. One can almost feel the heat and humidity of the scene. The artist’s love of the subject and his respect for nature and those working in that environment are apparent.

David Bates currently lives and works in Dallas.

Sources: David Bates, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Scala Publishers 2007

David Bates, DC Moore Gallery Catalogue November 15 – December 22, 2006

Podcast: David Bates and Tyler Green, Modern Museum of Art Fort Worth, February 13, 2014



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