JOHN NEVILLE
Big Fish
JULY 18–AUGUST 12, 2012
Essay by Karin Wilkes

Hurricane, 2012, oil on canvas, 11 x 14 inches
Launching a Dory, 2012, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches
The thing that has drawn me most to John Neville’s artwork, is his narrative. The ability to tell his family stories in a vibrant blaze of intense color; the relationships of the people in his paintings to each other and the sea; and all with a delicious sense of humor which, in his case, is irrepressible. He breathes life into these “story” works with this combination, and welcomes us to come along for the ride on, the usually, very large swells of the sea.

—Carol Craven, Carol Craven Gallery
Martha’s Vineyard, July 2012
Green Water
oil on canvas
36 x 60 inches
2012
John Neville has the eye of a draftsman—for symmetry, balance, design, and dimensions. His artwork is not limited to the practical, however, but is rich with a fanciful world of folklore, myth, and vibrancy. Neville’s latest collection of paintings features much of the iconic subject matter for which his work has become loved and venerated. Viewers will be pleased to see his famed cast of characters: pink-cheeked fishermen, grand in size, with strong jaws, thick necks, and blockish working hands situated within the exceptional compositions of Neville’s Nova Scotia seascapes.

These seascapes are rendered with a textile-like use of pattern as in Big Fish, where repetitious waves allude to the tedium of rowing day in and day out. From another perspective, as in Hurricanes and Uncle Sailing Home, Neville depicts ocean waves as massive triangular peaks, fractal-like in their replication, eternal as the open ocean. Neville also continues to explore the range of his already highly stylized and successful motifs, undertaking some new and exciting perspectives, such as Night Fishing, a luminous and eerie depiction of life beneath the sea.

Buttery-golden clouds loom in White Horse and Dory, looking magical, opulent—even edible. The seashore glitters like coins, reminding the viewer that the ocean serves not only as a source of income but a wealth of beauty. Equally compelling is the study for this piece, White Horse and Dory Study 1, where the title’s subjects are both conspicuously absent from the painting itself.
Yet that which cannot be seen is strong in presence, captured by the effort of the figure’s angled torso, the friction of his grip, and the resistance of his rope.

The color red is an ever-present ingredient of Neville’s compositions—a strategic dash of heat in an otherwise cool palette. From a figure’s sun-exposed crimson skin to his red dory and boathouse, all that is human and human-related seems to be red in the midst of blue-green expanse. These red components often reveal the pulse of Neville’s paintings. Launching a Dory is rife with red hues. The successful juxtaposition of red on red makes this one of Neville’s most striking, daring paintings. Men, boats, and buildings alike point toward the ocean in this vigorous composition, almost ball-of-fire like in its collective objective.

Sunday Row shows a departure from the iconic red dory; Neville has painted the vessel green and softened the colors, highlighting the romantic variation of the scene. Yet the figure’s shirt becomes the image’s red accent, even as it is captured in a smudge of watery reflection appearing like a school of fish, as if part of the man’s spirit still belongs in the company of sea creatures. In Tango, Neville again obscures the distinction between man and occupation. Here, a woman dances with a fish dressed like a man, showing that Neville’s perspective on seafaring life combines both workmanlike seriousness and playful humor. As the woman leans her head against the bright red heart of the fish’s bow tie, the viewer is transported into their affectionate story.

—Karin Wilkes
Director, Courthouse Gallery
White Horse and Dory
oil on canvas
38 x 60 inches
2012
Spring Launch, 2012, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches

Rum Runners at Moonset
2012
oil on canvas
36 x 24 inches
Night Fishing
oil on canvas
36 x 60 inches
2012
Island Harbor, 2012, oil on canvas, 30 x 34 inches

Conche, Newfoundland, 2011, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches

Iceberg in Harbor, 2011, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches
JOHN NEVILLE

BORN 1952, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS
- Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2010, 2012
- Firehouse Gallery, Damariscotta, ME 1999-2002
- Fog Forest Gallery, Sackville, New Brunswick 1999
- Marianne Friedland Gallery, Toronto, Ontario 1994
- South Street Seaport Museum, NY 1993
- Acadia University Art Gallery, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1989
- Great George Street Gallery, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island 1987
- University of New Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick 1982
- Last Great Canadian Art Gallery, Annapolis, Nova Scotia 1977
- Anna Leonowens Gallery, NSCAD, Halifax, Nova Scotia 1976

GROUP EXHIBITIONS
- Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2009, ’10, ’11, ’12
- Carol Craven Gallery, Martha’s Vineyard, MA 2002
- Acadia University Collection, Wolfville, Nova Scotia 1999
- Taigh Chearsabhagh, North Uist, Scotland 1998
- An Lannrait Gallery, Isle of Lewis, Scotland 1998
- Tobera Mory Gallery, Isle of Mull, Scotland 1998
- ACA Gallery, Manhattan, NY 1997
- Gallery House, Nobleboro, ME 1991 ’92, ’95, ’97
- Dalhousie Art Gallery, Nova Scotia 1994

COLLECTIONS
- Dundee Education Authority Collection, Scotland
- Saint Mary’s and Dalhousie University Art Galleries, Halifax, Nova Scotia
- Canada Council Art Bank
- Confederation Center Art Gallery, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
- University of New Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick
- Museum of Fine Arts, Geneva, Switzerland
- Acadia University Art Gallery, Wolfville, Nova Scotia
- Essos Resources Canada, Calgary, Alberta
- The Canadian Fund, Ottawa, Ontario

EDUCATION
- Bachelor of Fine Arts, NS College of Art and Design, Halifax, NS, 1972–76
- Center De Gravure Contemporaries, Geneva, Switzerland, 1973–76
Eggemoggin Regatta, 2011, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches