

jo ann ritter

BREWSTER



*Cape Cod Harvest*, oil on board, 11" x 14"

## An ever-colorful, evolving vision

**Sweeping strokes of white and gray, punctuated by stark trees and simple farm structures, capture the vast wintry solitude of the western plains in Jo Ann Ritter's painting, *Big Sky*. Warm fall tones of golden marsh grass and a red cranberry bog glimmer in *Cape Cod Harvest*. Whether capturing scenes near or far, Ritter draws you into her paintings with an almost joyous use of color, expressive brushwork, and an uncanny sensitivity for mood and the moment.**

Ritter is best known for her impressionistic landscape and seascape oil-on-board paintings, but her still life miniatures, like *Very Berry*, an image of mouth-watering pink scoops of strawberry ice cream, and *Meltdown*, with green ice cream dripping tantalizingly down the edge of a sugar cone, are also visual delights. For Ritter, color is so sweet you can almost taste it. "I always have had this huge love of color," says Ritter, who lives in Brewster. "Color excites me. Darks and lights excite me."

Inspired by the scenery of places like Cape Cod, Colorado, and the Bahamas, Ritter has attracted an international following for her expertly composed and emotionally

by susan spencer

evocative work. Still, she says she is always spurred on by the desire to improve. "I'm really motivated by the idea that each painting I do will be better than the last one. It's an uphill climb," says Ritter, explaining that she tries to avoid being defined by her subject. "People expect you to do certain things when you get put into a niche. I really like to explore different angles."

Painting has been Ritter's full-time focus since 1992. She began her art education at Penn State and Syracuse University, but was inspired by her husband, Dwight, to explore painting further. She attended Boston's Museum School, took watercolor workshops on Monhegan Island, Maine, and studied with nationally known painters. She is a member of the Copley Society of Boston, the Cape Cod Art Association, and Oil Painters of America.

In 1996, her husband suggested a move to his family's Brewster home. Jo Ann was soon immersed in the Cape's arts community. She notes that working as an artist can be a difficult way to make a living, but says a successful partnership with Addison Art Gallery in Orleans has helped her succeed in a competitive market.

Ritter says she strives to paint for herself, even though it's easy to get caught up in doing what sells. She tries to explore new subjects by expanding the abstract qualities of a painting; building up thick layers of paint, blurring the edges of brightly contrasting colors, twisting traditional themes with whimsical, sometimes humorous touches.

Works such as *Reunion On The Beach*, where people look almost secondary to bright swaths of sea and sand, family members seeming to float away beneath tents and umbrellas, and *Sanctity*, where a mother holding a child close is almost swept away on the far edge of a painting, show her abstract leanings. Still, Ritter's extensive portfolio also glimmers with paintings that are so "Cape Cod" that you can almost feel the tangy salt air on your face, as in *October Beach Day*, or revel in the multi-colored sweetness of a classic Cape garden in *Hollyhocks*.

This summer, the Ritters are planning a cross-country trip in a trailer. Ritter is looking forward to exploring the colors and contrasts of the Adirondacks, Mt. Rushmore, the Rocky Mountains, and the Southwest.

"Painting is problem-solving," says Ritter. "You really need to spend time thinking before you actually start painting. Once you've thought about what you're going to do—then you start painting from the heart."

**Jo Ann Ritter's art can be seen at the Addison Art Gallery, 43 Route 28, Orleans, MA, 508-255-6200. [www.addisonart.com](http://www.addisonart.com).**



*Reunion on the Beach*, oil on board, 11" x 14"



*To The Bay*, oil on board, 9" x 12"

*Susan Spencer is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Brewster and Whitinsville, MA.*