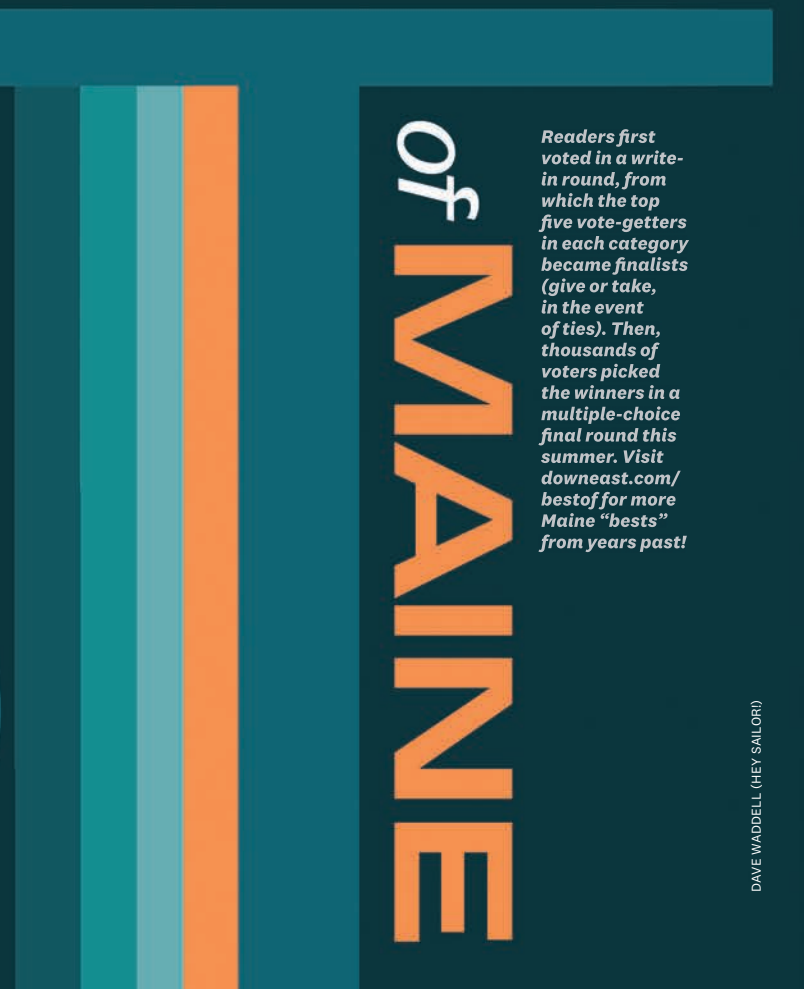


OUR 15TH ANNUAL ROUNDUP OF MAINE'S BEST EVERYTHING: ART GALLERIES TO ARCHITECTS, BEERS TO BOUTIQUES, GOLF COURSES TO GIFT SHOPS. MORE THAN 10,000 READERS CAST VOTES FOR THEIR FAVES, AND WE'VE SPRINKLED IN SOME PICKS OF OUR OWN. HOW DID YOUR FAVORITES DO?



of MAINE

Readers first voted in a write-in round, from which the top five vote-getters in each category became finalists (give or take, in the event of ties). Then, thousands of voters picked the winners in a multiple-choice final round this summer. Visit downeast.com/bestof for more Maine "bests" from years past!



A seasonal fried smelt dish at Searsport's Hey Sailor!, one of our picks for the year's best new Maine restaurant. See the gatefold beginning on page 80.



Longfellow's Greenhouses, in Manchester, is a (ahem) perennial contender for readers' favorite garden center.

OUR PICK: GARDEN CENTER/NURSERY

My mother-in-law and I refer to Manchester's **Longfellow's Greenhouses** (longfellowsgreenhouses.com), as our "happy place." In spring and summer, we're there picking up seedlings and supplies and enjoying the blooms in the display beds. The wide selection of plants (grown in 23 greenhouses) is second to none — the range of herb seedlings particularly blows me away, with tons of hard-to-find culinary herbs. When winter is dragging on, we escape to the huge, lush houseplant room and dream of warmer weather. It's part gift shop, part garden center, part nursery. And it's dog-friendly, so my Goldendoodle loves to visit too.

— ABIGAIL SOLLOWAY-HILT, AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR



OUR PICK: FURNITURE STORE

I pass **Re Find Furnishings** often, whenever I head into Machias, and I always stop with hopes of striking gold. But as I squeeze through the rooms of secondhand stuff — a lot of it big-box-store furniture, inexpensive kitchenware, and the like — I mostly just find deals on basics, like a \$100 recliner. Occasionally, there are gems: an antique sideboard, carnival glass, the life-size silkscreen peacock now preening in my boho bathroom. What I always find are chatty neighbors and a laid-back community vibe. Former owner Kim Gardner fostered that for 10 years (and gave discounts to those in need). Happily, Michael and Adly Acebal, who bought the store in May, are keeping up that spirit.

— JOYCE KRYSZAK, CONTRIBUTOR

HOME & GARDEN

BEST OF DÉCOR

Catherine McLetchie opened **The Good Supply** (thegoodsupply.org) 10 years ago this summer, stocking a building behind her South Bristol post-and-beam barn with home goods, gifts, and crafts by 16 local artists. Today, the shop has taken over the barn and represents more than 90 artists and artisans from all across Maine. The word "curated" is overused in retail, but The Good Supply is the too-rare indie shop that genuinely feels like it reflects a proprietor's hand-picked aesthetic — in this case, McLetchie's eye for understated rustic

cool. From wall art to handmade kitchenware to candles to planters and other vessels, everything at The Good Supply feels homespun without feeling homely, threading the needle between fine art and folk art. Visit before the end of September to check out the shop's cool anniversary installation, a 9-foot whale sculpture made from beach trash by artist Cindy Pease Roe.

More than once I have pulled off of I-95 on exit 102/103 in order to nab an impromptu housewarming or host gift at the **Center for Maine Craft** (shopmainecraft.com). It's no boutique

— the 2,500-square-foot emporium is inside an interstate rest stop that it shares with a Starbucks and a Burger King and some coin-operated massage chairs — but it's your loss if you write the place off as an exit-ramp tourist trap. What's inside represents the work of more than 300 Maine makers. Highlights include an entire wall of gorgeous pottery, tea towels screenprinted with every imaginable bit of iconography, beautiful basketry and turned wooden bowls, sun catchers and stained glass, and a lot more.

— BRIAN KEVIN, EDITOR IN CHIEF

READERS' PICKS

ARCHITECT

Knickerbocker Group

Boothbay, Portland

FINALISTS

Kaplan Thompson Architects

Portland

Platz Associates

Auburn

Whitten Architects

Portland

BUILDER

Houses & Barns by John Libby

Freeport

FINALISTS

Bowley Builders

Kennebunk

Knickerbocker Group

Boothbay, Portland

Marden Builders Inc.

Boothbay Harbor

M.R. Brewer

Portland

O'Shea Builders

Windham

Senecal Construction Services

Brunswick

GARDEN CENTER/ NURSERY

Moose Crossing Garden Center

Waldoboro

FINALISTS

Broadway Gardens Greenhouses

Westbrook, South Portland

Estabrook's

Yarmouth, Kennebunk

Longfellow's Greenhouses

Manchester

Skillis Greenhouses

Brunswick, Falmouth, Cumberland

HOME IMPROVEMENT STORE

Hammond Lumber Company

Various locations

FINALISTS

Ames True Value Hardware & Supply

Various locations

Damariscotta Hardware

Damariscotta

Grover's Hardware

Boothbay Harbor

Rocky's Ace Hardware

Bath

FURNITURE STORE

Chilton Furniture

Scarborough, Freeport, Portland

FINALISTS

Dow Furniture

Waldoboro

Jordan's Furniture

South Portland

Sproul's Furniture

Newcastle

Sweet Dreams Home Furnishings

Brunswick

Readers' favorite builder, Houses & Barns by John Libby, built this simple, classic post-and-beam artists' studio on Penobscot Bay's remote Wheaton Island in 2010.



SHOPPING & STYLE



OUR PICK: WOMEN'S BOUTIQUE

In the Knightville neighborhood of South Portland, **Artemis Plus Size Resale** (artemisplussize.com) fills a void in the area for stylish, all-bodies-welcome thrifting. The consignment shop, new this summer, recognizes that brands don't use standard sizing — and that preferences for fits vary widely — so its racks are organized loosely by style and size ranges. The queer-owned shop also stocks pieces like chinos and button-downs, since not everyone who comes through the doors prefers to dress femme. For around \$60, I left with an athletic skort, a new dress, a canvas romper, and tips from owner Chelsea Rourke on how to style my finds. — BRIDGET M. BURNS, CONTRIBUTOR

BOOKSTORE

Sherman's Maine Coast Book Shops

Various locations

FINALISTS

Gulf of Maine Books

Brunswick

Left Bank Books

Belfast

Longfellow Books

Portland

Owl & Turtle Bookshop Café

Camden

CAR DEALER (NEW)

Lee Auto Malls

Various locations

FINALISTS

Bill Dodge Auto Group

Westbrook

Charlie's Motor Mall

Augusta

Darling's

Various locations

Pape Subaru

South Portland

Patriot Subaru

Saco

CAR DEALER (USED)

Lee Auto Malls

Various locations

FINALISTS

Charlie's Motor Mall

Augusta

READERS' PICKS

Norm's Used Cars

Wiscasset

The Hight Family of Dealerships

Skowhegan, Madison, Farmington

WOMEN'S BOUTIQUE

The Grasshopper Shop

Rockland

FINALISTS

Coyote Moon

Belfast

House of Logan

Bath, Boothbay Harbor, Camden

Women of Substance

Damariscotta

SHOE STORE

Lamey Wellehan

Various locations

FINALISTS

Colburn Shoe Store

Belfast

L.L.Bean

Freeport

Renys

Various locations

Valentine Footwear

Bangor

BARGAIN STORE

Renys

Various locations

FINALISTS

GearME

Freeport

Marden's

Various locations

Miles In Motion Thrift Shop

Damariscotta

Serendipity Fine Consignment

Camden

PET SUPPLY STORE

Loyal Biscuit Co.

Various locations

FINALISTS

Ames True Value Hardware & Supply

Wiscasset

The Animal House

Damariscotta

The Fish & Bone

Portland

Two Salty Dogs Pet Outfitters

Boothbay Harbor

TOY STORE

Island Treasure Toys

Bath, Freeport, Kennebunk, Yarmouth

FINALISTS

Daytrip Jr.

Kennebunkport

Out On A Whimsey

Belfast

Planet Toys

Camden

Treehouse Toys

Portland

GIFT STORE

Lisa-Marie's Made in Maine

Portland, Bath

FINALISTS

1890 Primitives

Skowhegan

Daytrip Society

Kennebunkport

GoodyGump Designs

Portland

Home Ingredients

Kennebunkport

OUR PICK: GIFT STORE

Is it a home-goods shop? Some kind of low-key florist? Owner Coco Martin bills **Wildings** (wildingsmaine.com), in downtown Damariscotta, as a “plant and lifestyle boutique,” and it is both a lovely space to browse and an exquisite spot to find tasteful, unexpected gifts. Maybe a potted prayer plant or a succulent in a terrarium? A swoopy, stainless watering can or a stylish hardwood hanger for a wall-mounted vase? Plenty of Wildings merch is horticultural, but the shelves are also filled with cool bags, ceramic mugs that would blend in at the MoMA gift shop, and jewelry from Kennebunkport's snazzy, modern Minka label. And the airy, light-filled space is a perfect fit for Main Street's stately 1850 Day's Block. — B.K.



The Island Treasure Toys mini-chain is a perennial reader fave, now with a new Kennebunkport location.

OUR PICK: BOOKSTORE

The novelist Helen Ellis has written that shopping at an independent bookstore should feel like “you're in someone's living room,” and by that measure, Fort Kent's **Bogan Books** (boganbooks.com) is downright quintessential. It's not just the overstuffed easy chair and pillows and books stacked up on mismatched household furniture that gives New England's northernmost bookstore its welcoming atmosphere. It's also the earnest enthusiasm of owner Heidi Carter, a graphic designer by trade and dyed-in-the-wool book nerd who opened the Main Street shop in 2018. Carter's kids' shelves are particularly dialed in and her cookbook section lavish, and she keeps the store's calendar full of fascinating author chats. — B.K.

Coco Martin runs
Damariscotta's
Wildings with
husband Jesse.



BEST OF SUSTAINABILITY

For crunchier types in western Maine, Cornish's **Amolette Herbal Apothecary** (amoletteherbals.com) is a gem of a store. Filling up half the ground floor of Main Street's striking, red Little River Building, it's a cozy space packed with inventory. For naturopaths, there are floor-to-ceiling displays of bulk teas, extracts, and herbs and culinary spices, along with natural toothpastes and toiletries, CBD beverages, and more. The eco-conscious will appreciate all

the zero-waste soaps, shampoos, and detergents. And anyone can admire the wide selection of gorgeous hand-woven baskets, perfect for toting whatever products match your convictions.

— GRETA RYBUS, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Eliminating single-use items from my lifestyle has always seemed daunting, but it got easier in 2020, when Marla Baldassare opened Kittery's **We Fill Good** (wefillgoodseacoast.com), a one-stop shop

for refillables and eco-friendly household goods. On all my visits, Baldassare has recommended products without hard-selling and answered my zero-waste questions without judgment. Her empathy for navigating lifestyle changes and enthusiasm for protecting the environment has made it my go-to for sans-packaging shampoo and conditioner bars, plastic-free toothbrushes, and natural cleaning products. — ADRIENNE PERRON, ASSISTANT EDITOR

OUR PICK YOGA STUDIO

I've been to many different studios since starting my yoga practice, but my heart belongs to **Yoga on York** (yogaonyork.com), where I attended my first-ever class. Every other Sunday, May through September, the studio hosts a class atop York's Mount Agamenticus. Students hike about a third of a mile up the Blueberry Bluff Trail (or they can drive the access road), then practice on the mountain's scenic summit, overlooking the ocean and 10,000 acres of conserved land. The studio, celebrating its 20th year, knows how to connect its students with nature (beach yoga and farm yoga are also on offer) to help them feel peaceful and centered — and that's what yoga is all about. — A.P.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

READERS' PICKS

HAIR SALON/ BARBER

River's Edge Spa & Salon

Kennebunk

FINALISTS

Bei Capelli

Scarborough

Green With Envy

Camden

Main Street Barber Shop

Kennebunk

Mint Salon Block

Falmouth

NAIL SALON

River's Edge Spa & Salon

Kennebunk

FINALISTS

Elizabeth Nails Spa

Brunswick

Lucinda's Day Spa

Cumberland

Millenia Nails and Spa

Portland

The Nail Spa by Thao

Kennebunk

CHIROPRACTOR

Family Chiropractic Associates

Scarborough, Falmouth

FINALISTS

Cape Integrative Health

Cape Elizabeth

Couture Chiropractic Center

Kennebunk

Holland Chiropractic

Bath

YOGA STUDIO

Greener Postures Yoga

South Portland, Falmouth

FINALISTS

Ananda Yoga and Wellness

Belfast

Crow Point Yoga

Boothbay Harbor

The Daily Sweat

Kennebunk

Fishmoon Yoga

Harpwell

Way to Be Wellness and Yoga

Kennebunk

DAY SPA

River's Edge Spa & Salon

Kennebunk

FINALISTS

Cedar Grove Sauna

Montville

Lucinda's Day Spa & Hair Studio

Cumberland

Nine Stones Spa

Portland

Sea Glass Spa

Boothbay

DENTIST

Brunswick Dental Health Associates

Brunswick

FINALISTS

Damariscotta Dental

Damariscotta

Mainly Teeth

Various locations (Mobile)

PenBay Dental

Rockport

MASSAGE STUDIO/ PRACTITIONER

Athlete's Touch

Portland

FINALISTS

Chandra Massage + Wellness

Kennebunk

Deeply Rooted Massage & Wellness

Kennebunk

Mockingbird Massage

Brunswick

GYM/FITNESS CENTER

Bath Area Family YMCA

Bath

FINALISTS

Boothbay YMCA

Boothbay Harbor

Maine Pines Racquet & Fitness

Brunswick

Rangeley Health and Wellness

Rangeley

The Wellness Center at Boothbay Harbor Country Club

Boothbay



OUR PICK: DAY SPA

It feels a long way off, but in the deep freeze of winter, I like to drive out to **Cedar Grove Sauna** (cedargrovesauna.com), in Montville, where a cozy wood-fired sauna sits nestled below, you guessed it, a massive cedar tree. I prefer self-care with a side of fortitude, and the icy-cold plunge bath outside — which frequently needs to be cracked open, like a crème brûlée — provides instant adrenaline, waking up all your senses before you rush back into warmth. Owner Jackie Stratton recently renovated a mobile sauna for pop-ups around the midcoast, even in summer, visiting hangouts like Edgecomb's Glidden Point Oyster Farms, where you can sauna ashore, then plunge into the (empty) oyster pens.

— TARA RICE, PHOTO EDITOR

Greener Postures
Yoga, readers'
pick for best yoga
studio, offers
classes on summer
mornings at South
Portland's Bug
Light Park, as well
as at studios in
SoPo and Falmouth.



READERS' PICKS

SKI MOUNTAIN

Saddleback

Rangeley

FINALISTS

Camden Snow Bowl

Camden

Mt. Abram

Greenwood

Sugarloaf

Carrabassett Valley

Sunday River

Newry

BOAT CRUISE/ EXCURSION

Casco Bay Lines

Portland

FINALISTS

Balmy Days Cruises

Boothbay Harbor

Cap'n Fish's Cruises

Boothbay Harbor

DoryWoman Rowing

Belfast

Hardy Boat Cruises

New Harbor

BED-AND- BREAKFAST OR INN

Harraseeket Inn

Freeport

FINALISTS

Grey Havens Inn

Georgetown

OneSixtyFive

Brunswick

The Trellis House

Ogunquit

Topside Inn

Boothbay Harbor

GOLF COURSE

Samoset Resort

Rockport

FINALISTS

**Belgrade Lakes
Golf Club**

Belgrade Lakes

**Boothbay Harbor
Country Club**

Boothbay

Wawenock Golf Club

Walpole

MARINA

Boothbay Harbor Marina

Boothbay Harbor

FINALISTS

Derecktor Robinhood

Georgetown

Dolphin Marina

Harpwell

Fore Points Marina

Portland

Paul's Marina

Brunswick

HOTEL OR RESORT

Samoset Resort

Rockport

FINALISTS

**Boothbay Harbor
Oceanside Golf Resort**

Boothbay Harbor

Cliff House Maine

Ogunquit

Quisisana Resort

Lovell

Sebasco Harbor Resort

Phippsburg

OUR PICK: GOLF COURSE

Pastoral views abound at **The Meadows Golf Club** (themeadowsgolfclub.com) a low-key gem nestled into the Litchfield countryside. Longtime player, first-time owner Randall Anderson bought the 18-hole, par-68 course, together with friends, in 2017. Come for the lovely woodland course (watch for wildlife on the fairways!), stay for Doolin's Pub, a lively, down-to-earth watering hole where golfers and non-golfers gather year-round for comedy nights, trivia, and more (the swings don't stop in winter, thanks to indoor multi-sport simulators). Don't skip the pub's signature Reuben or perfect chicken wings. An ideal Sunday morning is a round followed by brunch and a spin through the Red Dawg Bloody Mary Bar. — KATHLEEN CAPETTA, FORMER EDITOR

TRAVEL & PLAY



OUR PICK: BOAT CRUISE/EXCURSION

The pogies were jumping in Belfast Bay when I went out for a rowing lesson with **Nicolle Littrell**, of Belfast's **DoryWoman Rowing** (dorywomanrowing.com). The seals chasing them around the harbor kept popping up to stare at us as I tried to perfect my blade entry. It was the best kind of distraction. You can keep your sightseeing cruise — there's no more classically Maine way to spend a guided afternoon on salt water than in a traditional wooden boat. Littrell's professional background is in filmmaking and academia, and she was a recreational rower before a pandemic layoff nudged her into a guide license. Now, she offers lessons, plus tours and specialty trips, like full-moon rows, from the beautiful 19-foot Swampscott dory she's named **Sorciere** (it's French for "witch"). — B.K.

BEST OF FAMILY

Carved into the woods (with a sensitivity for preserving mature trees, as privacy screens), **Wild Acadia Camping Resort** (wildacadia.com) opened in Trenton this summer with 90 RV and tent sites and an all-inclusive model new to Maine. I love how brothers Andy and James Allen made gallons of lemonade out of the early-pandemic closure of their Wild Acadia Fun Park. Now that it's reopened, gone is the pain point of having to keep reaching for your wallet to keep kids entertained on vacation. Campers enjoy free use of the updated Funzone's waterslides, mini-golf course, "sprayground," zipline, ropes course, climbing wall, and trampolines. Acadia National Park is 15 minutes away, but your kids may talk you into skipping the MDI traffic. — KIM KNOX BECKIUS, BRANDED CONTENT EDITOR

Since Scott and April Shanaman took over Auburn's **Lost Valley** (lostvalleyski.com) in 2016, they've doubled the number of ski runs and opened a nano brewery in the lodge. All great stuff, but parents of littles may most appreciate their addition of the Maine Family Snow Tube Park, where a rope tow offers no-sweat access to four fast, 600-foot lanes. The Shanamans have made sure the fun doesn't stop when the snow melts too. On Friday nights in summer, various Maine bands take the stage at the foot of the mountain for a free, family-friendly concert series. Hundreds attend every week to jam out to covers of Grateful Dead, Bob Marley, Tom Petty, and other dad-rock variants. — A.P.



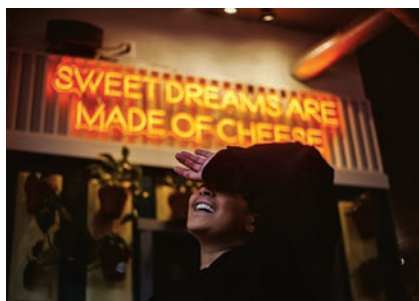
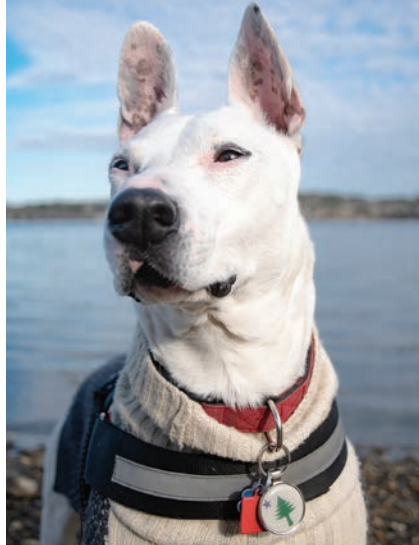


"A lot of the people I've had in the boat have had little to no experience," says DoryWoman Rowing's Nicole Littrell. "For them, it's the draw of a unique experience out on the water."

BEST OF THE WEB

"Of course I do! He's the one with the dog that shakes her booty!" That's how my teenager responded when I asked if she knew of **@mistermainer**, who is likely Maine's most followed TikTok celebrity. At first, I was puzzled by the popularity of midcoaster Dmitry Pepper's short video snips of Biscuit, his rescued English-bull-terrier-and-whippet mix, who has more than 13 million fans, along with her own line of merch. But the more I tuned into my daughter's peals of giggles, the more I "got" the release valve this dancing pup provides for a generation that's come of age in COVID times. And, yeah, I ordered a logo hoodie (from mistermainer.com).

Instagrammer Keela Ferrell (@eatwithspoon) trains her lens on Greater Portland's culinary scene with cheeky humor but a deep appreciation for food and the cultures it reflects. A health-care professional by day and a home cook, opinionated restaurant diner, and multitasked creator off the clock, she's recently gone beyond sharing plate pics and cooking videos to offer virtual cooking classes, curated gift boxes, and more to paid followers on Patreon. Give her a follow and you'll feel like you've made a friend . . . one who'll tell you straight-up you're wrong to prefer lobster claws over tails. —K.K.B.



ARTS & CULTURE



OUR PICK: THEATER GROUP

When Betty White died on New Year's Eve last year, just shy of her 100th birthday, Maine journalists went looking for the local angle and reported that, in the 1960s, Madison's **Lakewood Theater** (lakewoodtheater.org) put on three summer shows featuring everyone's favorite Golden Girl. (We see you, Blanche fans. Sit down.) This summer, they revived one, the 1962 comedy *Critic's Choice*. It played on the heels of an adaptation of novelist Paula Hawkins's bestselling 2015 thriller *The Girl on the Train*. Next up, it's Dickens (*Great Expectations*), then an adaptation of a 1906 French farce (*Anything to Declare?*). That kind of programming range is how you get to be the country's longest-running summer stock theater. —B.K.

OUR PICK: GALLERY

No signs point the way to the secluded, discreet **Sarah Bouchard Gallery** (sarahbouchardgallery.com), which curator Bouchard opened in April on a back road in Woolwich. An arts-scene vet with gallery and nonprofit experience, Bouchard asks would-be visitors to book reservations for exhibitions in what had been her garage (now fantastically renovated). So far, the down-low strategy seems to be working: the gallery's June exhibit of Waldoboro painter Dozier Bell got rave reviews and nearly sold out. Bouchard's eye is for minimalism, abstract or representational, and her stable of artists alone — Bell, Josefina Auslender, Michael Mansfield, and Kate Russo among them — makes the gallery worth seeking out.

— EDGAR ALLEN BEEM, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

READERS' PICKS

MUSEUM

Farnsworth Art Museum
Rockland

FINALISTS

Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine
Portland

Colby College Museum of Art
Waterville

Maine Maritime Museum
Bath

Portland Museum of Art
Portland

PRIVATE SCHOOL, SECONDARY

Lincoln Academy
Damariscotta

FINALISTS

Cheverus High School
Portland

North Yarmouth Academy
Yarmouth

St. Brigid School
Portland

Watershed School
Camden

PRIVATE SCHOOL, ELEMENTARY

Waynflete
Portland

FINALISTS

Ashwood Waldorf School
Rockport

The Bay School
Blue Hill

Center for Teaching and Learning
Edgecomb

North Yarmouth Academy
Yarmouth

St. Brigid School
Portland

THEATER GROUP

Maine State Music Theatre
Brunswick

FINALISTS

Ogunquit Playhouse
Ogunquit

Portland Stage
Portland

The Public Theatre
Lewiston

Quisisana Resort
Lovell

ART GALLERY

Maine Art Hill
Kennebunk

FINALISTS

Gleason Fine Art
Boothbay Harbor

Lemont Block Collective
Brunswick

Littlefield Gallery
Winter Harbor

Saltwater Artists Gallery
New Harbor

Our readers' pick for best museum, Rockland's Farnsworth Art Museum, recently (and effectively) reimagined how it displays works from its permanent collection, which includes this 2001 Yvonne Jacquette oil of Rockport Harbor.

