

## JUDITH SCHAECHTER

*Human/Nature*, 2016

Stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted,  
stained and fired, and assembled with copperfoil,  
30 x 32 in



## MELISSA CRONIN

### The New Domestic

Lessons humans can  
learn from lobsters,  
tortoises, and glaciers

#### Lobster Farm

Tucked away on the wind-chafed Atlantic coast, down the looping island roads of a gnarled archipelago, sits the cottage my grandfather built in some unknown year that was after the First World War but before the Second. It was here on this tiny island, population four hundred, where I learned to fish with a mackerel jig and to dive head-first into the eelgrass, because eels don't live in eelgrass at all. It was here on this island, this great windy lump of sandstone sitting stoically in the Gulf of Maine, that I sat on as a little girl, getting fat on fried clams and working off the calories by running through the bentgrass meadows. My skin was covered in the sticky slime that shoots out when you snap a milkweed plant between your fingers. My feet were hard and lined with soot from the island's garbage fires; my hair was short as a boy's but soft in the orange evening sunlight.

Now, the island is treeless, a bald rock that juts out of the gulf like an approving thumb, steep on the sides and dotted with more vacation homes every year. Despite the lawnmowers and the porch swings and the SUVs, the working waterfront still churns. There are men tanned and sinewed like old ropes in the sun. They pick the traps up and empty them and throw them back again, work that bends their backs and hollows their eyes. But still, on this island filling with people, they continue to hold the power, because in those traps is the one thing that makes this whole place run. The locals, the summer folk, the tourists, the whole economy—well, nearly the whole state, really—they all come back for one reason: the crustaceans.

Lobsters, really the *only* crustacean worth talking about in Maine, are more iconic to the state than the flannel shirt and the summer blueberry. On the island, when I was young and surrounded by a herd of barefoot, popsicle-faced cousins, lobsters were a rite of passage: at first, the only tastes were stolen from a parent's plate, a spindly leg to suck the meat from, alongside a hot dog dinner. When I go to the island as an adult, it's an occasion unto itself, a celebration and a ritual for my family. The ritual process of lobster eating is always the same on the coast of Maine:

Walk to the dock, find a tan-skinned lobsterman spraying down his boat.

Small talk: "Looks like rain?" "Only hard shells this month."