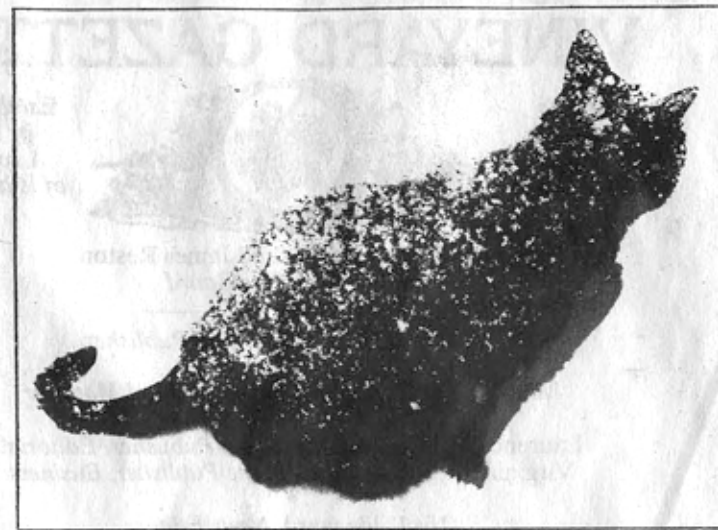




OIL ON LINEN BY STEVE MILLS.



WATERCOLOR BY KAREN LARSON.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON SHAW.

At the Granary Gallery: Three Artists, One Traffic Jam

By NIS KILDEGAARD

The traffic jam outside was the first clue that Sunday's was no ordinary opening night at the Granary Gallery in West Tisbury. The second was the costuming of gallery owners Bruce Blackwell and Brandon Wight, and their staff, in commemorative T-shirts bearing photographs from Alison Shaw's new book, *Vineyard Summer*.

Yes, this was another three-artist, two-week show at the Granary, and as always with a plethora of other fine art on display and for sale. But Sunday's opening was also Alison Shaw's moment of arrival on the threshold of what, for her, is a new sort of celebrity. Miss Shaw sat at a card table in the gallery's airy courtyard, and there she held court, at the head of a line much longer than the line for the gallery's open bar. Sometimes 20 and 30 people snaked back from her table, people with copies of *Vineyard Summer* under their arms, waiting patiently for the artist's signature.

But in fairness to the artists who were so nearly eclipsed by all the fuss over

Miss Shaw, let's begin by turning to their work — for it is very good indeed.

In the long hallway space of the Granary Gallery hang the photo-realistic paintings of Steve Mills. All his works are oils on linens, but at first glance you might think they are printed on Kodak's Finest.

The paintings of Steve Mills owe their very existence to photography. Each of his images begins as a photograph, which is painstakingly transposed in oils. The attention to detail and the reproduction of light's every nuance are so perfect in his works that a photograph of any one of his paintings in this newspaper might easily be mistaken for the original photograph on which it is based.

But make no mistake: Steve Mills is no passionless copy-artist. His paintings are filled with amazing little accomplishments — the gleam of a studio lamp off the waxy sheen of a still-life apple; the perfect recording of summer haze the picture titled *Islander*, his painting of the favorite SSA vessel

making its turn at West Chop; the illusion of depth that draws you into the woods in his painting of early sunlight pouring through trees around a fairway at Farm Neck.

Many of Mr. Mills' paintings for this show are of the Vineyard, depicting favorite places with a rich emotional resonance for folks who love them. But these paintings are also, always, about the light.

Around the corner on the courtyard walls are the sun-filled watercolors of Karen Larson. When her fans think of her work, they think first of Camp Ground scenes, brimming with scrollwork on houses and flowers in yards around them, all lovingly set down beneath a sky of cumulus-studded blue. This show will not disappoint them.

There are plenty of Miss Larson's affectionate Camp Ground (and Ocean Park) scenes in this Granary show. In these, as in all her work, there is a solid underpinning of sketch that is almost draftsmanlike in its precision, but guided by an artist's unerring sense for harmonious composition. Over this skeleton, she builds her bright and happy watercolors, finally breaking free from the confines of drawn lines in the play of light in her painted skies.

Don't let the architectural precision of Karen Larson's paintings fool you. Look into those skies and appreciate

also her sense of light, and her ability to work with watercolor at its most spontaneous and free. One of her most haunting images in this show is *Golden Windows*, in which a beachfront house reflects the clouds and dying light of an up-Island sunset. The windows and railings draw the eye into the picture, but it is the sky that steals the show.

Finally, what to say about the photography of Alison Shaw? Perhaps we should begin with full disclosure, saying right up front that Miss Shaw is a colleague and friend. Then we could observe that she's doing wonderful things with vegetables this year — her farmers' market still-lives of squashes and flowers and peppers are among her most appetizing images ever. We could safely report that Miss Shaw's colors are still the super-saturated tones of the day's darker margins, and that she continues to find ways to use these high-impact tones to powerful effect in her art. We could note with gratitude that she con-

tinues, even as she explores the outer limits of color, to produce elegant black-and-white images of almost Oriental beauty, and that for this her followers are grateful. We could observe that a highly personal vision is immediately evident and unmistakable in her work, and that this of course is the mark of the mature artist. But some of this is trivial, and the rest has been said already, in last year's review and in the ones before that.

After enjoying the photography of Alison Shaw, so filled with energy and vision, words are just so much noise, colorless and futile. Better simply to invite you to the Granary Gallery this week or next, to take in the delightful show.