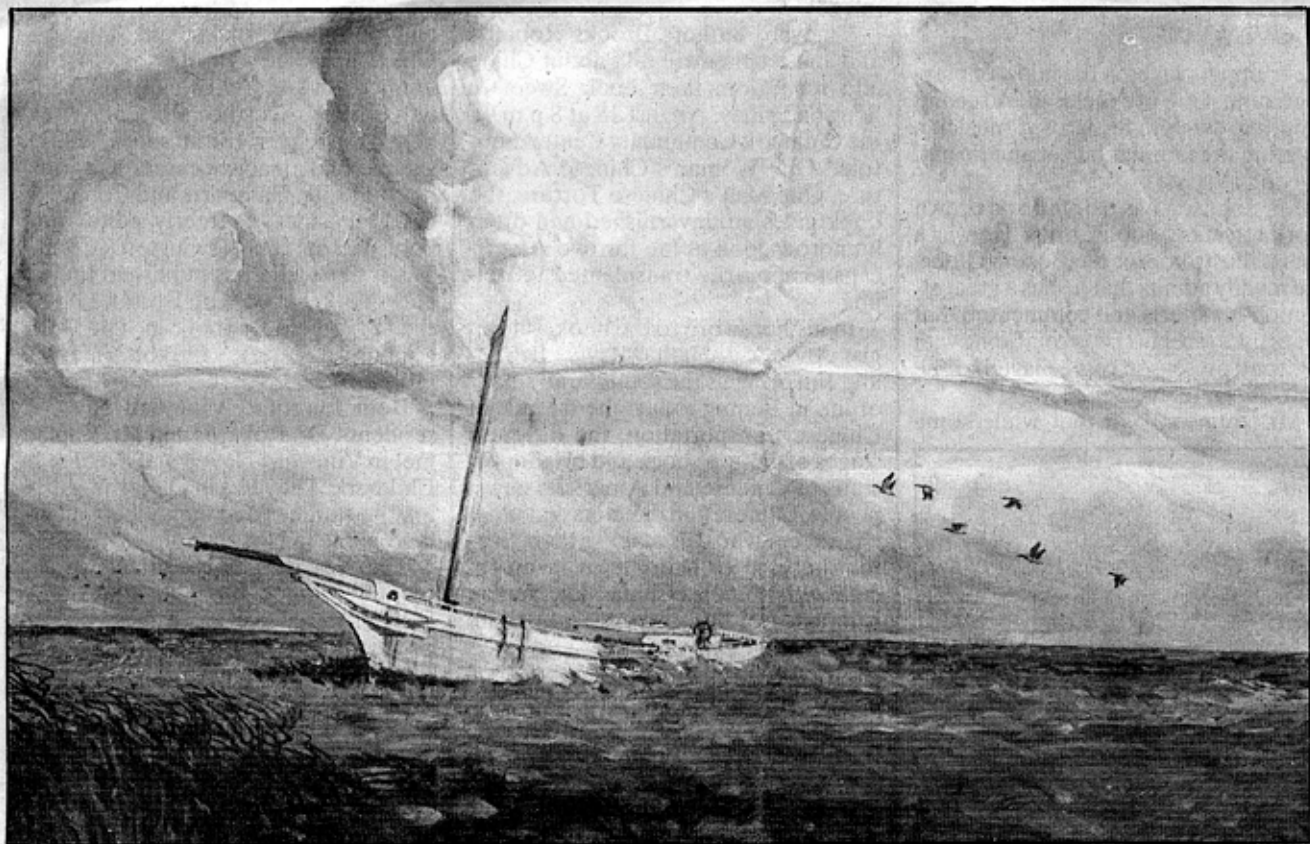


# Gallery Show Is Study in Contrasts



PAINTING BY JAMES A. MITCHELL 3RD.

By NIS KILDEGAARD

It's been said that representational art is pictures of things, and modern art is pictures about things. This week's show at the Granary Gallery in West Tisbury has both, plus something more — pictures of pictures of things.

Let's start with the modern art; that would be the vigorous, color-filled paintings of Lois Mailou Jones. Born in 1905, Miss Jones is a towering figure in the world of art, and this show at the Granary leaves you with no question that her eminence is deserved. On the gallery's courtyard walls she has hung images from around the world, from Hong Kong to Gay Head, each one a vivid celebration of life.

Miss Jones' palette has a distinctly Caribbean flavor which carries across from her paintings of Haiti to her Vineyard scenes. Even her Island ponds have that glowing tropical blue. When she paints village scenes, often from the perspective of a nearby hilltop, she plays with the rhythms of the buildings' geometry in an almost Cubist way. And her small scenes from the village markets of Port-au-Prince have a distinctly jazzlike energy. These are happy paintings, and a joy to behold.

The pictures of things in this three-artist show are provided in masterful oils and watercolors by James A. Mitchell 3rd, and the subject of his art is almost invariably the sea. These paintings are the polar opposites of still-lives, capturing as they do all the vitality and motion of the sea and the ships that sail across them.

This is truly salty art. Let yourself be absorbed into the power and grace of *Big Sloop Hard Pressed* — or just about any of Mr. Mitchell's sailing scenes, for that matter — and you will

begin to understand why the sea holds such a fascinating sway over artists.

Turbulence is a phenomenon that has fascinated mathematicians of late, but the best artists understand it in a way that number-crunchers never will. Look at the roiling waves in the foreground of *Schooner Yacht with Working Fisherman*, and you will wonder at how Mr. Mitchell has managed, with such bold strokes of his painter's brush, to say something so true about the nature and movement of turbulent water.

This week's show at the Granary Gallery also highlights the paintings of Steve Mills, one of which proved to be the undisputed sight-gag of the gallery's summer season. It's entitled *A Corner of the Vineyard*, and in the finest *tromp l'oeil* tradition it looks for all the world like an actual cork bulletin board festooned with little pieces of Island summer life — an SSA schedule, an All Star Video card, a Mink Meadows greens ticket, an invitation to Eisenstaedt's 95th birthday party. Many gallery visitors mistook it for an actual bulletin board until they got up close.

Mr. Mills is a master of photo-realism, which could also be described as paintings of pictures of things. In fact, his paintings reproduce his photographs so well that they often end up saying as much about the medium of photography as about the scenes he has chosen first to photograph, and then to paint.

Consider his painting entitled *Daylilies*, for example: The flowers bloom in the foreground, dazzling yellow in the sunlight, while the background of a stone wall and country path is thrown into soft focus. Focus, in a painting? It makes you stop and think. Or look at two adjacent paintings, *Racing Into Edgartown* and a smaller one entitled *Sketch*. They could have been painted from adjacent frames on a single roll of film.

The paintings of Steve Mills would be far less enjoyable if he were anything less than a skilled photographer with an artist's eye. His paintings are a wonder for most viewers, and the question often asked in amazement is, How does he do that? The irony is that Mr. Mills could probably give you a far more thorough description of his artistic process than could, say, an artist like James Mitchell or Lois Mailou Jones. And although his transcriptions of the sunlight glinting off the ocean waves have a photo-finish perfection, the guess here is that Mr. Mitchell, who has translated the motion of the waves directly into the strokes of his brush, has the deeper knowledge of the subject.