

Artist to Collect

Dominik Modlinski





previous page, First Light, oil on canvas, 60" x 60"

above, Life in the Valley, oil on board, 20" x 30"



above, Valley Of White Pines, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"

below, Western Surf, oil on board, 32" x 72"



## Into the Wild The Artistic Journeys of Dominik Modlinski

written by Kylie Serebrin

### An Artistic Wanderer

Dominik Modlinski is not your typical landscape painter. He is instead the creator of paintings that chronicle his innumerable 'artist journeys' – whereby he thrusts himself into extraordinary and unfamiliar wilderness experiences for extended periods of travel across rugged and barren terrains on an infinite global quest to capture the majesty of nature at point-blank range. Throughout his adventures, Dominik explores and records the world's most spectacular vistas. He navigates these remote places, amidst harsh and extreme weather conditions, in order to access the raw essence of their identities.

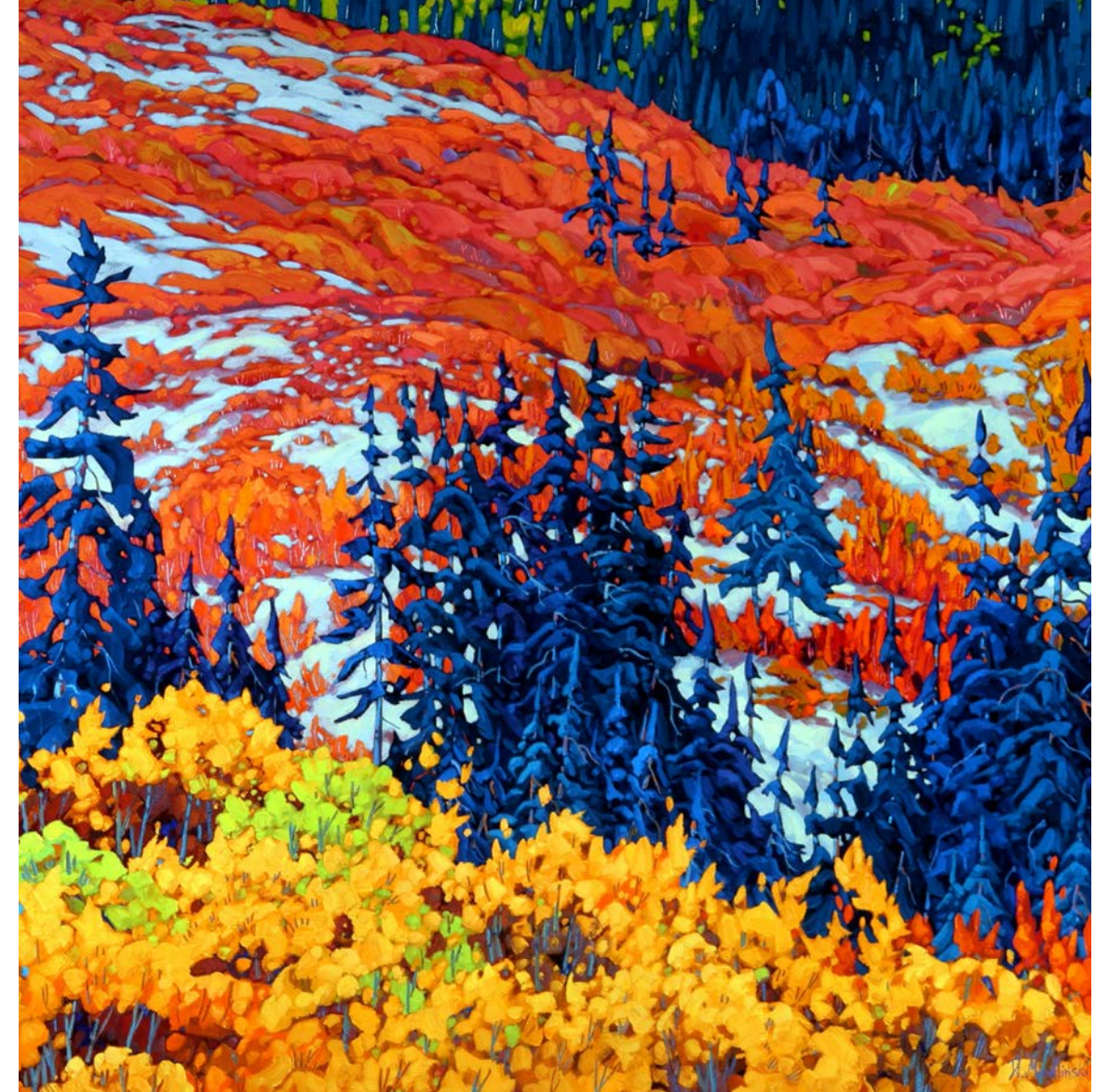
While his route is not always predetermined, Dominik's destination is fixed: to raise environmental awareness through paintings of

vanishing splendor. By documenting his awe-inspiring visual encounters, Dominik invites us to witness scenes of sublime, untamed beauty that are both fragile and endangered. In cooperation with his stunning photography and evocative blogging, Dominik's paintings strive to communicate the need to preserve our planet's glorious and diverse landscapes, in light of their rapid devastation, and to inspire his audience to take action in the earth's defense.

Dominik J. Modlinski was born in Warsaw, Poland on November 20th, 1970. He began studying printmaking at a very early age, before attending Warsaw's School for Artistic Crafts and Design where he learned the arts of jewelry making and engraving. In 1987, Dominik immigrated to Canada and enrolled at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, graduating with honours in 1993. It was while studying landscape painting at



above, Coastal Spirit, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"



below, Leaves of Autumn, oil on board, 20" x 30"



Kluane Foothills, oil on board, 48" x 48"

college that he found himself powerfully drawn to the wilderness of Northern Ontario. Shortly after graduating, Dominik packed up and moved to Algoma, Ontario to paint at the Algoma School of Landscape Arts.

"Then, in 1995, I had the privilege of meeting the great Gernot Dick – a professional landscape painter and the guiding spirit behind the Atlin Art Centre in British Columbia," Dominik recalls. It was a meeting that changed Dominik's life forever. "Gernot was the most influential person I've met over the course of my career, because he demonstrated that an artist must sacrifice everything else and dedicate him or herself to creating the best possible work. He taught me that the only way to attain artistic success is to live and breathe art and to permeate landscapes, up close and personal. Most importantly, he showed me that this is not selfishness; rather, it is an artist's responsibility to nurture his or her gift." Inspired

by Gernot's lessons, Dominik vowed to distinguish himself from his contemporaries by testing his physical limits out in the wilderness and risking his life to capture the most authentic and intimate experiences of nature.

Thus, an artistic wanderer was born. Since then, Dominik has continued to pursue his passion for plein air painting in various locations around Canada and the world. In the early 1990s, Dominik's travels led him to the untamed parts of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. "The dramatic landscapes of the far north called to me," he explains. "It was there where I truly found my inner creativity and voice."

Since that time – now over 15 years ago – Dominik regularly returns to his isolated cabin in the northern village of Atlin, BC to explore and paint. "This wild location borders on the Yukon and Alaskan territories, offering me access to diverse and spectacular ecosystems," he points



left, Northern Memories, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"  
top, Deep in the Woods, oil on board, 24" x 30"  
middle, Fire Glory, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"  
bottom, Autumn Light, oil on board, 11" x 14"



Northern Dream, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"

out. "It is an environment that provides seemingly limitless inspiration, particularly as the region transforms with the ebb and flow of Canada's four magnificent seasons."

Dominik's northern travels inspired him to stretch his explorations further abroad, visiting many of the earth's last remaining untouched locations. Some of his most extreme painting expeditions have taken him across entire continents and hemispheres, such as Antarctica, the High Arctic and Greenland, and Patagonia. Dominik has also ventured throughout the wilds of Namibia and South Africa, Southwestern USA and the Baja California and Copper Canyon coasts.

"All of my most memorable stories and best paintings are rooted in these wilderness explorations, because only by really being there can I focus on the micro and macro relationships of shapes and forms in nature – the dynamic coexistence of smaller organic life forms in the foreground, the more massive geological entities in the background and the overarching dance of light and shadows," Dominik explains. "Along

my travels, what I strive for is not to capture the photorealistic details of places, but the essence of landscapes: their textures, smells and overall atmospheres. In short, I paint my spiritual bond to the places I visit."

#### Oh, the Places He's Gone!

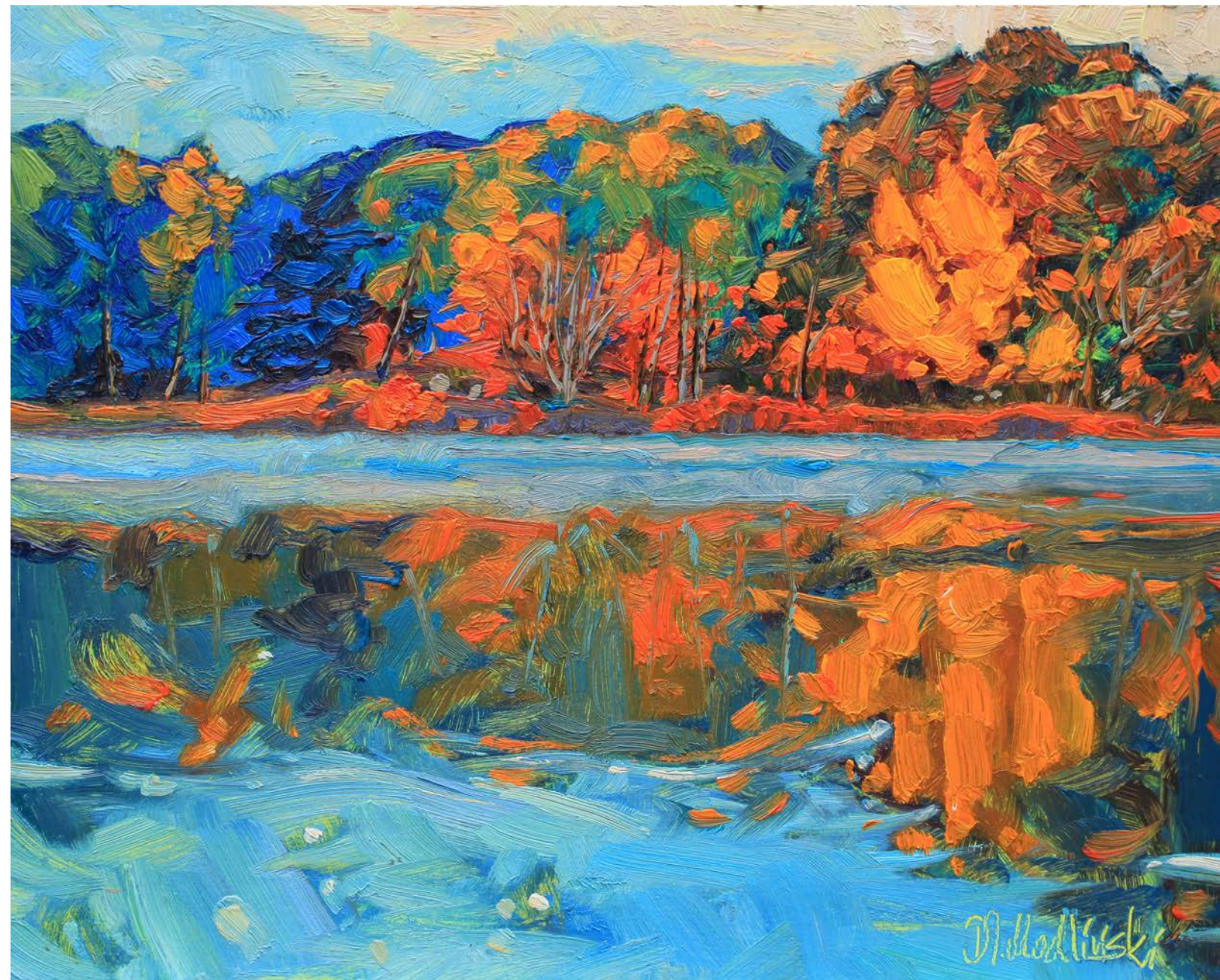
Two years ago, Dominik's travels carried him through the Republic of South Africa and Namibia, with stops in Johannesburg, Mozambique, Kruger Park, Natal, the Drakensburg Mountains and Cape Town along the way. It was a journey of more than 10,500 km over the course of 5 weeks, with weather ranging from blistering heat to hurricane conditions. "It's not until one steps foot on the African continent that one realizes how incredibly complex and entirely beautiful the land and its inhabitants are," Dominik insists.

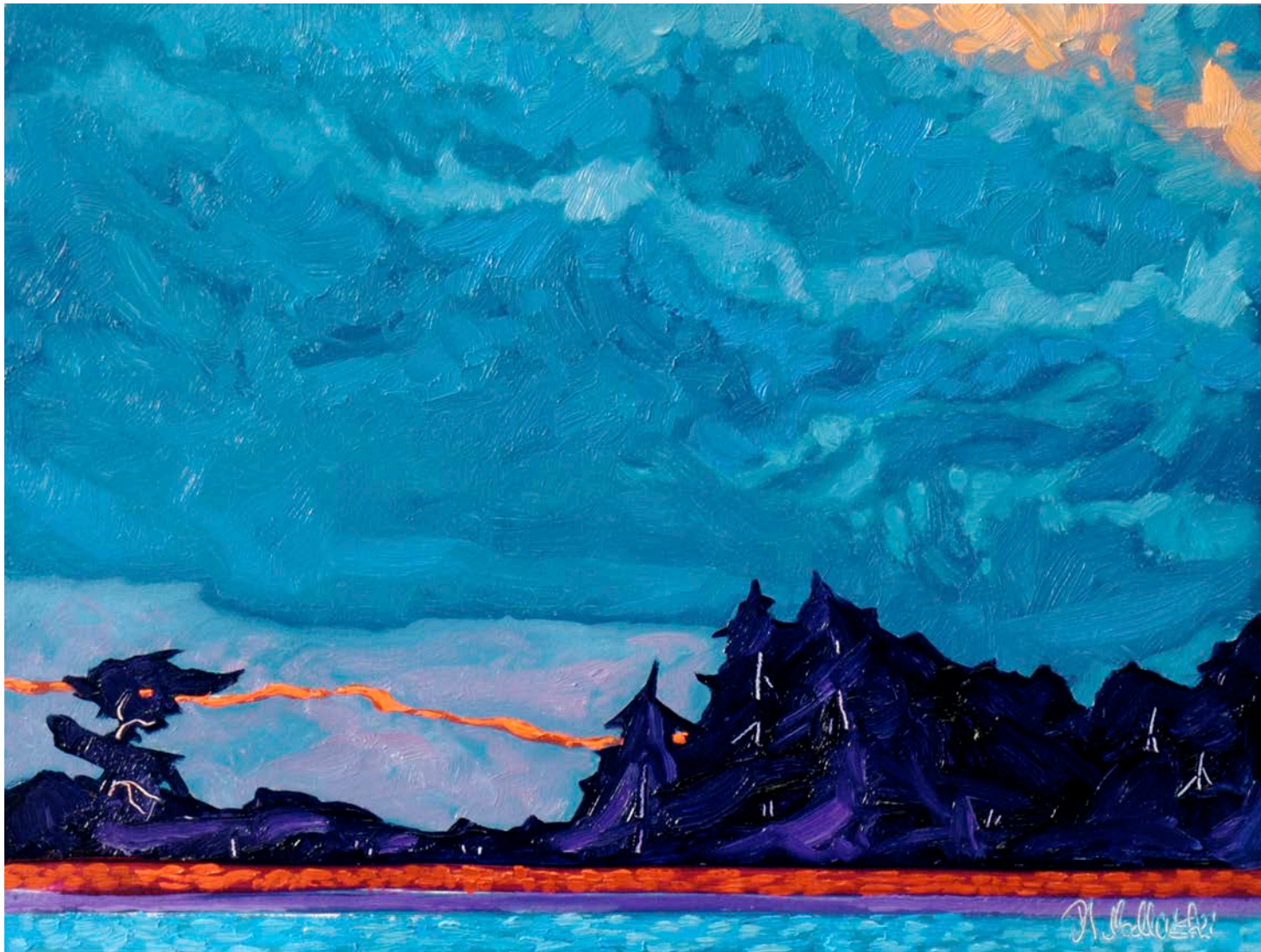
For him, one of the adventure's highlights was his visit to Namib Naukluft Park. "It's a place where a landscape painter or photographer could easily spend days or weeks capturing countless compositions in the ever-changing light. One



above, Orange above - Valleys below, oil on canvas, 32" x 72"

below, River's Glow, oil on board, 11" x 14"





Indigo Dream, oil on board, 11" x 14"



Island Reflections, oil on board, 11" x 14"

morning, I was picked up from my camp and taken a few miles into the desert where two hot air balloons were being prepared for takeoff, and I enjoyed the most spectacular sunrise flight over the mountains and dunes," he describes, still in awe of the memory.

Since that time, Dominik also ventured through America's southwest, en route to Nevada to participate in the Burning Man Festival. "Attending Burning Man was something that was on my 'bucket list' for many years and now that I've seen it, I believe it should be experienced by everyone at least once in their lives. Our day-to-day reality dulls our creative perceptions of the world around us, making us feel like our wildest dreams are unattainable, but at Burning Man creativity knows no limits and individual expression abounds! The seven-day festivities are filled with music, the building of artworks and the availability of any temptation one's heart desires. Yet, the atmosphere is very peaceful

and convivial," Dominik shares.

Passing through Abiquiu, New Mexico – where Georgia O'Keefe lived and painted for decades – was another climax of this expedition. "After visiting this area, I understand why she was so drawn to that landscape," Dominik explains, "there is such a remarkable mixture of gentleness and drama to its shape and light."

Most recently, Dominik spent 5 weeks exploring the coasts of Baja California and Copper Canyon, Mexico on a BMW R1150 Rockster motorcycle with a good friend. "The road was so full of twists and turns. Our path winded along beautiful hills dotted with meadows and sparkling green pastures. We pulled off many times to get closer to the scenic views in order to soak up the afternoon sun and for me to sketch. At some points, it took a lot of skill to manoeuvre our bikes through the deep sand and rocky terrain and we certainly took our share of soft falls!" he recalls. "We stopped in a

place called Loreto Bay, which was my absolutely favourite area along the coast. There, my days were filled with kayaking, visiting the colourful streets of Loreto and of course drawing. The little labyrinth of islands along the coast there creates a visual paradise beyond imagination and the sea is abundant with whales, sea lions, seals and sea turtles." There is no doubt in Dominik's mind that he will return to Loreto Bay in the near future.

#### Between Adventures

While travelling out of a backpack, Dominik creates small-scale plein air paintings that he is able to transport with him. These 'sketches' are done on board with quick, expressive brushwork. Regardless of the weather, he never abandons these sketches before their completion, as they are usually composed with the intention of being translated into larger works back in his studios. "It's crucial that I gather sufficient information

about a landscape, especially its colour harmonies and effects, so that I am able to fully revisit the experience after I've moved on. I absolutely refuse to leave a site until I know I have an unlimited cache of impressions and remembrances of a subject," he notes. "My studios are, therefore, simply an extension of my wilderness travels. They are where I pore over my travel sketches and photographs and explore via memory." These studios include one at Dominik's home on Vancouver Island and one at his cabin in Atlin.

#### Determination, Patience and Focus

When not travelling or painting, Dominik pursues his second passion: martial arts. His martial arts training began in Poland at age 16 and upon his immigration to Canada he promised himself he would learn Karate-Do. Within a month of arriving in the new country, and with very limited language skills, Dominik was studying under



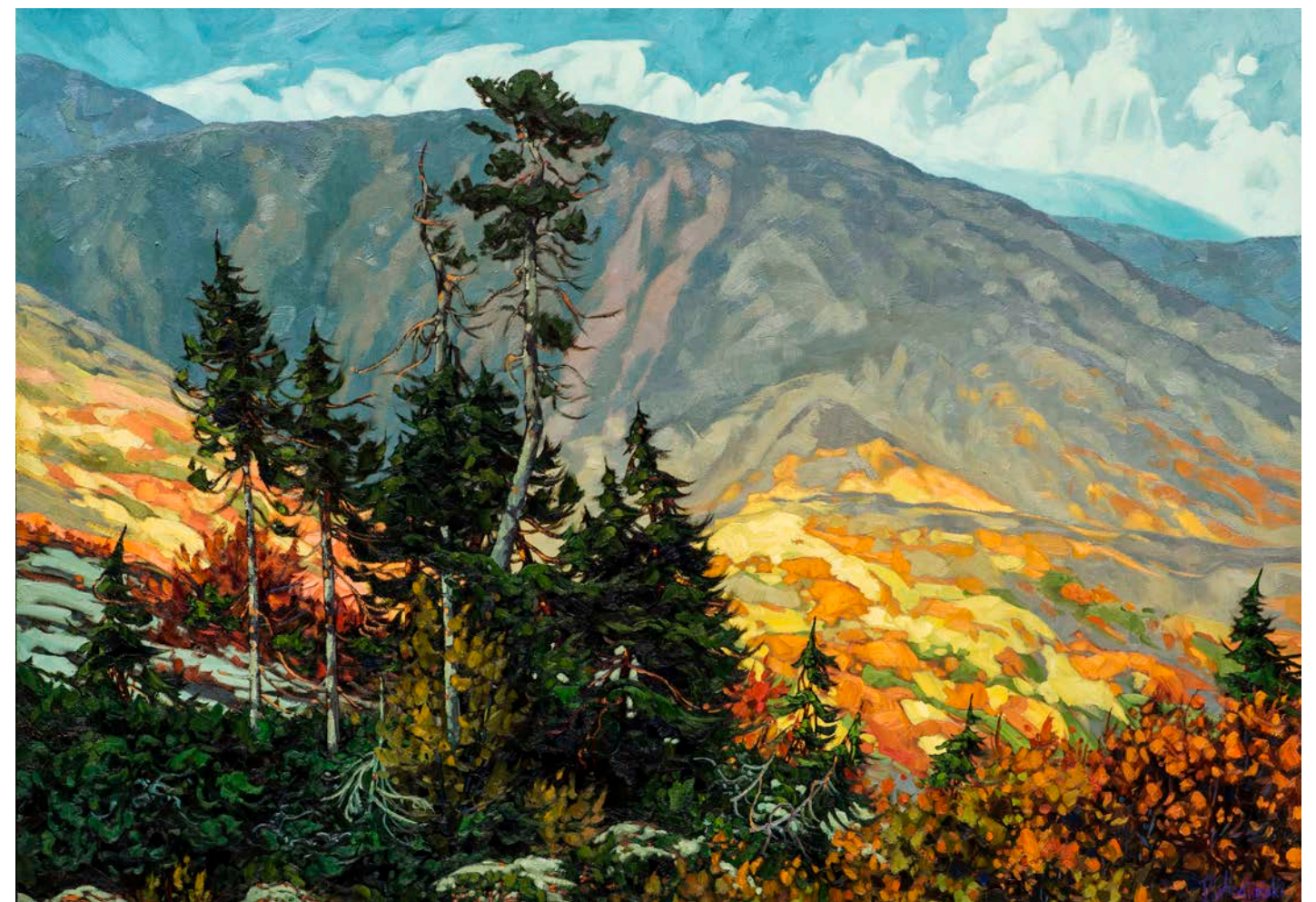
above, Algonquin Water, oil on board, 11" x 14"



above, Guardians Of Peace, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



below, Tundra, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



below, Northern Legacy, oil on canvas, 43" x 60"



above, Sunny Portage, oil on canvas, 40" x 40"



right, Cascading Light, oil on canvas, 60" x 46"

Sensei Gerry Campbell at the Orillia Martial Arts Centre. Just as starting a new life as an artist in a foreign land required supreme dedication and persistent study, so too did Dominik's journey from White to Black Belt.

Today, Dominik has been training for over 25 years and currently holds a rank of 5th degree Black Belt. Since he travels so often for his art, Dominik developed a habit of taking his karate training uniform with him everywhere he goes. "This has allowed me to practice martial arts with many wonderful people across the globe in numerous unexpected and inspirational places," he states. When at home in Nanaimo, Dominik currently studies the Wing Chun style under Sifu Bob Stevenson.

To some, the practices of martial arts and landscape painting might seem worlds apart, but to Dominik they are inextricably linked. "My unwavering dedication to my art career is deeply rooted in my martial art studies. Karate taught me how to become proficient at a craft through determination, patience and focus – all of which

have been instrumental in defining me as a painter. After all, it is from all of my life's journeys and personal growth that my paintings are born."

To follow Dominik Modlinski on future astonishing adventures, visit [www.paintingjourneys.com](http://www.paintingjourneys.com). To contact Dominik directly email [dominik@paintingjourneys.com](mailto:dominik@paintingjourneys.com).

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