

## *Nina Anderson Coler*

"Nina Coler grew up in Buckland where her family has lived for five generations. Nina hopes her watercolor landscapes can help preserve open space and rural life by sharing the beauty of the "dying architecture of a way of life--I want people to see my work and say, Oh, we need to preserve this." Her art is the perfect complement to her 88 acre, off-the-grid homestead in Ashfield, her deep family roots, and her community involvement that includes being on the board of directors of the Franklin County Land Trust. Raising her children was a central focus for Nina for many years. Recently she has had the opportunity and pleasure of spending time with her 15 month old grandson, so hours in her studio have been shorter than usual, but she still aims at several mornings a week of painting if she can.

Certainly her art career is truly home-grown in the best sense of that word--she learned to paint by taking workshops alongside her father. "He was having so much fun at these classes with Joan Boryta I said Let's go together!" That was 24 years ago. Nina studied with Joan until she felt her work was taking on a bit too much of her teachers style, and she struck out on her own. Another inspiration was the work of Buckland's own famous landscape painter, Robert Strong Woodward (1885-1957).

Nina did not study art while she was in college at UMass, she studied dance. "I think a lot of things are similar in composition with dance and with painting. You have your focal point, and your line of action. A diagonal is always more exciting than a horizontal and it's the same for movement. Fast or slow can be like long or short strokes, same with cool and warm. It's a balancing act in order to make an interesting composition. You want to have it all to make it exciting."

Winter is her favorite subject. The greens of summer leave her exasperated with their abundant monotony, and she's happy to see them fall. "I love the blue, blue shadows of snow, and the lines of the world are there, exposed for you, like the bones of the earth." Nina does not paint plein aire, but goes out on skis with her camera to gather images to work with in her home studio. These serve as a foundation for more emotive interpretations of the landscape

she loves and knows so well. (Perhaps the bare trees are also dancers on a stage?)

She admits that each painting contains a crescendo of doubt halfway through, when everything seems wrong, but "you just push through it" to the other side and then there is relief and joy. Nina would like to take some more classes again. "I am so hooked on watercolor... It's a lifelong thing to improve yourself. Sometimes I can feel myself tightening up with it, but I try to stay loose." She'd also like to try her hand at oil painting some time, in particular she would like to be able to add the lights on top of the painting instead of planning and building the darks around them as watercolorists have to do.

Next door neighbor and fellow Co-op member Sarah Holbrook was the contact who first put Nina in touch with the Co-op gallery. Initially, the meetings felt very foreign to her. Used to chairing various town committees, the tangents and emotional issues of monthly meetings seemed superfluous. As she got to know everyone and understand and appreciate the issues, it no longer felt strange. "It's such a supportive group, it's not just a business, it's a group of friends. And I've been very happy being a part of it."