



On the Maine coast, students roam fifty acres of woodland in search of inspiration.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VERNON DOUCETTE

## Painting the Wilds

CFA professor hosts a summer retreat in the woods of Maine

EACH SUMMER FOR the past fifteen years, John Walker, a College of Fine Arts professor and a nationally known painter, has opened his seaside home near Damariscotta, Maine, to more than twenty graduate painting students, who spend a week roaming the fifty acres of woods and coastline, hunting for just the right landscape, the right colors, the right light.

"There are two houses," says Walker, "and they distribute themselves around and somehow we accommodate them, with the help of portable loos."

Each day, the students seek out pine-shaded tide pools and changing sun-

light. They lay blankets over windswept fields of grass and wildflowers, perch their easels on a wooden dock, or sit back in an Adirondack chair facing the rocky shore. Wherever they can find inspiration, they sketch and paint.

In the afternoon, Walker finds them, wherever they are, to check out and discuss their work. He expects his students to come away from the experience with an understanding of what it takes to work as an artist.

"For most of them," he says, "it's the first time they've actually stood on their feet for a long period of time and seriously looked at

some subject matter that is constantly being changed by the light and the weather."

But the weeklong trip is not all work. When the brushes are washed and the canvases are laid out to dry, teacher and students gather for dinner. "It's an event," Walker says. "You'd be surprised how many of these kids have never eaten a lobster."

When it's time to turn in, the students unroll sleeping bags on slipcovered couches, single beds, or the floor. The next day they'll get back to work, searching for a new and better vista.

NATHANIEL BOYLE



John Walker

### WEB EXTRA

Watch a slide show of students painting at John Walker's home at [www.bu.edu/bostonia](http://www.bu.edu/bostonia).