



Island artist Diana Cherbuliez's Percent for Art sculpture "Home" hangs in the lobby of the kindergarten-12th grade Vinalhaven School. BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTOS BY ERIN FREDRICH

# Safe harbor

*Artist Cherbuliez evokes feeling of home with lobster-boat sculpture at Vinalhaven School*

BY LEANNE M. ROBICHEAU  
OF THE NEWS STAFF

Coming into Carvers Harbor by ferry, passengers are greeted by the smell of fish bait and the sight of wharves piled high with barnacle-encrusted lobster traps. Lobster boats — their clean lines standing out in sharp contrast against the deep blue sea — bob at moorings in the inlet.

Stepping ashore, old white clapboard homes, worn vehicles and cracked, potholed roads project the same weathered quality. The largest of Maine's inhabited islands — 15 miles from the mainland — Vinalhaven boasts 1,200 year-round residents. In this far-flung community, no one misses much. Everybody knows everyone and their business.

"It's all out in the open," Vinalhaven artist Diana (pronounced Deanna) Cherbuliez declared, speaking of island life. "It's blatant."

Vinalhaven's fleet of lobster boats — bows and riding sails all pointed in the same direction, as they are

blown by the wind — were the inspiration behind "Home," a kinetic sculpture recently installed in the new Vinalhaven School and completed two years ago.

Cherbuliez conceived of "Home," capturing the symmetry and unadorned beauty of the lobster boats, as part of a Percent for Art project arising from construction of the island's new school. The classic-style lobster boats — their decks, roofs, wash rails, hulls and bottoms painted buff, bikini blue, battleship gray, Hattaras white and other traditional colors — float suspended from black steel rods in the lofty school entrance. An aluminum superstructure supports the piece. The eight fiberglass boats move in the direction of the wind as an outdoor wind vane relays an electronic message.

"You see the nuts and bolts," Cherbuliez continued. "That's what I love about the fishing community. "We don't just eat lobsters, we live with the traps on our lawns. We accept the way things work. I didn't want this sculpture to be a magic thing."

See *Sculpture*, Page C2



Sculptor Diana Cherbuliez says she was inspired by the sight of Vinalhaven's lobster fleet clustered in Carvers Harbor.

# Sculpture

Continued from Page C1

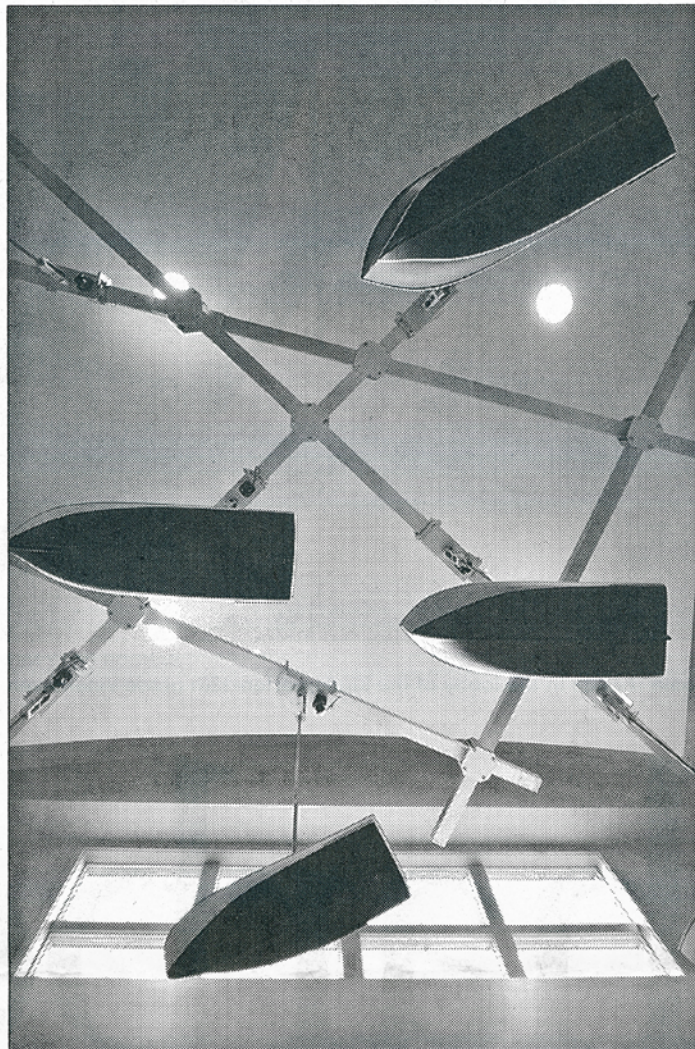
Designed by Oak Point Associates of Biddeford, the new Vinalhaven School and its various "islands," or building sections, was inspired by author Margaret Wise Brown's children's classic "The Little Island," first published in 1942. Brown, who summered on Vinalhaven and died at the age of 42 in 1952, authored more than 100 books, including "Good Night Moon" and "The Runaway Bunny." She won the Caldecott Award for Most Distinguished Picture Book for Children for "The Little Island."

Built at a cost of \$14 million, Vinalhaven School's construction included funds to commission public art as part of Maine's Percent for Art program. Under Maine law, 1 percent of construction funds for all state-funded building projects must be set aside to commission original artwork for public display, whether it is in a new public school or renovated community college.

Since 1979, more than 1,300 works of art have been purchased or commissioned through the Maine Percent for Art program. State buildings account for 20 percent of the total. University and community college projects represent an additional 20 percent, while public schools take up 60 percent. Public school participation is optional, but has steadily risen from 14 percent to more than 90 percent over the past 15 years.

In keeping with the Maine Percent for Art law, Vinalhaven School officials publicized their building project and received proposals for pieces from scores of artists. Cherbuliez, who makes her home on Vinalhaven, and Glenburn artist Elizabeth Busch were chosen.

Busch was awarded \$20,000 and created a kinetic sculpture, titled "Ebb and Flow," which hangs in the school cafeteria. The piece consists of nine murals made of woven strips of theater gel, a type of heavy, col-



BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY ERIN FREDRICHS  
**Sculptor Diana Cherbuliez kept the lobster boats clear of gear so as not to detract from their beauty.**

ored acetate. In between the murals are five "fantasy" houses, representing the island people. The giant panels are framed in steel armatures and are suspended from the cafeteria ceiling.

"They're about islands," Busch described.

Originally from Scarsdale, N.Y., Cherbuliez earned a master's degree in fine arts from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University and a bachelor's degree in fine arts from San Francisco Art Institute. Her sculptures are exhibited at numerous New York and Maine galleries.

As a child, Cherbuliez vacationed summers on Vinalhaven. Two decades ago, she decided to live on the island part of the year and made it her permanent

home 13 years ago. She is building her own home and studio there.

Cherbuliez submitted her proposal for the lobster boat installment anonymously. She saw the familiar sight of the island's lobster boat fleet clustered in Carvers Harbor as a symbol of home. In fact, the sculpture is the first thing people see when they enter the school.

"While the exterior of the [school] building is architecturally derivative of the traditional summer residences, this sculpture inside the school takes its form from the year-round present-day working community," the artist wrote in her proposal. "A boat is an exceptional example of man working with nature; he must

continually respond to both the ocean's resources and her dictates. A fishing fleet is also an apt metaphor for the way we wish our students to work within the requirements of school."

Many Percent for Art committee members were moved when they read and examined Cherbuliez's concept proposal.

"I love it," SAD 8 Superintendent George Joseph recalled. "Who wouldn't? This piece is such an integral part of the community."

Cherbuliez was awarded \$23,000 and she personally raised an additional \$10,000 from private contributors. She also donated nine months of her own time for the project, which involved many hands. Island builder David Moyer constructed nine fiberglass hulls of differing shapes and sizes, while island graphic artist Kathy Bray meticulously painted the boats' bows, wheelhouse roofs and wash rails. Mechanical engineer Peter Lindenmuth of Dorchester, Mass., and Rockland welder Larry Wildes were also major players in the project.

Cherbuliez did not want the boats to look like "doll furniture," so she deliberately left out details such as lobster traps and gear.

"The boats are so beautiful, you have to look past that. That's implied," she explained.

The beauty of the school lobby — where the lobster boats hang — is heightened by local granite gracing the walls. The 16 slabs came from Swenson Quarry and were donated by sculptor Wes Reed. A compass rose pattern was woven into the linoleum floor below the sculpture.

Cherbuliez spent four months sanding and putting the boats. She likened the piece to a giant erector set when it came time to put it all together. She says everyone pitched in.

Many islanders "just came and helped," she said. "It's the nature of the community."

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