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GALLERIES

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Portraits of power, perception



The sunlight gathered on the thin strip of water in Christopher Armstrong's "Floater" rivets the eye.

By [Cate McQuaid](#)

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(Sandra Allen)

CHRISTOPHER ARMSTRONG:

Paintings

DON KIRBY:

Photographs

At: Clark Gallery, 145 Lincoln Road, Lincoln, through Sept. 30. 781-259-8303,

www.clarkgallery.com

Visionary details

Nature and landscape are one of the oldest subjects in art and bad landscapes are legion: pretty and trite, iterations of a bland imagined ideal. Good landscapes require deep attention from an artist willing to see something with an original eye. Often, as in Allen's case, that's a matter of examining every knot and gnarl. Painter Christopher Armstrong brings that kind of attention to the sea in his works at Clark Gallery.

You might think his "Floater" focuses mainly on the mountain of cumulus clouds that fills the painting, but what rivets the eye is the thin strip of water below, gathering bright sunlight on its surface in slender ridges of white paint, topping off several degrees of blue, from aqua to a serene gray. "Dorsal" lands us in the drink like a swimmer. Diamonds of sunlight glitter off the softly rising waves. A transparent haze softens the horizon line.

Also at the Clark Gallery, Don Kirby's stunning photographs of wheat fields were shot on black-and-white film with a large-format camera. Patterns appear in the fields based on what has been planted or harvested. Sometimes, as in "Bluegrass, Jackson Road, Rockford, Washington, 1997," that pattern has the contrast and groove of a zebra's stripes. The stripes accentuate the soft contours of the land.