



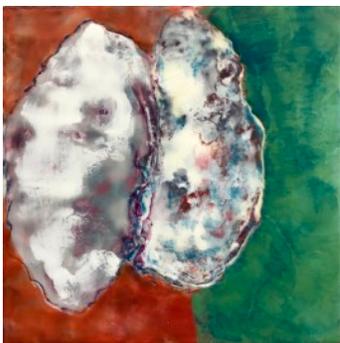
In response to Joan Stuart Ross
Oyster Shell Couple Red & Green

I once lived on an oyster farm. Well, what would have been an oyster farm. It had been created by a friend of mine. He had dug channels on his wetland property in southern New Jersey and cut hundreds of rounds of “tire beads” from old car tires. These he tossed into the sandy shallows of the Delaware Bay. Then he waited while thousands of fertilized oyster eggs attached themselves to the circles of rubber and began to grow into “oyster seed.”

A season later, those “tire beads,” with their happily growing baby oysters, were gathered and brought across Cape May County to a tidal, salt marsh by the Great Sound. There, strung like lanterns and hung from rafts in the two big channels that were flushed daily by a combination of creek water and the briny, tidal water of the sound, the oysters had grown succulent and ready for harvesting. But the County illegally ran raw sewage from its complex across the marsh into the pristine creeks that ran through it. This shut down oyster farm, a legal and quiet enterprise created by a marine biology loving, medical doctor. Years of lawsuits later, the county was let off scot-free. So much for the oyster farm.

Shimmering essence of protoplasm, are oysters; basic life stuff, held and housed in their own, solid hands. Oysters, when challenged by a bit of grit, respond by making a pearl. An important life lesson for all of us.

Regina Ress
Roaming Writers



Joan Stuart Ross, *Oyster Shell Couple Red & Green*, encaustic, on panel, 12 x 12 inches