

## Exhibit showcases photography of Robert Hallock

■ Continued from C1

print quality, which is really important to me."

In his latest exhibit, "Out and About," at Amherst Town Hall through the end of June, Hallock offers a wide range of black-and-white photos, from landscapes in the Valley and further afield, to still-life shots and abstract images from the natural world; the pictures date from roughly the last 19 years. His eye is attuned to small details, in both nature and human-made settings, that could easily be overlooked.

As he writes in exhibition notes, in many of the abstract images in the show, "I see something beyond the abstract, something more familiar." Sometimes those images come to him quickly, Hallock notes, while others only emerge after a longer period, perhaps a week or more.

The exhibit is displayed on three floors at Town Hall, and the images are grouped somewhat by theme. The first floor includes varied photos that don't fit neatly into one category, mostly landscapes and still portraits. The second floor features pictures taken on or near water — fishing boats, foggy coastlines, sand dunes — while the third floor offers abstract images and photos with interesting textures, like ivy looping across a weathered door.

### Have camera, will travel

On the first floor, Hallock has put together photos taken during trips to Italy, including out-of-the-way places in Venice and a beautiful view of the Dolomite Mountains in the northeastern part of the country, a range known for its distinctive color and saw-toothed peaks.

In "Soul of the Dolomites," perhaps the exhibit's most dramatic landscape, a wedge of mountains — solid walls of rock — dominates the frame. Fingers of conifers run partly up their sides; clouds drift overhead, one touching a mountain-top. In the foreground, a broad meadow slopes downhill to a

wooden hut, putting nature's grandeur in neat perspective. It's a vision of open space and semi-wilderness that's not often associated with densely populated Italy.

For a small group of photos called "Unseen Venice," Hallock wandered down back alleys in the famous tourist city to look for something to photograph besides gondolas, canals and churches. In one, corroded ship anchors are clustered in a stairwell inside a stone building with rough-hewn walls. In another, a line of laundry hangs outside another old stone building; the drying wash appears very white against the rough walls, where plaster has fallen off to reveal underlying bricks. A weathered wooden window frame adds to the sense of timelessness the shot evokes.

Some of Hallock's images are from closer to home — trees and shoreline along an inlet in the Acadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton, a partially frozen pond in Plainfield — and they're not just of natural settings. The most striking might be a picture of the front of the Fine Arts Center at UMass he took at midnight in 1996. The building is reflected in a standing pool that Hallock notes has since been replaced by a parking lot; the reflection gives the center a sense of mystery and elegance that is no longer evident.

Then there's the more intimate detail of another far-flung landscape, Cochise Stronghold, a protected mountainous area in southeastern Arizona where the Apache chief of the same name once held out against U.S. and Mexican forces. Hallock focuses not on the landscape as a whole but rather on a close-up of jumbled boulders and yucca plants that symbolize the rugged country.

### The allure of water

Hallock's photos on the second floor range from the Valley to Maine to the British Isles, but all echo a common theme: water. One is of a familiar land-

mark in the area — Whitmore Falls, in Sunderland near the Connecticut River, a small but multi-tiered waterfall with numerous lines of water. The hazy light in the picture gives the image a slightly dreamlike quality.

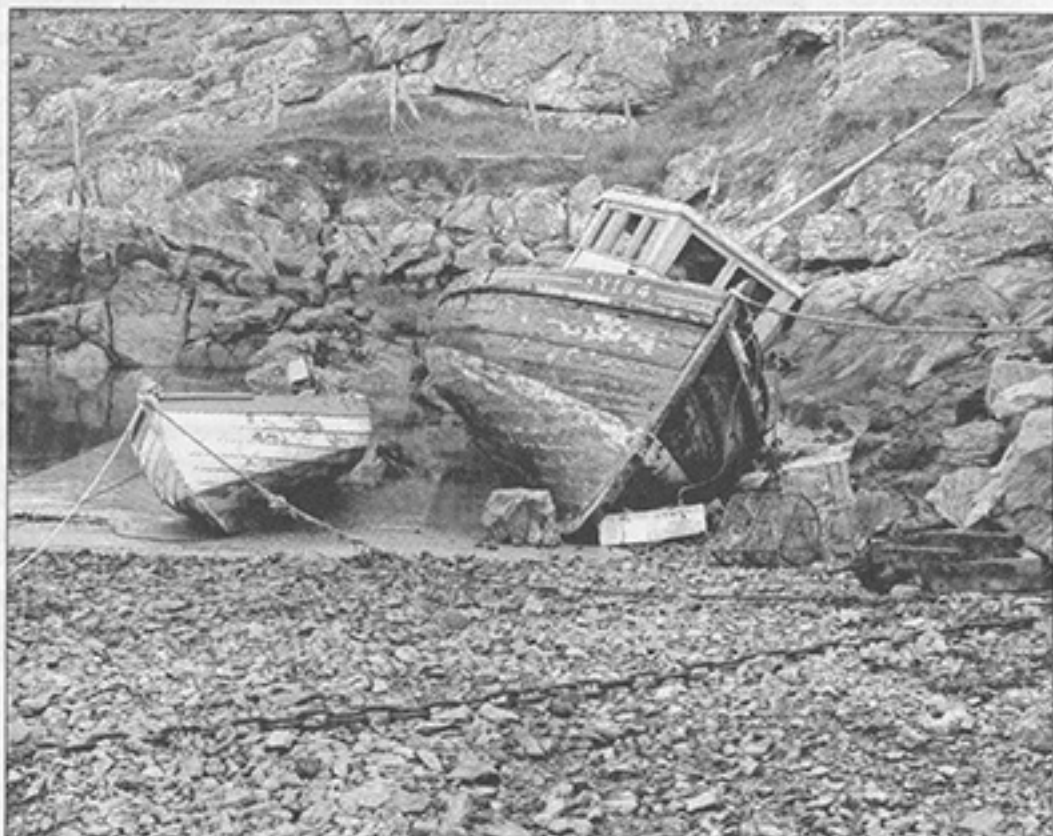
Hallock's best picture title might be "Perseverance," a photo he took along a shoreline in Scotland. A battered fishing boat — the Perseverance — and a smaller dinghy are drawn up on the edge of a tiny stone beach, wedged just beneath the side of a cliff. Worn fishing traps are scattered nearby, all of it seeming to testify to the determination that's needed to wring a living from the cold waters and climate of this northern land.

Quoddy State Park in Maine is noted as the country's easternmost point, right on the border of New Brunswick. It's the setting for a Hallock image in which the photographer captured the essence of the northern New England shoreline during an early-morning hike: steep cliffs, rock ledges, scattered evergreens, a deep inlet — and a bank of fog that obscures part of the view.

Other photos from the Maine coast are also built around fog, like one that shows three fishing boats in various degrees of obscurity, on the water. An even more dense fog — one in which you can almost feel the dampness — hovers in a photo of a crumbling wooden shed in Chatham, on Cape Cod, that's being reclaimed by nature. Through the mist, only part of the shed can be seen; vines and other foliage have almost completely enveloped one wall.

Hallock offers a nice contrast to these foggy vistas with a shot of a sandy path through grassy dunes near Brewster, also on Cape Cod. The well-trodden trail, churned with footprints and washed by sunshine, seems to beckon the viewer forward; perhaps the sea is just over the horizon.

The abstract images and still-life details of the third floor photos are primarily from the



"Perseverance" is Robert Hallock's testament to the rigors of fishing in northern Scotland.

Valley, though one — a small coil of seaweed on a beach of black pebbles — was taken in Iceland and another in Death Valley in California. Other photos — interlocking ice crystals, strips of curling paint on the outside of a house, the needles of an evergreen tree — speak to Hallock's interest in crafting meaning and feeling from the ordinary.

"I also am drawn to images that may have a smaller hidden image within them, something that may interest the careful observer," he writes on his website. "I like to create photographs that may convey something serene or tranquil. I like to find beauty in unexpected places and try to capture it."

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Robert Hallock's photographs will be on view through June 29 at Amherst Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Avenue. Hours: Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Hallock took this photo, "Ivy and Door," in Amherst.