

# Chester River Inspired Poems & Paintings

In a long-imagined project, Washington College poet-in-residence and local artist collaborate to celebrate the moods, beauty, and spirit of the Chester.

**Meredith Davies Hadaway M'96** and Marcy Dunn Ramsey are well-known and beloved artists in Chestertown. For three years, Hadaway has served as the Washington College poet-in-residence, and Ramsey's paintings are popular at galleries in town and on walls across campus.

They share more than friendship and a connection with the College: although they typically work on larger scales, both have work that started as short or small exercises and grew into more, both live directly alongside the Chester River, and both often find inspiration in the natural world.

"Meredith and I have discovered over the years we have been working creatively that we share many of the same aesthetics and ways of seeing the natural world," Ramsey said. "So when I read her poems, there is a special resonance for me."

At the end of last year, Hadaway and Ramsey published a book that came out of a series of conversations in which they considered how Hadaway's short poems and Ramsey's small gouache paintings deepened the impact of one another when combined. Hadaway said they avoided literal illustrations of poems or descriptions of paintings in favor of being "inspired by the spirit imbued in each work" to find the most powerful combinations.

In the end, they selected 20 poems to pair with 20 paintings and created *Small Craft Warning*, designed by Jim Dissette '71 at Chester River Press. Hadaway said the entire process and the finished product felt different from her earlier books as this was more "a love letter to the Chester River" by friends working together.

"The Chester is the first thing I see in the morning. It's the last thing I see every night," Hadaway said. "I have to pay attention to its tides, its wildlife, its moods, its colors. It is constant change with the river. It teaches you to keep moving. It gives shape to my life." — MJVB



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I no longer worry  
what I should have done.

Going forward, I only  
worry about going forward.

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