



## RALPH JOACHIM

*Sunburst, 2012*  
acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in

courtesy: R.Blitzer gallery

## DALY WALKER

### Fire

in shades of red and yellow. I wrote one of my American haiku to express what her painting evoked in me:

Unafraid maple leaves  
flutter onto the pond  
I am part water leaves and decay

I could feel the change of seasons in my bones, a sense of incredulity. Was it really this late in the year? Was I really this old? But I didn't fear or regret the prelude to winter. Nor did I fear old age as much as I once had. I welcomed a new time of year. And I was finding that the same thing was true with my life. Each phase brought me something unique and pleasurable. As Solomon had said in Ecclesiastes: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Although I'd heard it a thousand times, I still thought that this was a great piece of writing.

I particularly enjoyed fall because it was football season and a time to gather wood and light a fire. Monday, October third, was a day of sunshine and leaping winds. The conditions were perfect for harvesting firewood. I dressed in frayed khaki shorts, an old T-shirt, and a sweat-stained ball cap.

I had spent a lifetime trying to look good in the eyes of others. I feared rejection, and was too concerned with the approval of those who saw me. I dressed well, joined committees, and met with people. I sought out offices to hold, events to attend, and parties to give. I was afraid to be left out and alone. But in recent years, I was coming to the realization that if I couldn't be happy with and by myself, then happiness could never be within my reach.

At Little Creek, I don't worry much about what I wear or how I look to a passerby. In fact, I can only remember two passers-by at Little Creek: one was a young fellow from down the road who had lost his coon dog; the other was an old man in a station wagon who was looking for a cabin where Hoagy Carmichael had written some of his music. I hope that by embracing solitude I am not just hiding. Yet, I know it is wrong to be selfish and aloof. I don't want to end up a loner who doesn't participate in my community.

When I was a practicing surgeon, I refused to use a chain saw because I knew one slip could amputate a finger and put me out of business. Not that I don't still like my

**A**ristotle argued that everything beneath the moon was composed of four elements—fire, air, earth and water—and everything beyond the moon was aether and imperishable. Of these four elements, the stoics believed that fire came first, and that eventually everything else would be consumed back into fire. I agree that Aristotle and the stoics were right metaphorically. What follows is about fire.

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As autumn approached, the days at Little Creek shortened. Restless lamb's-wool clouds appeared high in the sky. The leaves of the sumacs turned saffron, the maples ruby and gold, all brilliant as they prepared to die and drop. V's of geese honked their way south. Fewer birds appeared at our feeders because they had begun their migrations to the tropics. As the angle between the earth and the sun narrowed, the strength of the sun's fire weakened. The air became too cool in the morning for me to go the bench and read. In a jacket and jeans, I sat in a porch rocker and listened to acorns thud to the ground. Toni painted a watercolor of two maple leaves, veined and variegated