

ARTIST'S SHOW AT UMBRELLA REFLECTS HIS CONTINUED PROGRESS

Lawyer-turned-artist Andrew Newman calls his new exhibit «a bit idiosyncratic. »

The painter is preparing for a mid-October show at the Emerson Umbrella that features 10 old works of art alongside a recent remake of the same picture, with changes that reflect his artistic maturity. He said the only similarity between the old and the now was the composition. All other characteristics, such as the scale and the colors, could change.

«I wanted to explore how far I had traveled as a painter in the 12 years since I did my original set of works, » said Newman from his spacious studio at the Umbrella.

«My method was to choose 10 paintings that I considered good, and use just those as the subject of the new work. I took the underlying painting as a source. »

He said the only rule was to «adhere to the original composition. »

«It was revealing, » he said; amid the paintings he will hand before the Oct. 17 show in the Blanchard Gallery at the Stow Street artists' collaborative. The opening is from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Newman's three young children will be on hand, along with his partner, author Gregory Maguire. Dozens of Maguire's book jackets form a permanent exhibition around the top of Newman's studio wall space.

Newman said he moved up to Concord in 1999 from his former Washington, C.C. home and career as a litigator with a prestigious law firm to join Maguire. Two of the couple's children are from Cambodia, while the youngest was born in Guatemala. All three attend the Concord Children's Center during the morning.

Newman said his father worked in the Foreign Service, which meant the family lived in cities during his youth. «I had some concerns about moving to a small town, » he said, «but Concord is a very walkable town. During my 22 years in Washington, I only had a car for a short while. I love the open air here, and the accessibility. It's a winning combination. »

Newman said his routine is to paint in the mornings, and spend the afternoons at home with Maguire and the kids.

Newman never went to art school, or took a drawing class, yet his work is precise and detailed. It was an easy transition from lawyer to artist, he said. He is now represented by 11 galleries both in the U.S. and Europe. He had shows at the

Umbrella in 1998 and 2000, and is on target to keep to his goal of mounting a local show every two years.

«I think my color sense improved, » he said. «My sense of light and shadow has become more nuanced. »

Newman grew up in Bethesda, Md, and graduated from Trinity College, Oxford, and Georgetown University Law Center in 1980. For the next 14 years, he practiced law, working his way up the ladder until his art overtook his interest in law.

«I never was an enthusiastic attorney, » he said. «It always seemed as if painting was hat I wanted to do. »

It took him three years to «reduce his legal practice, » in preparation for full-time painting. But he found the partners supportive, eventually becoming customers for his work. He left his firm, Patton Boggs, L.L.P., in 1994.

Newman paints in acrylics mostly, priming either a canvas or a board with a tinted gesso, or base, the layering on paint. His work is a mix of landscaped and portraits. He has done some commissioned portraits on canvas.

«I almost never start with a white surface, » he said, preferring an ocean blue or brick red. He began by painting landscaped reminiscent of Van Gogh.

«The landscapes didn't tax my drawing skills too much, » he said.

But he kept at it, visiting museums and other exhibits for at least three years before teaching himself how to draw figures. He particularly likes the figure drawings of Pablo Picasso and Honore Daumier.

Newman said he doesn't miss the hectic pace of the law firm, but he does remember fondly the camaraderie among lawyers. He said he finds the same esprit de corps at the Umbrella, where other artists support each other in an easy, informal way.

«But it's less white-knuckle that the law firm, » he said.

The show is in the second floor Blanchard Gallery, 40 Stow St. from Oct. 17 through mid-November.

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By Betsy Levinson