

HOW ANDY NEWMAN BECAME A NEW MAN

Painter Andy Newman, who is a studio artist at Emerson Umbrella, will give a slide presentation at the Concord Art Association on Sunday, Jan.27. His topic will be «Ten Years of Self-Teaching, » and his talk will include not only a review of his artwork over the past decade, but also observations on how an artist can best promote his or her career.

Newman knows what he is talking about, for he is surely among the most prolific and successful artist residing in the Concord area. He is self-taught as a painter because he went to school to become an attorney, and in fact he practiced law in Washington, C.C., throughout in 1980s. He began painting in the early 1990s and by 1994 had made a decision to quit the bar and become a full-time artist.

His experience as a lawyer is helpful in his second career, Newman says, not so much for expertise in contracts and invoices, but in person-to-person networking skills. This gift for making contacts is evident in his schedule. Newman's exhibitions in 2001 included galleries in Arlington, Va., Lisbon, London and Northeast Harbor, Maine; in addition to several juried shows at the Concord Art Association. In February he'll be showing at a contemporary art fair in Madrid.

Of course all the networking skills in the world won't help an artist if his or her work is not aesthetically worthwhile, but Newman's figure studies and landscapes are unusually evocative. His figure groupings are interpreted in detail in the winter issue of Boston's art MEDIA, in an article by Beth Surdut titled «Discovering the Drama of Daily Life. »

Locally, Andy Newman is represented by the Powers Gallery Inc Acton, where currently four of his landscapes are on display. These paintings are part of a series he began two years ago, which he refers to as the «borderlands» landscapes. The images focus on vernacular architecture in the hinterlands where New England meets Canada – the Northeast Kingdom of northern Vermont, New Hampshire, and southern Quebec.

Newman is drawn to the spare style, even bleakness, of both landscape and architecture in that part of the country. As he observed in a recent interview, «What I see there chimes closely with what interests me in composition and form. » There have been two solo exhibitions of this series, one in 2000 at La Galerie Madeleine Lacerte in Quebec City, and one in 2001 at Alpers Fine Art in Andover.

Since these exhibitions Newman has concentrated on the vicinity of Canaan, Vt., and the four paintings at Powers Gallery in Acton are of this recent work. «Farm House, Hollis; » «Several Barns, Sawyerville; » «House and Barn, Canaan II; » are all small oil-on-panel views of dilapidated buildings. The color choices are surprising. The skies range from flesh pink to rust red, the blue sheet-metal roofs

and white wooden clapboards built up in layers to form a delicate impasto of paint.

Not so absorbed in his own creative projects that he avoids volunteer work and community service, later in the spring Andy Newman will do some workshops similar to «Ten Years of Self-Teaching» for Adelante, an after-school program for Latino teenagers in Lawrence.

In the meantime, his presentation for Concord Art Association will begin at 4 p.m. on Sunday the 27th, in the Art Association's gallery at 37 Lexington road. I, for one, have marked my calendar to hear the testament of this thoroughly admirable artist.

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