

ARTIST ADDS COLOR TO LIFE AFTER THE RAT RACE

Once all of his children finally made in onto the morning bus, painter Andy Newman found himself with more time to mentally act younger.

This recent breath of fresh air may have coincidentally come as his last child entered the school system, or it could be a conscious effort to move forward and avoid repetitiveness. «I have come instinctly to sense when I may be reaching that point, » said Newman.

Whatever the reason, at a first look, Newman's most recent paintings appear to be far removed from his previous work.

Described as color compositions, Newman has removed all representative figures from his acrylic and oil paintings and instead is focusing on the visual component of mixing hues.

Newman began his adulthood as a lawyer before eventually making partner in a law firm in Washington, D.C. It wasn't until he was almost 40 that he made the conscious decision to leave his orderly, fast-paced world to pursue a career as a professional painter.

«I just sort of drifted into it, » he said, leaning against an organized but cluttered workstation in his studio. A paint-spattered area rug covers an ever more paint-spattered floor, and lying out to dry are two in-progress canvases with graceful and contrasting colors.

In the beginning of his self-teaching, «because it's not a process that's over, » Newman worked in the «representational» genre. Buildings, landscaped and people were superimposed and emerged from a color field. His previous figures were illusionary drawings from photographs or life that existed on a canvas with a background comprised of various colors and depths.

Since that time, he has ignored the image in the forefront and has focused his work on the way in which a canvas holds color. Before, drips and drops could be seen running throughout the image and behind the blue colored farmhouses and archways of his representational paintings.

Now, Newman is intentionally splattering and dropping acrylic paint in a free flowing manner. With this technique, he can only control so much of what happens on the canvas. The rest is left up to the paint.

His most recent stint at the newly reopened Powers Gallery on Route 2A in Acton his «the first show of actual artists, instead of the introductory show» at the renovated 18th century farmhouse. Featured alongside Linda Hoffman,

«Common Ground» showcases almost 30 of Newman's pieces. He estimates five of those pieces are developments of his newer efforts.

While he works on several pieces at the same time, the walls of his Emerson Umbrella studio «gives you this sort of subliminal kick, » he said, gazing around the space he shares, or actually dominates, with his spouse Gregory Maguire.

Since coming to Concord from Washington, D.C., Newman has led a less solitary artistic life. Finally following his artistic aspirations at a later in age in life, Newman does not have the companionship of many other colleagues. In the walls of the Emerson Umbrella, he said, the energy emanating from the surrounding creative minds have helped him feel less alone.

His artistic drive is not alone in his family, however. He comes from a mother who painted in water color and received basic instruction from his brother, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design. His sister works as an interior designer, and frequently swipes paintings from her brother.

Newman is indirectly inspired by the world outside the floor-to-ceiling windows that compose one wall of his studio. «I apprehend the books I read. I apprehend the music I listen to. That filters into my paintings, but there is no direct connection, » said Newman.

His greatest inspiration is the visual works of other painters. Depending on his style or technique at the time, his influences have been Mark Rothko, Edward Hopper and Andre Derain.

Since fleeing from his legal days, Newman is less hostile and resentful of the time he spent in his previous employment. In the 13 years he has spent painting full-time, he has gained representation from 12 galleries worldwide.

Newman's next solo exhibit is expected to be in Dublin, N.H. at a space called Redmond Bennett starting in mid-August. He is also preparing for an annual fall show in Portugal.

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