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Photograph by Donis Perkins

# North Reading Gallery Show Is Like a Peek Into Artist Jan Roy's Diary

When Pablo Picasso said, "Painting is just another way of keeping a diary," he was declaring his art as a record of his creative journey, each piece a snapshot of a specific moment and state of mind.

The metaphor was front of mind for Allyson Paladino, owner of [Inner Space Fine Arts](https://www.innerspace-fineart.com/visit) (<https://www.innerspace-fineart.com/visit>), which is featuring the work of Newburyport artist [Jan Roy](https://janroy.com/) (<https://janroy.com/>) in an upcoming exhibit titled "Keeping a Diary" at the North Reading gallery. The show is about "remembering a place in time," says Paladino, who personally sourced pieces from Roy's Haverhill studio.

"It encompasses her journey over years. Each one is painted from a trip or a memory or a situation with a person, where they were, what year, what room they were in, what they were doing," she says.

Paladino describes Roy's work as "impressionist abstract with a story to tell."

"You definitely get a sense that it is something—mountains, a cityscape—but it is up to interpretation, which I love," she says.

Housed in an intriguingly octagonal building on the bustling commercial strip of Route 28, Inner Space Fine Arts opened in 2020, just as the Covid-19 pandemic was shuttering local commerce. Paladino offers a mix of fine arts and one-of-a-kind, handmade gifts, including her own line of wrapping papers, cards, and gift tags, ensuring a true "something-for-everyone" shopping experience.



Guided by a mission to boost the profile of regional artists and artisans, Paladino brings in works inspired by the natural world, “blades of grass, clouds in the sky, leaves on the trees,” in a variety of media including wood, glass, and textiles. A recent show of works by Marsha Zavez and Amy Vander Els featured florals and landscapes worked in “very distinct styles, but they play well in the sandbox together,” she says.

Upon visiting Roy’s studio, a converted shoe factory that she has worked in since the 1980s, Paladino was struck by its high ceilings, warm wood floors, and natural light, “right out of central casting,” she says. Then there’s the work: oils and acrylic paintings, many large-scale, abstract works of nature, buildings, and structures that tell the tale of a life lived in many places over many years.

“Art is everywhere, paint is everywhere, and her paintings were just beautiful. I was just in love with every one I looked at,” she says.

Roy says it was through speaking with Paladino that she became aware of the diary aspect of her work, which features a life spent in New York City, Cuba, Morocco, Switzerland, and other places.

“It dawned on me that this is what I’m about. I’m recording my life, what I’m thinking about. That’s why the quote from Picasso jumped at me. I’d written in my journal years ago that painting is like keeping a diary, and it is for me completely.”

Among the pieces selected for the show are three large works inspired by Roy’s time living in Brooklyn, New York, where she frequently walked and biked under elevated train tracks.

*Photographs by Sarah Jordan McCaffery*

“What I love about train stations, there’s so much bustle and activity in one area and nothing in the other areas,” she says. “What I wanted to convey was the whole feeling of welcoming—warm colors, liveliness below a massive structure, and then up above, more activity, the feel of a train coming.”

In one station painting, a small figure waits quietly on a bench while the screech and noise of the city echoes above. A long flight of steps separates the figure from the platform.

“The scale is so important,” Roy says. “He’s in his own little world. He has no idea there’s a lot of steps!”

In a painting titled “Wafting,” a female figure is seen cooking in her tiny kitchen, while the scent of the dish she is preparing wafts upward toward another apartment.

“I feel that I’ve experienced that plenty of times, living in a city,” Roy says.

The urban works draw from a childhood living in the country, while pining for city life, Roy says.

“I was longing to get away from it, to leave nature and see people and manmade things,” she says. “That’s what I love about Haverhill, I love being up here and the hustle and bustle down there.”

Another work, composed of two vertical panels, was inspired by a trip to Switzerland. The bottom panel features a cityscape flowing upward into the second panel, which shows mountainous terrain with a ski lodge and gondola.

“I had so much enjoyment with this one, I felt like I had traveled,” she says.

Photograph by Sarah Jordan McCaffery

There are works inspired by travels to Morocco, where Roy was inspired by “the abstractness of the country and little details, big expanses of color with nothing going on, but something up in the corner.” In “Havana,” Roy details the experience of staying in Cuba for several weeks, in a “deteriorating, old, once-beautiful building.”

“I think urban is my favorite thing. I just love it,” she says.

“Keeping a Diary” debuts Sept. 7 and will be up for several weeks, before the next show, later in the fall, featuring the work of Elise Frieda, described by Paladino as “abstract, but based on the natural world.” That show, “Garden (un) Variety,” is based on plants in the artist’s garden.

“You can totally see it is flowers, but it is totally abstract and equally as beautiful,” Palladino says. “It is the essence of flowers.”

Paladino sees the role of the gallery as boosting the profile of lesser-known regional artists, and says she is planning at least six more shows in the next year.

“Everybody is working so hard, and they are creating so much beautiful work, but how do you get it seen? Where do you get it shown? They are so happy to have a place to show their art, and I just want to help them. I’m glad I started the gallery—they needed it, not just me.”

*Inner Space Fine Arts is located at 189 Main St., North Reading. To learn more about the gallery and “Keeping a Diary,” visit [innerspace-fineart.com](http://innerspace-fineart.com) (<http://innerspace-fineart.com>). To see more of Jan Roy’s work, visit [janroy.com](http://janroy.com) (<http://janroy.com>).*

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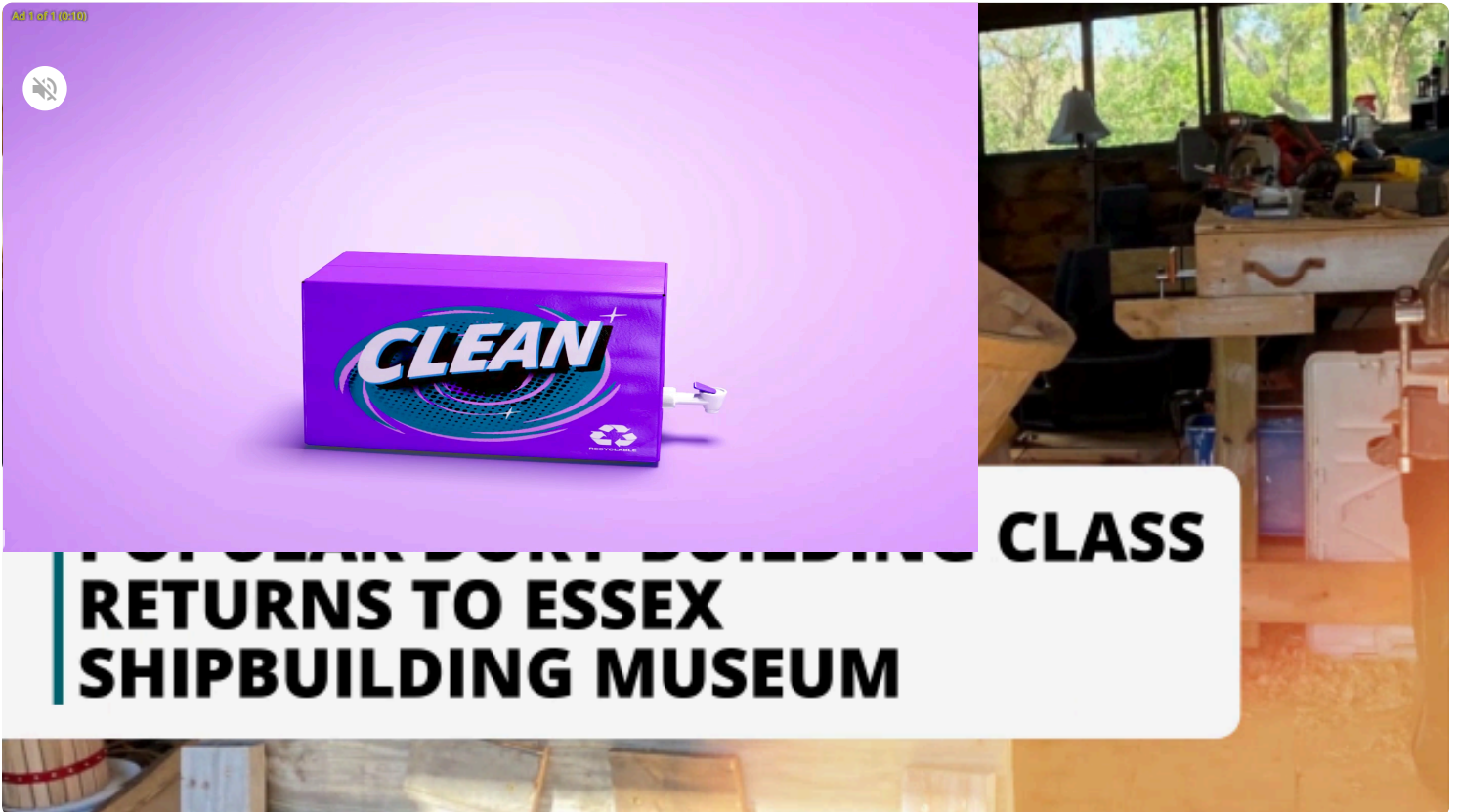
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