



ALISON RECTOR

COURTHOUSE GALLERY  
FINE ART

# ALISON RECTOR

JUNE 25-JULY 20, 2014

## SHARED QUIET



*May*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches

COVER *In Celebration of Thought*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches

COURTHOUSE GALLERY  
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6 court street ellsworth, maine 04605    courthousegallery.com    207 667 6611

Studying Alison's striking and beautifully-executed library interior paintings reminds me of all that libraries stand for in Maine. They are places for civil discourse, for finding facts to support opinions, for meeting with others and for accessing information in any format be it print, electronic, microfilm, or a program presenter. They are places to bond with others or to find blessed solitude. Anyone is welcome in our state's library; I hope these paintings entice you to the public library nearest you. Libraries do change lives and there is something in them for everyone. This exhibit of paintings reminds us of this in such a lovely way.

— Linda Lord, *Maine State Librarian*



*The Children's Room*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches



When I first encountered Alison Rector's paintings, I again experienced the emotion that inspired my poem *In the insistence of light*; the ineluctable and immutable nature of light. Dawn's glow advances and evening's glow ebbs, resisting, like time itself, human efforts to stem its progress, and this timeless inevitability is deeply evident and richly explored in Alison's art. Notice how she employs light and accent to create an aura of capaciousness in even the tidiest of spaces, or how she blends and bends light to illuminate the sensory possibilities in her work from the most fore-grounded of objects to the limit of the vanishing point. When I study her paintings, I sense that I am standing in them in real time, smelling new paint or old must, feeling the sea breeze luffing the curtains or the dry heat rising from a woodstove, hearing the creak of the stairs or the whistle of the kettle, tasting meals long ago eaten at now unoccupied tables. Like James Joyce's prose, Alison's art stimulates all of our senses, elevating the prosaic to the majestic, which is why her work inspires ekphrastic responses—poems that comment on another work of art such as Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. These paintings invite us to drop in, listen, smell, taste, and feel them as a personal experience. Evocative, beautiful, and accessible, I wish I owned them all.

— Bruce Pratt



*Cathedral of Curiosity*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches

Alison's library interiors triggered a pleasurable, but maddeningly elusive, memory. Stonington in particular, the modest little storefront, took me back to an intensely personal set of feelings that took awhile to unpack. The feelings had little to do with the details of the room itself; after all, these paintings are not primarily architectural portraits even though each is readily identifiable. The memory had more to do with promise and anticipation. The familiar library signifiers—rows of books along shelves, chairs and desks and hanging pictures—were in place, but more important to me was the quiet space of possibility that was evoked. These library interiors transmit a pregnant emptiness; we encounter neither other patrons nor employees, but I, at least, feel the presence of human history, the multitude of lives and stories waiting to be discovered within the spines. Then it hit me. The benign light and gentle hush was exactly that of the reading room of my childhood library on the day when I was finally old enough to qualify for my own library card, hardly daring to believe that I had been officially certified to ingest the worlds between these covers.

— Katy Kline



*In Celebration of Thought*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches

## Entering: Alison Rector's Paintings

Alison Rector's continuing study of the interiors of our built world leads the viewer into a landscape of memory, mood and a mystery of meaning for our own selves to interpret. Her evident skill transcends the merely reproductive and photographic. The reality of books and banisters she adeptly depicts is tinged with a certain aura of respect and disciplined imagination. We are invited to enter and meditate upon her—and our—interior world. To spend time with Alison's paintings is to enjoy both pleasure and privilege.

— W.H. Ryan



*Corridor of Old Friends*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches



There is nothing more comforting and uplifting to me, as I travel from town to town, than the sight of community wealth poured into the common good. Alison's painting *Sanctuary* is especially affirming of positive shared endeavors, because this American library is both striking and a little sleepy in the late afternoon light. It's as if the room is sneaking in a catnap, feeling secure enough to repose upon its solid construction and well-earned community status. The oil painting of a ship that plunges through icy Atlantic waters, the reassuringly massive checkout desk, and the classical arch of the ceiling hold the promise that we will always have this library. It's a given. It's who we are, ennobling the pursuit of knowledge and the opportunity to park a bike outside and find the next adventure in the journey of books.

And yet, along with a solemn sense of permanence, there is also a gentle human scale to this ambitious institution. The People built their library, and the People have to mow the lawn and allocate funding for new rugs. The People will have to live with some ink stains on the couches and scuff marks on the chairs. Yes, there will surely be leather tomes that line the back shelves of maritime history, but we know that a dedicated librarian probably had to grit her teeth and enter a series of Gossip Girl books into the collection last week. Alison captures the grandeur of a modest achievement, the combined forces of local benefactors, committed volunteers, local trustees, and the durable yet non-hierarchical resolve to create a democracy of knowledge and information, a safe and welcoming space of learning and contemplation For All.

— Dar Williams



*Sanctuary*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches

Libraries exist to preserve and share our human experience. From monks to contemporary publishing behemoths, authors have recorded what they know and believe to be true. The best have crafted lyrical stories from the ever-changing “facts.” As repositories of these writings, libraries were once private, the exclusive domain of those in power. The church, the dictators and the very rich come to mind. Today, access to such knowledge is widespread and commonly available through libraries and the internet. Public libraries, often beautifully built, best celebrate the average person’s neverending search for knowledge. To make art from these honorable structures is most appropriate and Alison Rector’s ongoing reverence for buildings and their interiors makes her uniquely suited for this task.

— John and Sarah Ames



*Entering Circulation*, oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches





*January*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches



*February*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches



*April*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches



*May*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches





*March*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches



*October*, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches





*November, 2014, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches*



*December, 2014, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches*

## Can you guess the library?

*Answers on next page.*

Rockland Public Library

Waterville Public Library

Jesup Memorial Library, Bar Harbor

Blue Hill Public Library

Bangor Public Library

Stonington Public Library

East Blue Hill Library

Oakland Public Library, interior

Oakland Public Library, exterior

Pittsfield Public Library, interior

Pittsfield Public Library, exterior

Milo Public Library

Somesville Library, Mount Desert

Belfast Free Library



*Underpainting for Corridor of Old Friends.* Collectors of Rector's work often admire the underpainting of her unfinished paintings, appreciating them as much as the finished piece. Her technique uses a grisaille underpainting—a black and white value study; the term grisaille coming from the French word *gris* for grey. On top of the monochromatic underpainting, Rector adds layers of color, using the luminosity of the oil paint to build the surface and texture.

## SHARED QUIET

If you visit the Blue Hill Public Library, you will notice a small painting hanging next to the circulation desk. I painted this picture of the library's interior in 2010 around the time many Maine public libraries were celebrating their one century anniversary. The inspiration for the painting (and this show) was the placid sweep of light falling across the floor, drawing me into an illuminated reading room. I imagined decades of time passing in that quiet space.

We have eighteen Carnegie libraries in Maine and I set out, with my painter's eye, to visit each one. Along the way, library enthusiasts talked with me about their favorite public library buildings, so I visited them too. Now, whenever I see a public library, I usually go inside.

I wish to thank everyone who helped make this show a success: to Karin and Michael Wilkes at Courthouse Gallery, to the staff at the Maine State Library and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and most of all to the personnel at public libraries who welcome everyone into these exceptional buildings. I'm especially grateful to the art appreciators who have written so thoughtfully about my work. Each of them, pursuing their own creative endeavors, has supported my work generously through the years.

— Alison Rector 2014



ANSWERS

- Page 3: Belfast Free Library
- Page 5: Blue Hill Public Library
- Page 7: Bangor Public Library
- Page 9: Stonington Public Library
- Page 11: Jesup Memorial Library, Bar Harbor
- Page 13: Rockland Public Library
- Page 15: Waterville Public Library
- Page 16: Pittsfield Public Library, exterior
- Page 17: Pittsfield Public Library, interior
- Page 18: Somesville Library, Mount Desert
- Page 19: Belfast Free Library
- Page 20: Milo Public Library
- Page 21: East Blue Hill Library
- Page 22: Oakland Public Library, exterior
- Page 23: Oakland Public Library, interior

ALISON RECTOR

BORN 1960 Rochester, New York

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, *Shared Quiet*, Ellsworth, ME 2014
- Greenhut Galleries, *Remembering Summer Camp*, Portland, ME 2010
- Greenhut Galleries, *Inside Portland*, Portland, ME 2007
- Ten High Street, *Summer Shelter*, Camden, ME 2005
- Ten High Street, *Interiors*, Camden, ME 2003
- Diane Nelson Fine Art, *Introducing Alison Rector*, Laguna Beach, CA 2001

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2011, '12, '13, '14
- Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Biennial Juried Show, Rockport, ME 2000, '02, '10
- Senator Olympia Snowe’s office in Washington DC 2008, '09, '10, '11
- Greenhut Galleries, Portland, ME 2005, '06, '07, '08, '09, '10, '11
- Creative Arts Workshop, *Painting as Presence*, Juror: William Bailey, New Haven, CT 2008
- Center for Maine Contemporary Art, *Maine Printmakers*, Rockport, ME 2008
- Portland Museum of Art, Biennial Juried Show, Portland, ME 2003

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- “Alison Rector: The Eye of the Poet,” Maine Home+ Design Magazine, November 2008
- “Embodiment and Emptiness: Alison Rector’s Interior Images,” The Gettysburg Review, Fall 2008
- Little, Carl. “More Paintings of Maine.” Downeast Books, 2006
- Little, Carl. “Alison Rector at Ten High Street.” Art New England Magazine, January 2006
- “Artist Conversations.”MaineArts Mag, Maine Arts Commission Magazine, Summer 2005

EDUCATION

- Brown University, BA in Painting, Providence, RI, 1982
- Rhode Island School of Design (course work while at Brown University)





*November, oil on panel, 8 x 8 inches*

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