

ART

Spirit of the Community's Past

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A walk through the new exhibition on view at the Everson Museum of Art is like leafing

through the gently worn pages of an old album of family photographs. As you tour the show, which is titled "People, Place and Progress: Local Landscapes in Paint and Print," you might feel as if you're reconnecting with people and places lost to another time. The show offers painted scenes of the Erie Canal during its heyday, rural vistas of Tully and Jamesville, familiar architectural landmarks and long-gone stagecoach inns, all of which provide a visual narrative of days gone by; nostalgic images of faded faces and places.

The exhibition, which remains on view through Sept. 2, is a collaboration between the Everson Museum of Art and the Onondaga Historical Association and draws from both museums' permanent collections of paintings. The OHA also provides historic photos and black-and-white prints of many of the Central New York scenes that inspired a variety of artists — some are well-known artists and some are not. Many of these comparisons of photograph to painting are direct, almost mirror images of one another, while other pairings demonstrate a degree of artistic license on the part of the painter and in yet others, we see how time has altered the scene — sometimes for the good and sometimes not.

It's important to recognize this show is not about painting, which is good because the paintings in the show vary in their level of quality. This is a



Courtesy of Everson Museum of Art

JOHANN CULVERHOUSE painted this scene of "Clinton Square by Moonlight" in 1871. The piece is included in an exhibition at the Everson Museum of Art titled "People, Place and Progress: Local Landscapes in Paint and Print." The show features paintings of local historical scenes from the collections of the Everson and the Onondaga Historical Association. The OHA also provides historic photos and prints of many of the same scenes.

show that explores specific places and scenes and how they can become a defining sense of place for a city or region. It also questions the tense relationship between change and preservation. These ideas are clearly articulated in the relationships between the particular scene portrayed in each medium and in the sequencing of the works comprising the show. There are a couple of examples in which paintings stand on their own, without the photograph for comparison. There's one piece titled "Onondaga Indian House" by Fred Gardner that seems curiously out of place in the "Cityscape of Syracuse" section of the show. Otherwise, the selected works make good on the show's intent.

The exhibition is organized

under three main headings: A Sense of Place, Transportation: Roads of Progress and the Cityscape of Syracuse. Some of the places portrayed are long-gone vestiges of another era — Fernando Carter's wistful watercolor titled "Oran Hotel" (1894) depicts a rural roadside inn that would serve as a quaint stopover for any weary traveler. In the accompanying black-and-white photograph of the same scene, taken 15 years later, a telephone pole has been added to the view, subtly suggesting how progress might alter the personality of a specific landscape.

Many of the transportation images focus on the Erie Canal and its influence upon the urban landscape and its effect upon city life. Johann Cul-

verhouse's painting titled "Clinton Square by Moonlight" (1871) portrays the canal at a darkly atmospheric time of day, very much in the style of the Tonalists. The painting is accompanied by an 1885 photograph of the same scene, titled "Clinton Square Looking Southwest."

A 1964 watercolor by the more contemporary artist, Lee Brown Coye, provides a stylized and interpretative view of a canal boat docked beside a small store along the Chenango Canal. An accompanying black-and-white photo from 1895 captures a scene so similar one is led to believe Coye must have used it as reference material.

One of the most profound statements made about the evolution, or devolution of a

The details

What: "People, Places and Progress: Local Landscapes in Paint and Print."

Where: Everson Museum of Art, 401 Harrison St., Syracuse.

When: Through Sept. 2.

What to expect: Paintings and photographs featuring local historic scenes.

Admission: \$5 per person.

Hours: Noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

While you're there: Visit "Julie Blackmon: Other Tales from Home" in the Robineau Gallery.

Info: Call 474-6064 or visit everson.org.

cityscape, can be seen in the 1935 watercolor by Cornelius Jones and the 1923 photograph depicting Syracuse's Triangle Block; once located across the street from Syracuse's City Hall. The wedge of a structure consuming the entire city block was known as the Joy Building and was reminiscent of New York City's flatiron building. Both the painting and the photo capture the building's noble character. The accompanying wall text states that in 1957 this unique and defining building was demolished to make way for the city's first urban renewal project. Today, that corner is a parking lot.

This show is sure to resonate with Syracusans who have lived here for more than a generation. Decades and lifetimes will drift across the museum's walls like pages turned in that family album; but, there is also much to see for those whose history with the Salt City is not as long. In these images, we can find the spirit of our community's past and the ghosts of days gone by.

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