

The vast works of Charles Movalli

By Keith Powers / Correspondent

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Charles Movalli saw the world, and painted it, at its best. Plenty of air, interesting light, contrasting shadows, depth of field and fascination even in the most humdrum views. Seeing almost any of his paintings is like a blast of fresh winter air, or the genial glow of the sun. A second major exhibition of the year on Cape Ann remembers Movalli and his work. “Charles Movalli: Retrospective,” coming on the heels of this spring’s “Cape Ann & Beyond” at the Cape Ann Museum, brings another chance to revel in a lifetime of painting that won’t soon be duplicated.

If you go...

WHAT: Charles Movalli Retrospective

WHERE: North Shore Arts Association, 11 Pirates Lane, Gloucester

WHEN: through Oct. 28

ADMISSION: Free. Visit www.nsarts.org or call 978-283-1857.

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More than 100 works grace the upstairs gallery and landing at NSAA. These paintings are not as expertly labeled or contextualized, as was the CAM show. But the sheer number of works, and the large space in which they are shown — a key to appreciating Movalli’s vision — make this another can’t miss exhibition.

The docks and vistas of Cape Ann are well represented here. As are seasonal views of Vermont, and more exotic locales like London, Taos and Mexico. And even though Movalli’s style ranges from representational to almost entirely abstract, every one of these works shows the strength of his craft.

Textures envelop all of his subjects; shadow and subtle colorings complete the compositions. None of Movalli’s work will shock in any way. There are no toss-aways here — or provocative treatments. Thanks to his paintings, we see what an artist sees: a grander idea of the ordinary, a universal perspective of the local.

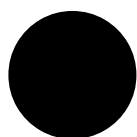
There are more than a few winter views here, calling to mind another great Cape Ann landscape artist — Aldro Hibbard — whose subject matter also moved easily from Cape Ann docks to Vermont woods. And some strikingly abstract compositions — “The Green Pickle,” “Jazz Musicians” and “The Nicholas Brothers.”

Five large paintings, including the breathtaking “Heading for Port,” are hung mysteriously in the landing gallery in the stairwell, offering limited viewing and not providing nearly enough room for a proper perspective. That would be about the only quibble of this extensive show.

The NSAA is not a museum, and so should not be expected to bring curatorial context to a body of work like this. That will come no doubt from future Movalli retrospectives. But having two extensive showings of the artist’s work within a year of his passing shows the strength of the artist’s influence, and provides more chances to revel in this important body of work.

“Charles Movalli: Retrospective” runs through Oct. 28 at the North Shore Art Association. Call 978-283-1857 or visit www.nsarts.org.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow [@PowersKeith](https://twitter.com/PowersKeith); email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com



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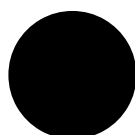
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