

ART SCENE - Newport gallery expands to include the world

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For years, Newport gallery owner William Vareika has been the go-to guy for works by 19th-century American artists such as John La Farge, William Trost Richards and John Frederick Kensett.

Now he's expanding his artistic empire to include everything from European Old Master paintings to works by modern masters such as Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol to non-Western art from Asia and Africa.

Two weeks ago, Vareika opened "The Newport Gallery of World Art," a posh new exhibit space next to his longtime digs on Bellevue Avenue.

Newporters may recall the site as the former home of Cabbages & Kings, a high-end housewares shop that closed in January. Now, after a makeover that includes new track lighting and a fresh coat of deep-blue paint, it's a place where 17th-century Dutch still lifes rub shoulders with French Impressionist landscapes and American Pop Art portraits.

"It was one of those now-or-never moments," Vareika said during a tour of the gallery last week. "Over the years, I've often thought about expanding, but there was never enough room to do it right. Then the Cabbages & Kings space opened up and I thought: 'Let's do it.' "

SINCE OPENING William Vareika Fine Arts in 1987, Vareika has focused mainly on American art from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries. But he said the World Art gallery would be more eclectic, reflecting the best works he could "buy or borrow" at a given time.

Certainly, "eclectic" describes the gallery's inaugural exhibit.

The show's earliest entry is a 1505 etching by German painter-printmaker Albrecht Durer. The most recent work a lush, paint-swabbed canvas by British artist Howard Hodgkin dates from 2000.

As always, the quality is extremely high (the Durer, for example, is so fresh it practically glows). And the number of name-brand artists is impressive, even for a well-established gallery.

In the Old Master category, look for Jan Van Goyen's *Landscape with Figures*, a 17th-century farm scene that has all the elements a winding country road, a pair of gnarled oaks, a gaggle of ruddy-faced peasants of classic Dutch landscape painting.

Impressionist fans have a couple of gems to chose from.

One is Gustave Courbet's darkly brooding landscape, *La Source Au Matin*. Though never an Impressionist himself, Courbet exerted a strong influence on many artists who were, including Monet and Renoir.



Even more striking is *L'Eglise de Moret, le soir* (Moret Church, Evening) by British-born Impressionist Alfred Sisley.

Like Monet's famous cathedral series, Sisley's canvas pits Impressionism's knack for capturing fleeting effects of light and shadow against the majestic bulk of an old stone church. The result is a glorious standoff: the church's craggy, rough-hewn walls provide the perfect foil for Sisley's jittery brushwork.

FOR MORE CONTEMPORARY tastes, there are etchings by Picasso and Matisse, as well as a rare late painting, *Vertical Composition*, by Jackson Pollock. The show also features several Warhol prints, including a surprisingly respectful 1984 homage to one of the icons of modern art: Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

At the same time, some of the show's best works aren't by A-list artists.

Flemish artist Jan Van Thielen, for example, isn't exactly a household name. Yet his luscious study of a glass vase filled with tulips and other flowers is a beauty as dewy-fresh today as it was when it was painted in the mid-17th-century.

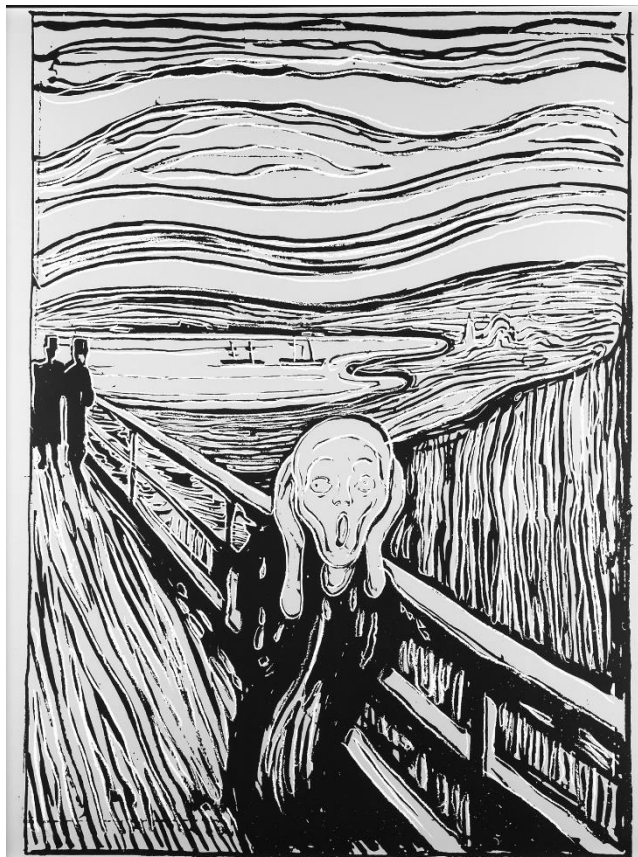
Other highlights include works by Norwegian Impressionist Frits Thaulow, French artist Francis-Joseph Luigi Loir and American Rackstraw Downes, whose panoramic 1986 view of the Hackensack River (*A Bend in the Hackensack at Jersey City*) is enough to rekindle your faith in contemporary painting.

Through Jan. 18 at the William Vareika Gallery, 214 Bellevue Ave., Newport. Hours: Mon.-Sat. 10-6, Sun. 1-6. Phone: 847-5431.

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L'EGLISE de MORET, LE SOIR (Moret Church, Evening), an 1894 oil by Alfred Sisley, is on display at William Vareika Fine Arts in Newport.



THE SMALL HORSE, left, a 1505 engraving by Albrecht Durer, and The Scream (After Munch), right, a 1984 unique screen print on museum board by Andy Warhol (and signed on the back by the Warhol Foundation), are on display at Vareika Fine Arts.