

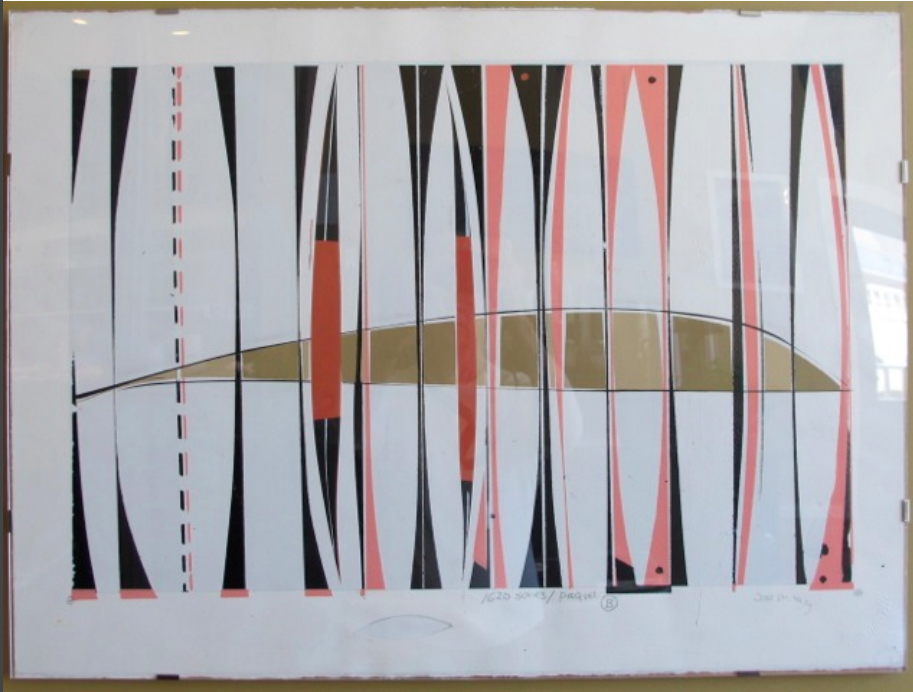
TMI Arts Page



Works by Joel Foster in Amenia

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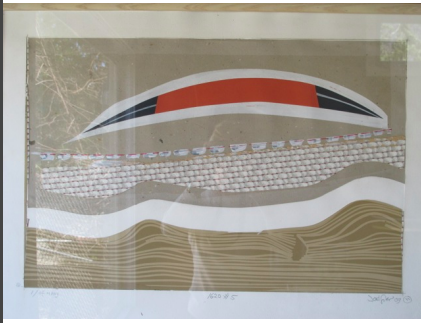
Joel Foster's 15 images from his 1620 series, hanging at the [Cozy Corner Cafe & Tap Room in Amenia](#), refer to memories and history of colonial New England.

The inspiration for this 1620 series comes in part from his ancestor, Elder Thomas Faunce, about whom historian Nathaniel Philbrick wrote, "In 1741, the ninety-five-year-old Thomas Faunce asked to be carried in a litter to the Plymouth waterfront. Faunce had heard that a pier was about to be built over an undistinguished rock at the tide line near Town Brook. With tears in his eyes, Faunce proclaimed that he had been told by his father, who had arrived in Plymouth in 1623, that the boulder was where the Pilgrims first landed. Thus was born the Legend of Plymouth Rock."

Foster's grandmother grew up in Plymouth, and Foster himself grew up in Hanson, Massachusetts, not far from Plymouth. Both the legend—whether true or not—and memories of his childhood near the sea have informed much of his work.

The 1620 series depicts the intersection of the white man's road with the indigenous culture. In many images one can see the white man's road as it makes its way through the topographical features of the earth, the sand, the sea and the air. "On the Beach" shows a shallop (a traditional fishing boat) pulled up on the sand as the sun rises majestically from the sea.

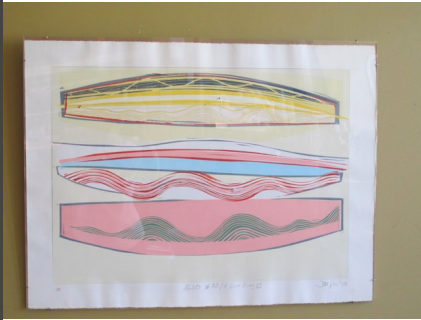
In 2007 Foster lost most of his sight to Stargardt's Disease, but for a time he had just enough peripheral vision to continue painting. As his sight worsened, he set about finding a way to render the images he had in his mind. He devised an ingenious way of laying down two pieces of thin tape adjacent to one another on a piece of paper as a form of stencil. He then



and gray that convey a great sense of space.

Painted in the spaces between the tapes, which are thin enough for him to manipulate into swirling designs that evoke the waves of the sea.

Although most of the images are abstract, one can nonetheless discern shapes that resemble canoes, sailing boats and coastal fishing boats. The sea is a constant presence—the texture of the sand, the waves, the swirling water of the incoming tide. The sinuous lines and forms are rendered in subtle shades of blue, melon, beige



Earlier this year Foster was part of a major show of blind artists at the Bausch & Lomb headquarters in Rochester, NY. Recently he was the only artist in Dutchess County to receive a \$1,500 Artist's Resource Trust (A.R.T.) fund grant from the Berkshire Taconic Foundation, to explore new materials. He has become too blind to continue working with tape and now wants to work with plaster and metal grids to create more tactile pieces.

Meanwhile Foster hopes to become a candidate for stem-cell treatment once the second stage of clinical trials has been completed. So far the results for Stargardt's Disease have resulted in dramatic improvements.

Until then one can admire not only the quality of his works but his courage in persevering in the face of a terrible affliction.

Tags: Art, Blind Artists, Joel Foster

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Carola Lott

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