

*Northeast Journal*, August 2003

## A Theory of Theorems - The Art Kevin Paulsen By Eileen Keeffe

At first glance, the paintings and drawings look like they were made 100 years ago; silhouetted landscapes and columned buildings, brooding trees beside meandering rivers, still life arrangements of fruit and flowers, each presented on large sheaves of torn paper, or cracked and worn plaster. On closer inspection, modern influences can be detected, the paint has been applied with a roller, the plaster sits atop fiberboard. This juxtaposition is just what prolific artist Kevin Paulsen is after, and his innovative work has struck a nerve with art enthusiasts both locally, at the Wright Gallery on North Front Street in Kingston, and at the David Findlay Gallery in New York City.

"There is an historical continuity in art that is being ignored," Paulsen said. "I take contemporary ideas and express them in the context of history." At a show held at the Wright Gallery in July, Paulsen presented a series of drawings on paper that explored techniques women used in the 1800s when creating decorative and domestic arts. "Women learned these techniques in finishing schools and often worked on projects collaboratively," Paulsen said. "Theorems, or small scale sequential drawings, are a formulaic way of designing or planning out a larger scale project."

Using still life's as a primary theme, Paulsen's "theorems" served as studies for a number of larger paintings. "I deconstructed many of the techniques these women used including exploring different ways to use combinations of lines and marks," he said. "As it often happens, the drawings led to paintings." Paulsen, who also has a studio in Kingston, is originally from the Midwest. He grew up in Kansas and attended the Kansas City Art Institute before moving to Chicago where he worked for Neidermeyer, Inc., a famed retail design company. He later relocated to Nantucket Island, where he honed his artistic skills and earned a reputation as a muralist, completing commissioned work for restaurants and private homes. His smaller scale paintings were shown in different galleries and display spaces on the island, and several years ago, David Findlay discovered his work and invited him to show in New York City. Since then, Paulsen has enjoyed growing professional success, prompting him to relocate once again. "I needed a larger studio space and also wanted to be closer to Manhattan where I was doing a lot of work," Paulsen said. "Kingston is a great location."