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Three Ashburnham artists combine for exhibit

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POSTED: 11/05/2013 06:35:34 AM EST

ASHBURNHAM -- Three Ashburnham artists are holding their first exhibit as a group at Stevens Memorial Library, with more planned for the near future.

Elaine Membrino, her husband, Richard Membrino, and Justin McGonigle have had their work featured in local collections together for the past year and a half with other artists in Fitchburg, Gardner and Ashburnham, but never by themselves. McGonigle said they are calling their group the "3 Painters."

"We're taking advantage of the local venues," said McGonigle, adding that they're setting their work on the walls of local libraries for free viewing.

He said they are trying to get exhibit space at a local museum. Their current display on the second floor of Stevens Memorial Library in Ashburnham opened Sept.



Ashburnham artist Elaine Membrino talks about her piece in the "3 Painters" exhibit at the Stevens Memorial Library called "January Afternoon." SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE/JOHN LOVE

30 and will be on display through Nov. 30. Each artist contributed five pieces with a similar style.

McGonigle brought a collection of mixed-media paintings. His most striking work on display came from channeling the emotions he holds on to from when he was stabbed as a high-school student in New Bedford in 1986. The piece, titled "Before and After the Wolfie Incident," is named for his attacker's nickname.

He said the ordeal still troubles him, but painting the piece was therapeutic for him and has helped him heal. It took him three years to complete.

Richard Membrino has been painting since 1965. He and Elaine first exhibited their work in 1969. They opened a gallery in Fitchburg in 1973, the city's first private art gallery, called the Delisle-Membrino Art Gallery.

His work on display is abstract. He said his style is always evolving, and he said a piece from 2001 came when he was working through a cubist style.

Viewers can see the evolution in progress, as irregular, mournful shapes in the older pieces are contrasted with flat, bright colors in repeated dimensions.

He said his current style creates tapestry-like images.

Elaine Membrino presented a collection of acrylic still-life scenes painted on thin wooden boards. She purposely

left the wood unpainted in some sections so the grain would contribute a pattern.

"I want people to look at my paintings and feel like they're being taken away," she said.

She uses yellow pears as subjects in most of her still-life work.

McGonigle said "3 Painters" have a show planned at the public library in Gardner and plan to have many more together as a



Ashburnham artist Justin McGonigle talks about his piece in the "3 Painters" exhibit at the Stevens Memorial Library called "Before and After the Wolfie Incident." SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE/JOHN LOVE



Ashburnham artist Richard Membrino with his piece "Semblance." SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE/JOHN LOVE

group.

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