



# ANDIAMO! Art on the Hill DESTINATION: Federal Hill, Providence's Little Italy

After a long, harsh New England winter, I'm feeling the need for escape. With travel budgets modest, our annual summer visit to the in-laws in Rome is an unlikely dream. Wistful for Mediterranean UV overload, serious pizza and the artistic legacy of Western civilization, I'm not entirely out of options — even here in Rhode Island, our nation's smallest state.

Wearing my New England pallor under oversized sunglasses, I hop in my jalopy for a journey across the highway. A mere 10 minutes later, I'm stirring espresso with a little spoon at Costantino's Venda Ravioli, which holds up its ample end at DePasquale Plaza, a cobblestoned public square crowned by an enormous fountain. The line at "Venda" snakes around cases of fresh pasta. Pure, unadulterated consumption is on the mind of these shoppers, but I'm tempering my share with a little gallery hopping.

Refreshed after my caffè, I'm greeted streetside not with the high whine of Italy's darting motorini (mopeds), but with a roaring motorcade of the Rhode Island Hell's Angels as they cruise impressively up Atwells Avenue. Welcome to Federal Hill, Providence's "Little Italy."

Painting a colorful, Americanized picture of Italy in miniature,

DePasquale Plaza is at the heart of Federal Hill, framed by the eclectic offerings of Atwells Avenue. Personified by an influx of Italian immigrants who developed the neighborhood from the late 19th through the first half of the 20th century, today's Federal Hill retains a hearty culture of welcome and celebration of the finer things in life: food, drink, community and art. Here, five independent galleries form a loose collective known as Art on the Hill, boasting a special sales-tax-free status bestowed by the state. Falling within a few blocks of one another, "The Hill" makes for a leisurely gallery crawl destination with plenty of pit stops along the way. Andiamo!

My first stop, **Gallery Z** at 259 Atwells Ave., is Art on the Hill's "oldest" member, having opened in 2001. Their private collection features fine art by Armenian, European and American artists from the early 20th

century to the present, and presents a robust annual exhibition calendar that spans an ocean of ideas. Old world meets new, as Gallery Z punctuates its annual season with exhibition opportunities for emerging art students, having hosted the "Sit Down" RISD Furniture Design show in 2008 (**artscope** Mar/April 2008), and the URI Senior Student Showcase this past April. Work by notable regional artists is highlighted in upcoming exhibits, including multi-layered "Photo Constructives" by Lawrence Sykes from May 6 through 30 and lush landscape paintings by Stephanie Marzella from June 3 through 27.

Here on Federal Hill, food is never far from the agenda. On the final Thursday of each month, from 5 to 7 p.m., Gallery Z's "Art, Food & Wine Creating Awareness for a Cause" events pair food and wine from local establishments with art appreciation and cause marketing.

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: The windows of Gallery 17 Peck look in on an eclectic collection of sculpture, pottery and paintings.  
Lawrence Sykes, *Boats Near Goa*, 2007, collage constructive.  
BELOW: Stephanie Marzella, *Dusk Fire*, 2008, oil on panel.



Across the street, at 258 Atwells Ave., I browse glass baubles at **Gallery Belleau II**. Boasting the largest selection of art glass and handmade American crafts in Providence, the sandwich board outside reads "Made in the USA (but mostly around the corner)." Pretty accurate, as of the 20 different glass artisans represented at Belleau II, 90 percent of the inventory on display is the work of owner Christopher Belleau. He feeds the window displays from his own glass studio just down the hill, enticing passersby with shiny gift ideas in the form of ornaments, plates, flowers and fish.

Window-shopping is a fine art unto itself, and at 303 Atwells Ave, **Gallery 17 Peck's** wrap-around corner windows capitalize on this with an eclectic cast of characters. Kinetic rebar sculptures by Timothy Reilly hypnotize, rotating inexplicably alongside award-



**Chabot Fine Art Gallery**, at 379 Atwells Ave., primarily showcases oil paintings by owner Lee Chabot, but makes room for a surprising mash-up of international artists. From May 13 through June 27, former Beatle Ringo Starr's limited edition digital art giclees will be on display, with select works by Paul McCartney, John Lennon and Alfred Hirschfeld. It's the British invasion — on Federal Hill?

Clearly, Federal Hill offers something for everyone, and it's just across the highway, on the other side of the world.

**Meredith Cutler**

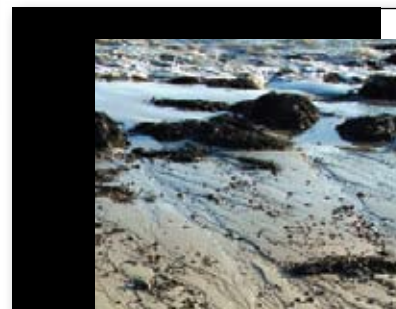
*LEFT: Mary Jane Q. Cross, Morning Stroll, 2009, oil on panel.  
ABOVE: Gallery Z in Providence's Federal Hill Tax-Free Arts District.*

winning Native American pottery by Glen Nipshank. I don't try to make sense of the collection, but let it transport me instead. Malcom Furlow's larger than life oil paintings of pop-art coyotes and Indian braves in boldly brushed Armani suits are my personal gallery picks.

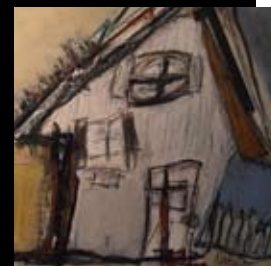
Owner and artist Daniel Kelley moved Gallery 17 Peck to The Hill from its former Downcity location to "take advantage of the foot traffic," which is plentiful on Providence's Gallery Night, held on the third Thursday of each month. Still, it makes me wonder; if foot traffic is crucial to the survival of Art on the Hill's galleries, how can they resist keeping Sunday hours, when the high art of strolling The Hill is at its best? Thinking about survival makes me hungry, so I sample a slice of heavenly, ricotta crowned pizza in Trattoria DiFiore's corner bar and deli before moving on.

In an elegant space with perfumed air, owner Munir Rihani welcomes me warmly for my first visit to **Royal Gallery** at 298 Atwells Ave. Dedicated to representational art, Royal houses a collection of (mostly) paintings by local and international artists. Through June 27, the walls are dedicated to Mary Jane Q. Cross, the self-styled "Fingerpainter of America." Faced with hand tremors that preclude her from fine brushwork, Cross works her bucolic, water-based oil paintings almost entirely with her fingers. Insider's tip? Ask for a peek of Brian MacNeil's flawless still life paintings, which will be exhibited later this summer.

After pondering the fruit of glossy still life spreads, I'm almost ready to cap off my day with a dreamy slice of banana crème pie at Pastiche, Federal Hill's celebrated European-style bakery. However, I still have one more gallery to visit.



Russ Bolt, *Marblehead*



Karla Quattrocchi, *House of Stone*



Joe Trepiccione, *Hill's Edge*

## AGC Spring Show

Mixed Media Juried Show

Opening Reception  
May 1, 6-9pm

Gallery Hours  
May 2-3, 1-6pm

## Two Solo Shows

Karla Quattrocchi

Joe Trepiccione

Opening Reception  
May 15, 6-9pm

Gallery Hours  
May 16-17, 1-6pm

**StoveFactory  
Gallery**

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