



THOMAS E. FRANKLIN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

John Phillip Osborne's love of nature inspires his landscape paintings, which have earned him worldwide recognition. Twenty-five of his works are on display at the Bergen Museum of Art and Science.

Artist's 25-year retrospective captures the great outdoors

By JAN BARRY
Staff Writer

Walk into an exhibit of John Phillip Osborne's landscape paintings and windows seem to open in the walls.

In a 25-year retrospective of the Ringwood artist's work at the Bergen Museum of Art and Science, visitors stand transfixed by stunning scenery from Alaska to Ireland to North Jersey locales painted in oils so realistically you feel you could stroll right into them.

"Oh — look at the Paterson Falls!" said a man admiring the collection on Sunday, awestruck by a large painting of the Great Falls in full torrent: whitewater tumbling between rugged cliffs, a fine mist drifting into sun-streaked clouds in a bright blue sky.

On a nearby wall, a silvery river deep in Alaska ripples through a mountain pass, a cloud shadow hovering on a towering mountain-side. Across the gallery, a rain squall lashes a darkened, distant mountain miles off across green pastures grazed by sheep along the Irish seacoast.

Museum Director David Messer mounted the Osborne retrospective because of "the sheer pictorial beauty of his work. . . . You will

Many of the paintings portray seasonal scenes.

not find a contemporary landscape painter who is any better than John."

The Osborne exhibition has been so popular a summer draw to the county museum at East Ridgewood Avenue and Pascack Road in Paramus, said Messer, that he plans to keep some of the paintings up past the Aug. 25 closing date.

Dramatic landscapes Osborne has painted from sketches drawn on location in Ireland, Scotland, and Newfoundland grace walls in New York corporate offices, galleries from Boston to San Francisco, and U.S. embassies around the world.

Other inspiring places are in the Highlands rising just outside his home in Ringwood. "I think I've painted every corner here — summer, fall, all through winter. It's always nice to come home to," he has said. "New Jersey is spring, especially. It's spectacular."

Many of the 25 paintings on display portray seasonal scenes in Ringwood and the surrounding countryside. The scenes include elegantly dressed girls dancing through a shower of apple blossoms in the botanical gardens at Skylands Manor, a magnificent tree near Ringwood Manor cloaked in the fog of a summer

drizzle, an autumn view of a ne- pond and wooded ridge, an snowy forest trail trod by a bi- tied-up figure walking a horse.

A picture-window-size paint virtually pulls viewers to peer a herd of cows grazing the wir- remains of a cornfield in Sus County. Turn around, and anot window-on-the-world paint captures a riotous red sun bursting above a woodland stre sinking into the shadows of du-

"They are very refreshing; calming," said Doris Moore, a museum trustee. "They make us focus on what we have in our environment. It makes me want to get out and look more closely at what is in our own back yard."

Osborne, who was born in Wyckoff 45 years ago, has been an art teacher as well as a painter the past quarter of a century. From his first job teaching at Ramapo Indian High School to his current position as senior instructor at the Ridgewood Art Institute, he has guided others to see the dramatic interplay of light and shadow that illuminates his landscapes.

Osborne took up outdoor painting after a memorable trip to Maine. "I had thoughts of being an architectural illustrator," he said. "In my senior year [at Ramapo Regional High School], I had a teacher my mother hired, to let me paint trees. Before I knew it, I had me on the Maine coast. And just fell in love with it."

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday hours are 1 to 4 p.m.

