

Maine's summer bounty includes multiple art shows worth your time | Column

New exhibits run through the summer at galleries in Rockland, Portland and Thomaston, among others.

Communities: [Portland](#), [South Portland](#), [Rockland](#), [Thomaston](#)

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Summer's in full swing, which means art is everywhere in Maine. There are so many shows and such great variety to be found at this time of year that it's impossible to get to it all. So, this week and next we'll abandon any grand overarching themes and, instead, offer groupings of short reviews to try and cover more territory.

CALDBECK

"[Jeff Epstein](#)," through July 31, 12 Elm St., Rockland, caldbeck.com. For more, call 207-594-5935

Jeff Epstein studied with the legendary Lois Dodd, and it has always been apparent to me that he profited much from her instruction in terms of technique. However, whereas Dodd's work seems matter-of-factly observed, with no subliminal messages, Epstein's paintings dwell in a kind of clash between what is natural and what is manmade. These two things aren't always in opposition, of course, but often the relationship between them feels tentative to say the least.



Jeff Epstein, “Metal Fence with Safety Cone,” 2025, oil on panel. (Image courtesy of Caldbeck Gallery)

This latest suite of paintings (one of four shows currently up, this one in the adjacent barn space), leans into a more ominous sensibility, even telegraphing a sense of danger that heightens our experience of them. For instance, three paintings feature orange safety cones. These bright orange objects exhort caution, warning us of an unknown imminent peril ahead. They look even more portentous at night (“Night Cones No. 2”  “Metal Fence with Safety Cone”). But the presence of the yellow line in “Safety Cones and Broken Yellow Line” also implies speeding into oncoming traffic.

The latter is almost a companion piece to “Burnouts, Double Yellow Line-No. 2,” in which an otherwise placid bucolic road is marred by skid marks of a car that swerved out of control. “Headlights, Early Morning” may be an innocuous painting of a house at dawn, but the headlights of the title project head-onto one side of the dwelling, making us wonder if it is that same driver, about to crash into someone’s bedroom as they sleep.



Jeff Epstein, "Burnouts, Double Yellow Line," 2015-25, oil on panel. (Image courtesy of Caldbeck Gallery)

There is moody lighting ("Streetlight, Foggy Night") and a looming monster-like black machine ("Night Excavator"). All these feel a far cry from Dodd's mostly sunny, quiet scenes of nature and domesticity — her houses in flames notwithstanding. To be sure, these paintings aren't all gloomy and mysterious, a quality of which I am, perhaps morbidly, a fan. But these notes of uncertainty and subtly suggested approaching catastrophe add a fascinating element to the Maine plein air painting we're used to seeing.