

ART

Stow artist is 'not finished yet'

New exhibit is on display at ArtSpace in Maynard

By Sharon Tully

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The title of Judith Jaffe's Retrospective, "I'm Not Finished Yet!," which is being exhibited at ArtSpace Gallery in Maynard, not only describes Jaffe's painting process, but also the artist herself.

The name of the exhibit "just came to me," Jaffe said. "That's the truth. That's how I felt."

Jaffe said this is her first retrospective. "I've had exhibits for other series. You show your series once or twice and then you go on to something else and then you don't show it again because it's not up to date," she said. The signature painting in the exhibit is called Retrospective and it is a collection of many of Jaffe's pieces. She photocopied some of her other work to make them larger or smaller, then made a collage, and then painted over parts of the original work.

In her soft-spoken voice she said there are several stages to her process.

"It's taking out a painting and looking at it with different eyes. It was finished, but now it's up for grabs as long as it belongs to me. "I've taken a number of paintings that I did 30 years ago because I wanted to redo them," she said. "They were sort of grim originally and they become something entirely different -- less grim."

Jaffe, who is in her 80s, shows no signs of slowing down. Jero Nesson, the director of ArtSpace Gallery, said, "To see her so dedicated and physically nimble at her age is inspiring."

Some artists focus on a particular medium, but Jaffe doesn't have a favorite. She has completed pen and ink drawings and also enjoys using the oil and egg tempera technique.

"I love every one I do. They're all exciting when you're doing them," she said. The artist, who has lived in Stow for 34 years, began her life-long passion as a child in New York.

She said she wasn't very studious. Art "was the only thing I could do," Jaffe

said. "It was my only ability." After high school, her mother sent her to secretarial school because she felt art was an impractical talent. In the 1970s, after Jaffe got married and had children, she took some classes at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston where she earned a four-year certificate. She also has a bachelor of fine arts degree from Tufts University. Jaffe has been working at ArtSpace since 2001. "She's in her studio all day. She spends the time and effort to produce wonderful paintings. It's interesting to look at her work from the 1970s and see how she's evolved to her current pieces. It's a really spectacular show honoring an amazing artist," Nesson said. While there is so much expression in Jaffe's paintings, she also communicates effectively with words. She prepared a statement that she feels fits all of her work. "I once read that in life, there is much cruelty and terror but also a wondrous and overpowering

beauty," Jaffe said. "Both forces are necessary and together they create a mysterious and remarkable world -- a world that dwells at the heart of all my work." "I tend to paint out of my head," she said. "From things I think about -- the world, new beginnings and endings of life, and I'm also interested in natural forms. That's what I mostly center on." Jaffe, who is a grandmother, has a wise, all-knowing view of what makes an artist.

"In one of my classes, they talked about the stages that children go through. You know how beautiful second graders and third graders work is? Artists always want to get back to that instinctual way of coloring and looking at shapes," she said. "Once you pass that stage, you have to work to get it back again." Sitting in her studio space, Jaffe offered sage advice. "It's so hard to make a living as an artist," she said. "You have to have something else to be in back of you. To be a visual artist, actor, dancer



Artist Judith Jaffe stands beside one of her paintings. COURTESY PHOTO

or director is the most exciting thing people can do, but they're the hardest to make a living. It's stimulating and rewarding, but not in monetary sense. Artists should work and enjoy themselves, and some people make it." Jaffe certainly finds ways to stay current. One of her art pieces, "Recalculating," was named after the common word heard in a GPS. She also incorporated Angry Birds into the piece because of her grandchildren. "Clearly she's extremely talented. She's

someone who has honed her craft through hard work," Nesson said.

When asked how she felt about the exhibit, Jaffe said, "My family is coming from all over the country - Texas, California, Virginia. It's sort of like a grand birthday party."

Judith Jaffe's work is on display through July 13 at ArtSpace Gallery, 63 Summer St. in Maynard. The gallery is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday to Saturday. For information, visit artspacemaynard.com or call 978-897-9828.