

# All Over Albany

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## ["Snapshot" paintings by Scott Hotaling](#)

posted [Jul 12, 2010](#)



Three of Scott's "snapshot" paintings.

By Kalyn Belsha

Scott Hotaling is an artist, but he also describes himself as a part-time genealogist. The 30-year-old Selkirk native has spent hours visiting family members to make a detailed family record, which he uses to identify subjects in the paintings he creates using old family photographs.

Scott's impressive [body of work](#) includes many small "snapshot" paintings, some of which are modeled after black and white Polaroids dating back to his Sicilian great-great-grandparents and a cast of other characters that fascinate him, despite the fact he's never met them. In addition to his family, Scott paints "found photos" -- ones he's been given, bought at estate sales or stumbled across on Flickr.

This August, Scott has two exhibits, one at the [Romaine Brooks Gallery](#) and another at the [Albany Center Gallery](#), that showcase his snapshot paintings, in addition to some haunting local landscapes. He gave AOA a sneak peek at some of the artwork he'll be showing and talked with us about how he creates his snapshots and why Albany has no shortage of views to inspire artists.



### **When did you first start turning photographs into works of art?**

A few years ago, I had my first solo show at the Romaine Brooks Gallery called "The Polaroid is Dead." I started painting from photographs -- paying respect to the photograph as an object -- with that show. That was a group of oil paintings done in the format of a Polaroid picture [using] real Polaroids. It was reactionary to the Polaroid film no longer being created and available to consumers. In a poetic sense, it was

paying homage to the Polaroid photograph. It really was the first instant-gratification photo. Now we get it every day with digital photography.

**Which was the very first "snapshot" that you did? And what about this photo made you decide "I need to paint this"?**

My grandmother. I was just sitting there with my old Polaroid [camera] from the '80s and I snapped a picture of her sitting on the bench. If you had ever met my grandmother, it epitomizes her. It's one of her more favorite spots at home that she sits on and just sort of enjoys the day. The thing is, when my grandfather was still alive, he'd be next to her, which is why I titled it "Waiting" [above]. I painted it because it was so close to me.

**How do you create the snapshot paintings? And how do you pick which snapshots to paint?**

I sketch it first and [then] I paint the photograph as an object. It's a storyteller in two parts, both the image it's showing us but also the heirloom that it may become, or lack thereof. When you see the paintings they look like photographs that you can reach out and pick up. I respect the imperfections of the photograph -- the rips, the tears, the bent corners, the poor enlargement or exposure that may have happened. One thing I do look for when I'm trying to select a snapshot is that it's not a modeled shot, or a posed shot or a studio shot. Because I want it to show a story. I think grabbing that action in time at a party or whatnot does that better than "OK, sit here, cock your head this way." But a lot of the saved photographs or albums are professionally taken.



**Why do you think that is? It wasn't conventional to take random snapshots? Or they just haven't been the ones that survived because they didn't seem important?**

I'm going to guess because photography was expensive. And you only had 36 images on a roll of film. We don't even think of this these days. And that goes into play with the whole idea of digital photography. You don't like the picture, delete it. And here you can't, you take the picture, you got it. But [when] photography was expensive, you were selective with what images you took. You took a few at ease, casual snapshots, but more of the pictures tended to revolve around posed things because you wanted your picture to come out good.

**Do you think that there's a lack of things to be inspired by in Albany?**

I think Albany provides me with an intense amount of inspiration. I feel that this city and this community really appreciates art, and I appreciate that. It helps keep me motivated. There are places to show, there are people that want to see the artwork.



**What is unique about the landscapes you'll be showing at the Romaine Brooks Gallery?**

This direction of my work is brand new. [One painting is of] the [Livingston Avenue Bridge](#) across the [Hudson](#). Very few bridges in this country spin like that one does, so in that sense it's rare. The stonework was built during Abraham Lincoln's presidency. The bridge itself was redone in 1901, so it is really old, but not quite as old as the original foundation. I believe the bridge is owned by the railroad company CSX. It's an ongoing conversation about what they want to do with that bridge, because it needs to be updated. I hope the bridge sticks around. But because we don't know what could happen, [this could] be one of the few paintings of the bridge.

**So what's next for you?**

These paintings of the landscapes are definitely a preview of what's to come. I'll always be working with the photographs and the snapshots. But at the same time I'd like to start doing some paintings of Albany and of my environment and try to look at the city in ways that are seen every day but are often overlooked. And

respect the less vista-like views. I don't want to paint the Capitol, that's been done.

*This interview has been condensed and edited.*

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Scott Hotaling's exhibit of snapshots and landscapes titled "Mannish Terrain" will be on display at the Romaine Brooks Gallery starting August 1. You can also see more of his snapshots at the [Albany Center Gallery's "Domestic Dramas"](#) exhibit open from August 6 to September 3.

**Earlier on AOA:** [Jennifer Maher's toy portraits](#)

all images courtesy Scott Hotaling

[6 comments](#)

tags: [art](#), [Kalyn Belsha](#), [people](#)  
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## Comments

these paintings are super. lets all look at them and get SILLY together!

... said Jonathen Schmoggins on Jul 12, 2010 at 12:57 PM | [link](#)

Congrats Scott! I really like your work.

... said [ROBYN BOCKIS](#) on Jul 12, 2010 at 1:19 PM | [link](#)

I LIKE SLEEPING UNDER THE STARS

... said Randy Travis on Jul 12, 2010 at 2:11 PM | [link](#)

Congradulation Scott,  
I miss you at work too.

... said Dolores K. Bachandouris on Jul 12, 2010 at 5:55 PM | [link](#)

Scott,

Congratulations on being featured here! Your work is quite impressive!

... said [Ken Zalewski](#) on Jul 12, 2010 at 11:36 PM | [link](#)

Scott,

I knew in highschool, when I saw your paintings you were going to be great and I was right. very proud of you. keep up the good work.

... said Naomi Swiader on Jul 19, 2010 at 12:49 PM | [link](#)

## Say Something!

We'd really like you to take part in the conversation here at All Over Albany. But we do have a few rules here. Don't worry, they're easy. The first: be kind. The second: treat everyone else with the same respect you'd like to see in return. Cool? Great, post away. Comments are moderated so it might take a little while for your comment to show up. Thanks for being patient.

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Sometimes the word "bizarre" doesn't cover it. From a TU story by James Odatto about NXIVM, the org based in Colonie and Clifton Park: The... [\(more\)](#)

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The photo above is the winner of the "Uniquely Saratoga" category at Sunday's hat contest at the Track. Much credit to the winner, Joan Yanni... [\(more\)](#)

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It sounds like Albany common councilwoman Leah Golby is trying to push things forward on car sharing. From an email she sent out on Friday... [\(more\)](#)

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Ear Candy New York talks with locals Railbird at "some guy's house" -- in the kitchen, in the bedroom, in the shower: Thankfully, the new... [\(more\)](#)

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