



Albany Institute of History & Art

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NEWS

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MAGICAL MINIATURE SCENES BY AWARD-WINNING HUDSON VALLEY AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR ON VIEW AT ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

I Spy with My Little Eye: Joan Steiner's Look-Alikes is on view now through January 29, 2017

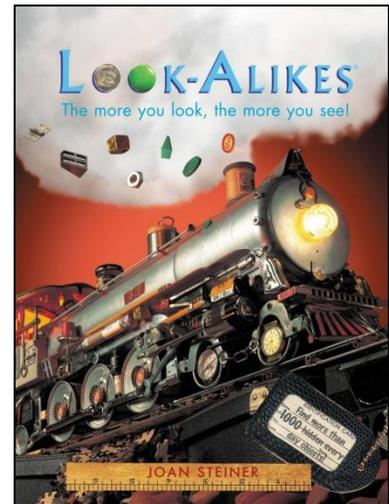


ALBANY, NY—Ten miniature dioramas by the award-winning children's book author/illustrator Joan Steiner (1943-2010) are on view in the exhibit *I Spy with My Little Eye: Joan Steiner's Look-Alikes*® at the Albany Institute of History & Art through January 2017. These meticulously crafted scenes were created from everyday objects and edible treats, and photographed for Steiner's *Look-Alikes*® books, which have been translated into sixteen languages and have sold over a million copies worldwide.

Before her death in 2010, Steiner was a longtime resident of Columbia County, and created her three-dimensional dioramas in her Hudson, New York studio, not far from her home in Claverack.

“We love to showcase the work of Hudson Valley and Capital Region artists at the Albany Institute, and this year we thought it would be fun to include Steiner’s dioramas as part of our Thanksgiving Weekend ‘Home for the Holidays’ family-oriented event,” explained curator Diane Shewchuk. “When the dioramas arrived, everyone at the museum was so enchanted with them, we decided to keep them up for a few months so that more people would have a chance to see them. We’ve also developed a self-guided looking game/scavenger hunt for visitors of all ages to enjoy as they find the dioramas, which are positioned in various locations throughout the museum, rather than in one single gallery.”

Steiner’s first children’s book, *Look-Alikes*, was published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers in 1998; it was named one of Time Magazine’s best children’s books and one of The New York Times Book Review’s Notable Children’s Books of 1998. The series continued with three other books: *Look-Alikes*® Jr., *Look-Alikes*® Christmas, and *Look-Alikes*® *Around the World*. These four books featured three-dimensional dioramas that turned everyday objects like razors, coffeepots, or vegetables into scenes of cityscapes, street scenes, parks, and more.



“Joan Steiner was a meticulous artist, and her ability to create the world on a tabletop set was unique among designers of children’s books,” said Thomas Lindley, who photographed two of the *Look-Alikes*® books, in an interview published in *School Library Journal* tribute to Steiner.

A native of New Brunswick, New Jersey and graduate of Barnard College in New York City, Steiner was the recipient of numerous art and design awards, including a Society of Illustrators Award and a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, even though she was not formally trained in art.

“Joan Steiner spent a lifetime creating extraordinary scenes from everyday objects,” noted Peter Iorizzo in the obituary he wrote for the *Albany Times Union*. According to that article, her favorite was a diorama called “Sweet Shop,” showing a young girl seated at an old-fashioned store counter, in front of a traditional soda fountain. Pretzels serve as chairbacks, crackers as seat cushions. This diorama is on view at the Albany Institute.

"I think the young girl [in that scene] is her," speculated Steiner's husband George Rodenhausen, at the time. Commenting on the world-wide following Steiner enjoyed with her books, he added, "She once said it made her happy to think her books had been in so many countries as ambassadors for her creativity and her simple desire to make people enjoy looking at pictures."

I Spy with My Little Eye: Joan Steiner’s Look-Alikes® continues on view at the Albany Institute of History and Art through January 29, 2017.

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The Albany Institute of History & Art is located at 125 Washington Avenue in Albany, New York. Free parking is available in the museum's lot at the corner of Elk and Dove Streets.

The exhibition galleries, Museum Shop, and the new Crisan Café at the Albany Institute are open Wednesday 10am-5pm, Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sunday noon-5pm. In addition, the café and museum shop are open Tuesdays from 10am-5pm. The Research Library is open on Thursdays from 1pm-4:30pm and by appointment.

Current admission rates are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students with ID, \$6 for children aged 6-12, and free for children under 6. Albany Institute members are admitted for free. There is no charge to visit the café or museum shop. The museum offers free admission to the galleries on Thursdays from 5pm-8pm and on the First Fridays of the month from 5pm-8pm. To learn about other discounts and free admission days, please refer to the Visit section of www.albanyinstitute.org.

For more information, visit www.albanyinstitute.org or call (518) 463-4478.

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Founded in 1791, the Albany Institute of History & Art is New York's oldest museum. Its collections document the Hudson Valley as a crossroads of culture, influencing the art and history of the region, the state, and the nation. With more than 35,000 objects and one million documents in the library, it is an important resource for the region, giving our community a sense of the part the Hudson Valley played in the American story, and our own place in history. Permanent and temporary exhibitions are open year-round and create a sense of place, allowing visitors to meet the people who helped shape this region. Among the museum's best-known and most-loved collections are the 19th century Hudson River School landscape paintings by artists like Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, the 19th century sculpture collections, and, of course, the famous Albany Mummies that came to the museum in 1909 and have been on view ever since. For more information, please visit www.albanyinstitute.org and be sure to follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/albanyinstitute) and Twitter (@AlbanyInstitute).