

# Palpable feelings are reflected in 9/11 artworks

**By TIMOTHY CAHILL**  
Staff writer

Looking at Marcia Clark's Manhattan cityscapes at the Albany Institute of History & Art induces a particularly fearsome vertigo. From 1983 to 1985, Clark had a studio on the 104th floor of One World Trade Center, the North Tower, the first to be hit a year ago. You take in the views that Clark painted and think, "This is all gone."

This sense of palpable loss pervades the four paintings in "A Day of Remembrance," the memorial exhibit on the museum's third floor. Each of the paintings shows essentially the same view, northeast, up the East River, with lower Manhattan sprawled out below and the borough of Queens extending to the horizon. Yet each painting is different, in scale and feeling, showing the city in changing seasons and at varying times of day.

One painting, titled "Twilight," captures the rush and bustle of day's end, when shadows grow bluer and yellow lights illuminate the buildings. Another, "Morning," gives us a stark winter dawn, hazy and dun, with plumes of steam rising over the river. Before

the attacks, the variety of light and mood would have been the principle pleasure of the paintings, like Monet's repeated studies of Rouen Cathedral. But now the scene, not the atmospheric, is the focal point, and not of aesthetic delight. It is dread you feel.

Because while the familiar New York landmarks in the paintings remain intact — Trinity Church, the Woolworth Building, the Brooklyn Bridge — we know the vantage point from which they were viewed has been taken forever. Our mind-reel of the twin towers collapsing on themselves makes everything else in the paintings seem more fragile, more vulnerable.

Then, on the heels of that memory comes another, grimmer thought. That for the men and women who occupied this same space a year ago, those victims with offices above the impact who likely perished, this view was one of the last things they ever saw: this shifting perspective, these deep canyons straight down, these spreading fingers of avenues, the bending river and beaded bridges, this far horizon of land and sky.

It is hard to look at these paintings and not feel a psychic falling away, a loss of solid ground, a weightless rising of grief and mourning.