



# Rosemary Chase gifts quilt mural to Saugerties

by **Frances Marion Platt** — February 4, 2025 in Art & Music, Community

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Artist Rosemary Chase, who grew up in Saugerties, has donated a mural to the town. The artwork has been installed on the back of a restored firehouse, built circa 1906 at 8 Theodore Place. (Photo by Lauren Thomas)

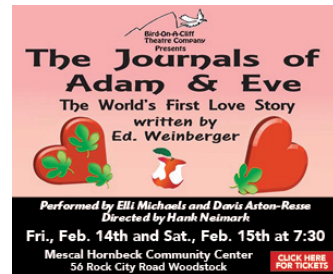
Growing up on a small family farm in Saugerties, Rosemary Chase (née Carpino) had the makings of a multimedia artist from the get-go. “I was always creating stuff,” she recalls. “All my classmates saw me as an artist.” From a tender age, she was “crafty,” made Christmas ornaments, picked beans from her mother’s garden to dry and string into necklaces. In 4-H Club, she learned to sew, made an apron and a shift dress — a harbinger of a long career in the fashion industry. “I used to change everything into evening wear. I’d put both of my legs down one pajama leg and use the other as a train.”

Chase lights up when she recounts a serendipitous moment of childhood artmaking that she knew even then would be unrepeatable. In an Easter egg-decorating contest with her siblings at about the age of 7, she experienced “some kind of chemical reaction that caused this incredible burst of color. I knew it was the best one, but my father, who was judging, picked one of the other eggs. I just said to myself, ‘He doesn’t know any better.’ Mistakes have been my A+ in artwork... I never know if I can do it again.”

Turning damaged, unloved and discarded objects into something more visually interesting manifested as a natural knack for Chase early on, long before “repurposing” and “upcycling” became trendy buzzwords. She dedicated ten years of her fashion design career, for example, to using paint and decoupage to transform soiled, shopworn shoes into bespoke bridal sandals, with remarkable success. “I breathe new life into things that are considered no longer valuable,” she says.

That inclination to rescue and “anoint,” as Chase likes to call the process, led to a recent ongoing project that has brought her considerable attention over the past few years: a wall art collection that she calls The Shutter Project. One of her shutters depicts the red bridge spanning the Esopus Creek on Route 9W. Another artwork, American Vogue Quilt, first shown publicly at Emerge Gallery in 2022, has just been blown up into a large mural and installed as a gift to her hometown, within view of that same bridge.

It was way back when she was earning her baccalaureate in Product Design from the College of Design at North Carolina State University that Chase painted her first murals for a couple of local businesses. “I did a lot of eclectic design projects while I was still in college,” she says. “I designed a logo and billboard for the Triangle Outlet Mall in the Raleigh/Durham area.” Global Views founder Lois Del Negro, a distant relative, “hired me when I was a sophomore in college to design bed linens and tablecloths.”



## Weather



design, she organized the college's first-ever Art to Wear fashion show, which she says is now an annual tradition that draws up to 3,000 attendees.

Upon graduation, Chase moved to Manhattan with \$400 in her pocket and has lived there ever since. Within a week of her arrival, she was hired as an assistant designer for knitwear, but had to learn the required skills on the job: "That was the only course that I did not take," she says. Her work experience quickly expanded to include such gigs as designing a Christmas letter for Lord & Taylor and doing styling and makeup for rock stars such as Robert Plant for MTV.

After four years of work in the Garment District, she set out on her own to design evening wear. A friend of the family in Saugerties named Ed Gerard connected Chase with jazz chanteuse Cassandra Wilson, who became a steady client. "Ed came to my rainwear show and asked me to make ten sketches for Cassandra. She bought three dresses right then, and 45 total, including her Grammy dress and costumes for tours."

Chase attributes much of her success in custom clothing design to her rapport with her clientele. "I was very good at observing and listening. They felt seen and heard, so I was not micromanaged. With every project since I was a freelancer, I've had full creative control." From clothing, she transitioned into footwear design, but eventually "started to leave the body slowly" and focus more on visual art pieces, especially when the Covid pandemic hit. "I didn't know I was a painter until I assessed that I used painting in everything I do," she says.

On a parallel creative career track, Chase joined SAG/AFTRA and pursued work in the film and television industry — mostly as a stand-in, body double, background and voice actor, which she still considers her "day job." "I was the double for Brenda Vaccaro's hands," she notes. To audition for a gig dubbing a cow character in a Spanish-language cartoon feature called *Pup 2 No Good*, "I dressed in a way that would make me feel animated." The confidence boost worked; she got the job.

Exposure to the film business led her to a project designing a series of more than 75 GIF images that she calls "Beach Messages," in which inspirational quotes written in beach sand are uncovered by receding waves. "They've received more than nine million views online," she says. "I'm not done with that project yet.... I want to see them projected, maybe outside St. Patrick's Cathedral, where there are a lot of hurting people."

Chase's predilection to bring home discarded objects and reinvent them with acrylic paint, decoupage and other media never went away; she was a winning contestant on the HGTV series *Flea Market Flip* with a piece of furniture she had upcycled. One day, on the streets of Rockaway, she found a pile of abandoned shutters. Drawing on work she'd recently been doing as a real estate stager, she was inspired to transform them into views from imaginary windows by painting scenes on the slats, often based on photographs she had taken in her wanderings. "Usually, shutters are meant to shut out. My shutters are dreamy views to look at."

That project soon expanded into an ever-growing series, as she collected real and faux shutters wherever she could find them and experimented with a variety of treatments, including simulated wrought-iron grillwork. Before long she had created enough for a one-woman exhibition called *Shutters with a View*.

One of those shutter images, titled *Town & Country*, was a photo of the red bridge on the southeastern fringe of the Village of Saugerties. Most of her family still live locally, and Chase pays monthly visits. In her frequent trips over the bridge southbound, she found her eye always drawn to the rear façade of the former firehouse, C. A. Lynch Hose Co. #2, at the corner of Theodore Place and 9W. "I felt something was missing in this scenic arc coming off the bridge," she says. "I wasn't looking for a place to hang my painting; I saw a need and filled it."

The charming 1906 firehouse, now a vacation rental property known as Casa Fuego, was revitalized and redesigned by Rebecca Falcon in 2021. Rebecca and her husband Jonathan Falcon operate businesses throughout the Hudson Valley, including Slutsky Lumber in Ellenville, Bashakill Bazaar in Wurtsboro and Liberty Street Liquors in Newburgh. Chase approached them with the idea of using the rear wall of the building to host a mural that would add enjoyment to the experience of local residents and visitors, and they agreed. "This is my first exterior mural," notes the artist.

In choosing which artwork to blow up to mural-size, Chase was thinking about the concept of preserving hope, having recently lost two loved ones who had felt hopeless in the final stages of terminal illness. The original acrylic-and-paper-on-canvas painting of *American Vogue Quilt* was meant to highlight the resilience and determination of American pioneers. It depicts an outline of a standing horse superimposed against a floral patchwork background. "Much like the patterns found in quilts, these stories of perseverance, woven together, create a rich tapestry of both struggle and triumph," Chase writes on her website. "Hope kept the pioneers pushing through challenging conditions, and the horse played an essential role in making dreams come true by transporting these adventurers to their destinations."

feels like: 27°F  
wind: 9mph W  
humidity: 38%  
pressure: 30.34"hg  
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### Frances Marion Platt

Frances Marion Platt has been a feature writer (and copyeditor) for Ulster Publishing since 1994, under both her own name and the nom de plume Zhemyna Jurate. Her reporting beats include Gardiner and Rosendale, the arts and a bit of local history. In 2011 she took up Syd M's mantle as film reviewer for Alm@nac Weekly, and she hopes to return to doing more of that as HV1 recovers from the shock of COVID-19. A Queens native, Platt moved to New Paltz in 1971 to earn a BA in English and minor in Linguistics at SUNY. Her first writing/editing gig was with the Ulster County Artist magazine. In the 1980s she was assistant editor of The Independent Film and Video Monthly for five years, attended Heartwood Owner/Builder School, designed and built a timberframe house in Gardiner. Her son Evan Pallor was born in 1995. Alternating with her journalism career, she spent many years doing development work – mainly grantwriting – for a variety of not-for-profit organizations, including six years at Scenic Hudson. She currently lives in Kingston.

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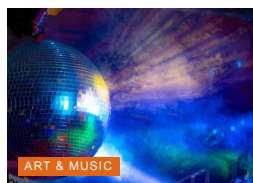
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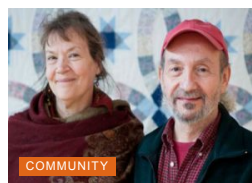
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