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Kimberly Ruggiero of Madison, with dog Finnegan, walks through her new studio and gallery on Wall Street.  
 Photo by Nancy Dionne

# A Change of Scenery

By Susan Talpey  
 Living Editor

**W**hen Kimberly Ruggiero was struck ill by a neurological manifestation of Lyme disease, what she missed most was not being able to paint. Now she's back in good health, she's taken her passion for art in a new direction, opening Ruggiero Studio and Gallery in Madison. Ruggiero initially planned for

the space to just be her working studio but the idea of a gallery grew on her.

"The gallery was an afterthought. The space just lent itself to more than that," she says. "The motivation behind the gallery is to create art, not just to sell it."

Ruggiero, who left a corporate career to pursue art, began formal training at the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts in Old Lyme in 2000.

"Lyme was the hotbed of the American Impressionist movement 100 years ago and it was wonderful to study there," she says. "When I found this space for my own studio, I wanted to bring to Madison, some of the incredible artists at the Lyme...I want to share the exciting work that coming out of the folks at the college."

In addition to her own pieces, Ruggiero has the work of her instructors and emerging artists.

"These are artists trained in the classical, academic tradition," she says. "These are works rooted in study from life, primarily the figure, as the classical masters did. The paintings have been built, creating drawings and sketches, using compositional elements. Most of the artists make their own panels and painting mediums, and stretch their own canvases."

More than a selling space, Ruggiero has filled her gallery with work that holds meaning for her.

"These artists are all connected to me in some way, be it as teachers or friends, and they all have an incredible enthusiasm for the gallery. At the academy, I found kindred spirits and shared with these artists a passion for creating art and beauty."

In the light, open space on Wall Street, Ruggiero, who has lived in Madison for 11 years with her family, hopes to attract many visitors.

"I think we need more galleries in town—I think every other shop in town should be a gallery. Madison is a destination point for people traveling and visiting the shoreline and I want to share the



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Lyme Academy with them," she says.

"Many people think of art as a luxury but it's really a necessity for me. I hope people will discover that it's more than a painting, it's the way humanity connects—through light, sensitivity, emotion, the figure."

With the artists boasting backgrounds in everything from law to medicine to business, and some artists straight out of college, Ruggiero says despite varied backgrounds they share the process of creating art.

"In my 30s, I underwent a shift in my priorities and I refocused my life," she says. "I slowed down and began to pay attention to detail. Art afforded me discipline that also fit with the direction of my life. I felt I could move forward, be more expressive, share the serenity, and not be afraid."

The artists on display at the gallery have begun meeting weekly to paint Madison landscapes, says Ruggiero.

"We've been painting once a week in town—at Bauer Park, Circle Beach, West Wharf—and we will have local landscapes at the holiday sale."

In addition to the holiday show,



Ruggiero Studio and Gallery will serve as the owner's artistic home, as well as an art space. Photo by Nancy Dionne

in the spring Ruggiero's gallery will feature some of the existing artists in one-man shows. She also hopes to donate a percentage of future profits to Lyme disease education and research.

"It's such a wonderful working space, I'd like to have drawing and painting classes and have models come in. In the summer, I'd like to run children's programs. We have a strong group of talented artist to pull from and so there's many great classes we can do," Ruggiero says.

"I welcome people will come and

see me work, look at the art, read a magazine. It's a very intimate experience, as opposed to some other galleries and I hope people enjoy it."

*Teachers and Friends* is the opening exhibit at Ruggiero Studio and Gallery, 33 Wall Street (behind The Nosey Goose), Madison. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. For info, call 203-245-3993, visit [www.ruggierogallery.com](http://www.ruggierogallery.com), or email [Kim@RuggieroGallery.com](mailto:Kim@RuggieroGallery.com).

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## Ruggiero Gallery Artists

Jerry Weiss	Oil Painter	Chester
Hollis Dunlop	Oil Painter	New London
Helene Johnson	Sculptor	Chester
Jeremy Davis	Sculptor/Draftsman	Old Lyme
Paula Billups	Oil Painter	Middletown
Ross Albrighton	Oil Painter	Niantic
Ken Dorros	Oil Painter	Glastonbury
Andrea Fenn	Oil Painter/Draftsman	Farmington
Robert Schweizer	Oil and Watercolor Painter	Avon
Patricia Collins	Oil Painter	Madison

## One Opens, One Closes

Sweet Jane's Gallery, which opened in January, has taken down its sign and shut up shop at its Wall Street premises.

Jane Cunha, co-owner of the gallery, says she and partner Jane Brodbar have closed the doors for good. Cunha will continue to work from her home studio, selling her work at Rituals Spa in Guilford and at her website, [www.janecunha.com](http://www.janecunha.com). During November, Cunha's work will be on display at the Mercy Center as part of the Shoreline Arts Trail Open Studios Weekend.

Calls to Brodbar were not returned.

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