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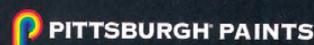
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Old Lyme Painting Tradition Finds Path to Madison

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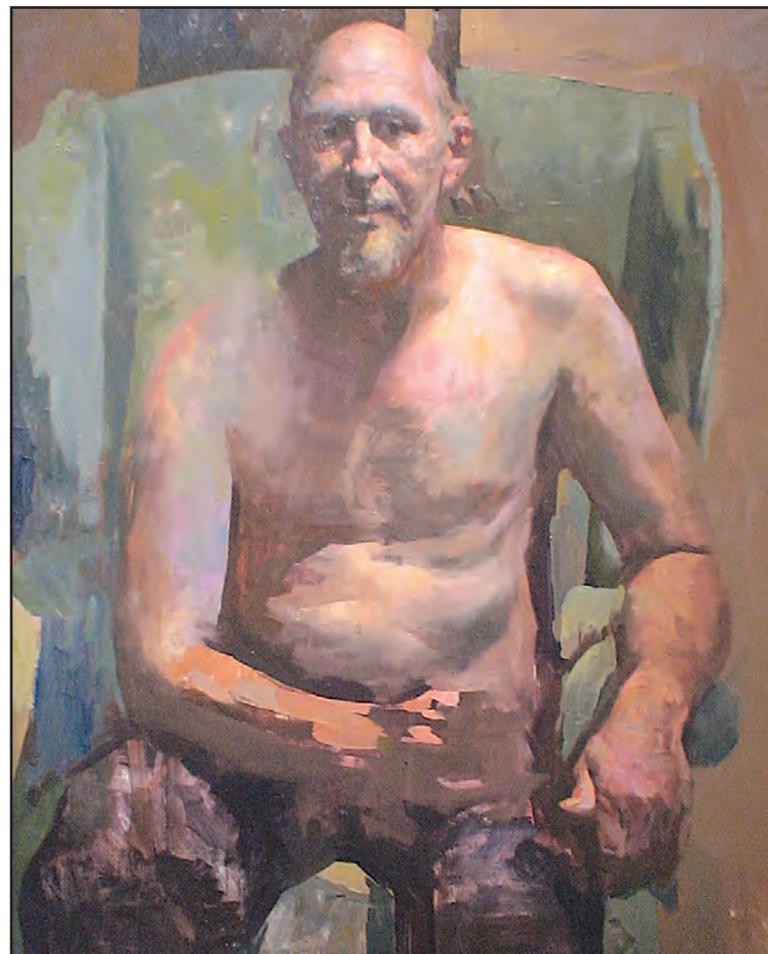


By Leah Lopez Schmalz
Special to Living

Along the lush green trees of the back properties on Madison's Wall Street is a small cottage with a friendly greeter who takes the form of a little black pup. It is such a sweet setup, blooming mums and swaying seagrass along the shaded path, that it looks like it should be a chocolate shop. Shortly, as the landscape-painted canvas atop an easel comes into view, its life as an art studio and gallery take form.

Ruggiero's Studio and Gallery opened its gallery doors for the first time on Sept. 14 with *Teachers and Friends*, an exhibit featuring the work of those teaching and/or trained at the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts. Ruggiero, who also studied at the academy, is seeking to create a "venue for artists to connect in a meaningful way with the community and one another."

The display is a splendid mix of fine figure painting, sculpture, landscapes and still-lives. Four of the figure paintings—Hollis Dunlop's two



Jake, oil on canvas, by Hollis Dunlop of New London

portraits *Jake* and *Sue* and Kimberly Ruggiero's *Woman at Night* and *Female Nude*—are simply stunning.

Ruggiero is getting back to basics; to a time when drawing the human form was the basis of artistic training and the primary subject matter of most exhibitions. In *Woman at Night* the bright, peach skin of a woman is set against a darkened wall. The serpentine twist of her torso is matched by the twist of her legs and shoulder blade as the entire corkscrew of her body descends on an angle toward the lower corner of the canvas.

The curvature and softness of the woman's body is a stark contrast to the cold wall and the hard fabric draped table upon which she lays. The surface is platter-like, as if the woman has been set there to serve up for inspection. The impression is cut only by the intimacy and softness of the situation, and the casual lay of her hair as it falls off the side of a pillow.

Perhaps most remarkable is the coloration used to delineate light and dark. No black and white here, not even beige and charcoal. Instead, Ruggiero puts lilacs and cobalts, oranges and golds, to the test to create a believable and hushed snapshot.

And her choice to hang it right

below Dunlop's portrait *Sue* is a wise one. It visually strengthens the interconnectedness that meanders throughout the work of this group.

In *Jake*, an older, balding, shirtless gentleman poses in a stiff and awkward position. This half naked model extends one arm across the canvas as the elbow comes to rest on his knee, the other arm poised on the edge of the wingback chair grasping at the robin's egg blue upholstery. Dunlop paints the right arm in such a way that the definition between flesh and cloth is lost, as if TV static were wrapped around his forearm. Slightly reminiscent of Lucian Freud's brushwork in the self portrait *Reflection*, *Jake's* full belly is shaded in tones of periwinkle, pink, aqua, and charcoal as it extends outwards. The paradox of this representation is that the oddity of the pose is tempered significantly by the slight tug of a smile and the ease portrayed on the man's face.

Jerry Weiss contributes a handful of pieces in both portraits and landscapes. *Red Crane*; *Brooklyn Waterfront* is by far the best of his exhibited landscapes. It is not the

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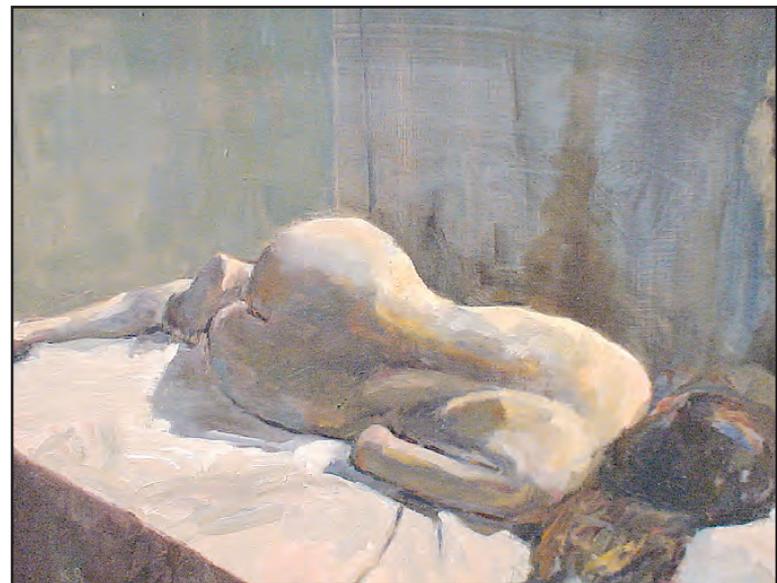
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Red Crane; Brooklyn Waterfront oil on canvas, by Jerry Weiss of Chester



Woman at Night, oil on panel, by Kimberly Ruggiero of Madison

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typical lovely waterscape that one is usually confronted with in a shoreline gallery. Instead it effectively captures the essence of a working waterfront. In fact, only a small patch of river manages to peek through the mass of rough bridge girding, bricks, and industrial equipment. Through his paint application, Weiss creates so much atmospheric movement that he leave the viewer wondering if the piece is a finished painting or a sketch he produced while driving by the Brooklyn scene.

These three are just a scratch on the surface of a truly gifted group of artists who not only exhibit well

together, but also find time to paint together. *Teachers and Friends* indeed.

Teachers and Friends runs through Nov. 9. Ruggiero Studio and Gallery is at 33 Wall Street, Madison, and is open Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. For info, call 203-245-3993 or visit www.ruggierogallery.com.

Leah Lopez Schmalz of Guilford is an environmental attorney with a BA in industrial design and a concentration in visual art and jewelry studies. Email her at leahlopez3@yahoo.com.

Community-Wide Jewish Sabbath Service In Fourth Year

Shabbat Alive, an ongoing, inter-congregational service, takes place on Friday, Nov. 9 at Temple Beth David in Cheshire and on Friday, Dec. 14 at Congregation B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge from 6 to 7 p.m. The performance is led by Rick Calvert of Congregation Beth Tikvah in Madison, Isaiah Cooper, and Jacob Zonderman. For more info, email ShabbatAlive@optonline.net.

Annual Halloween Parade in Madison

The Madison Recreation Department and Madison Chamber of Commerce co-sponsor the Madison Annual Halloween Parade on Saturday, Oct. 27 with a 1:30 p.m. departure time from Green Village Road School field.

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