

CREATING Beautiful CONNECTIONS

By Sarah Tietje-Mietz

Photography by Sherry Rhyno

LIFE'S CANVAS

Variety is the spice of life, and for artist and gallery owner Sherry Rhyno, her days have been seasoned with notes of joy, curiosity, celebration, and appreciation. A spectrum of influences and experiences have developed in Rhyno a keen ability in making connections through her own art, and through the work of the artists she represents at Gallery 31.

The artwork adorning the walls of the gallery located on Main Street Square where Route 6A and Main Street meet in Orleans has been carefully curated by Rhyno. It presents an impressive tableau of moments captured expertly in multiple mediums by many artists—painted in oil, pastel, watercolor, and alcohol ink—her own paintings included. Voted Best Fine Arts Gallery on the Lower Cape by Cape Cod LIFE readers for many years, Gallery 31 is the premiere place for exhibition of paintings in soft pastel on Cape Cod. While an image alone captures a customer's attention, it is Rhyno that connects them with an artist whose work acts as a keepsake of a memory, not just as decoration for their wall.

"I think the visual world creates associations in people. If I look at a still life of a bunch of veggies and a copper pot on the stove, it reminds me of Sundays after church as a young kid," says Rhyno. "And it's the sea that lures people back to our shores



ONS



Artist and Gallery 31 owner Sherry Rhyno delivers moments of light and life to others through art.



the most. A lot of people want to bring home a memory, because they come to the Cape to get away from it all. And so they want that sense of calmness, peacefulness, and solitude that they feel when they see waves breaking on the shore.”

Rhyno grew up in the Bristol County town of Attleboro, where her artistic journey began. She was a curious and creative child who could be found up in her room committing the scenes outside her window to drawings, or settled in her aunt’s art studio where she dabbled with the pastels and oil paints her aunt worked with. In cahoots with her older brother Ned, they convinced their parents they needed a darkroom in their basement for black and white photography. She dove into developing her understanding of the craft, even demonstrating the photographic printing process as a school project. She credits this early work as foundational in her ongoing exploration of value and tone, saying, “I think learning to see as an artist is a lifelong continual process, an awareness.”

The in-depth exploration of a process speaks to Rhyno’s curious nature, and she is not one to be restrained by a singular focus. In high school, she dove into studying the written word by helping form a literary arts magazine. She pursued these skills further by majoring in English as an undergraduate at Lasell College and the University of Massachusetts (UMass), where she also served as editor of the college newspapers. She did her graduate work at UMass and Boston University.

These endeavors in the literary and visual arts refined in Rhyno an acute skill as a communicator who harnessed the best facets of each creative practice as a means to create meaningful connections. Her combination of curiosity, communication skills, and creativity saw Rhyno through a career with UMass at the Boston campus that spanned 30 years. As marketing director, she developed multiple campaigns coordinating print, radio, and television with billboards on the MBTA and Boston’s Southeast Expressway, produced alongside other recruitment materials, mailings, videos, events, and campus guides for the university. A decidedly high-point of her career as marketing director was in the work leading up to the first presidential debate between Al Gore and George W. Bush in 2000. As dean of students, among her cherished responsibilities were overseeing leadership programs and the student art gallery, roles that would serve her down the road when she took on ownership of Gallery 31 on Cape Cod.



While at UMass, Rhyno was elected alumni president for three terms, directly working with the President's Office and serving on the development committee for the Board of Trustees. Outside of her time with UMass, Rhyno dedicated a considerable amount of energy to cultural non-profit work. She was one of three original incorporators of North Attleborough Community Television, Inc., a local cable access operation founded in 2005. She was elected to the Charter Commission for the Town of North Attleborough and by its members to serve as chair. She served on the board, and ultimately as the elected president, of the Pastel Painters Society of Cape Cod from 2010 through 2014, and was integral in the formation and designation of the Town of Orleans as an official cultural district by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in 2013, and chaired the non-profit Orleans Community Partnership, Inc. She currently still serves on the North TV board of directors and the Orleans Cultural District Town Committee.

To say that Rhyno is dedicated to her work, both personally and professionally, is an understatement. She is the type who goes all in, giving herself fully to understanding and enhancing each venture, her own artwork included. She left her post at UMass in the early 2000's, managing her own marketing firm and then taking the opportunity to pursue her work as an artist, and eventually gallery owner, full-time.



“One of the things that has influenced my style is that I am one of these people who believes that if I’m going to do something—I think my mom and dad instilled this in me—that I’ve got to give it my best shot because I might only get one shot,” says Rhyno. “You can’t necessarily control how long you live or how long you stay in different facets of your life, but you should do what you can to have a beautiful quality of life... You know, living life to the max.”

Rhyno is living her life in great spirit, in spite of a few health scares and setbacks, including the detachment of both retinas. She did not let these hurdles prevent her from painting and drawing, instead turning the challenges into opportunities to be more interpretive and expressive in her artwork. She describes her own style as multi-faceted, enjoying the efforts of pushing herself outside of her comfort zone through her subjects of floral still lifes or serene landscapes. Working mainly in oil paint and soft pastel, there is a keen sensitivity to the quality of light captured on and around her subjects; how a flower petal glows in the sunshine or the bark of a tree reflecting that certain luminosity only found on Cape Cod, especially at “golden hour.” In her landscapes, she spends considerable time working through identifying the

right scene and discovering the most impactful composition, studying the light and shadow, and creating multiple sketches and photographs for reference before committing the moment to canvas, board, or paper.

Rhyno is passionate about the art she creates and carries this enthusiasm to the artists represented through her curation and management of Gallery 31. Rhyno first became involved with the gallery in 2008 as an exhibiting artist and co-owner of ten, the same year she relocated full-time to Cape Cod. She became sole owner of the gallery in early 2013. She's created an environment for customers to browse a stunning selection of fine art by award-winning artists, yet goes far beyond simply showcasing their work. Rhyno creates meaningful

connections with each person who walks through the door, with a willingness to go the extra mile, or miles, like reframing pieces, showing a painting in a variety of lighting, or bringing work directly to a buyer's home to see how particular paintings work in their space. For Rhyno, this extra TLC serves to enhance the art experience for everyone. "I really want it to work for the artists. And I want it to work for our clients, our visitors, our collectors," she says. "It's a partnership."



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Visitors to Gallery 31 can often find Rhyno actively working on a painting, often a simple yet stunning arrangement of flowers, in an alcove serving as a studio. This allows Rhyno to devote any extra time to paint, and helps to build an awareness of how artwork is created through the viewing of her own process. She has been known to provide guests with the opportunity to try their own hand at mark-making with pastels, facilitating a more intimate connection with art as a process, and connecting the skill, technique, and craft it takes to capture the moments of beauty for sale in the gallery.

The gallery represents artists hailing from Scotland to Oregon to Cape Cod, and Rhyno does not just act as steward for the artists but also as interpreter for their work, making a concerted effort to understand each one's unique style. Rhyno has painted with many of the artists, and can speak to their artistic process from a greater depth of understanding because of this. She is a catalog of this information, easily delving into the techniques utilized by master pastelist Richard McKinley to capture his landscapes, diving



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just as deftly into the process renowned pastelist Jeanne Rosier Smith uses to render her ocean waves realistically. She is able to communicate with guests what elements are combining in a work to make it special, and because of this makes meaningful connections between the artist, their art, and the public.

Rhyno's curiosity and desire to forge new connections has helped develop her own voice as an artist. She categorizes her work as encompassing a "varied" style, which comes from her own desire to keep learning, developing, and stretching herself outside of one style or subject. She celebrates artists that can develop within their certain style, but for her it feels more limiting than nurturing in her growth as an artist. Instead, she absorbs the teachings of her peers and filters these through her own lens. The result is an artist who has a vast understanding and range of artistic processes and can pick and choose from this arsenal with the same ease as picking up a paintbrush. With these tools, Rhyno has leaned into a calling that challenges and nurtures her, and celebrates the life of art she has chosen.

"When I'm expressing myself with paint, the sky's the limit. I mean, I can do anything I want to do, can't I?" says Rhyno. "It's a place where you can take yourself, and just be free and let go, and not feel like you're having to judge yourself—there's a quietness where I can feel and hear my inner being."

Sarah Tietje-Mietz is a contributing writer for Cape Cod Life Publications.



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