

The Business Next Door

A snapshot of a local home business • Interview by Marcia Passos Duffy

Jeanne Thieme, Fine Artist
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Jeanne Thieme was born in Oak Park, Illinois; the family of eight migrated to Stamford, Connecticut where Thieme spent most of her childhood years. Her home away from home became Southern Connecticut State University where she received a Bachelor of Science in Art Education. Upon graduation, Thieme's art career began in illustration and design in a Connecticut art studio. Always yearning for a more rural, quiet life she soon found herself in New Hampshire where she freelanced with local art studios, then eventually began teaching art at the local high school. After rewarding years teaching and administering as fine art department chair, she left teaching to pursue a career of a full-time artist in her own studio/gallery on Pipe Dream Farm in Swansey, New Hampshire. She is a member of Arts Alive, New Hampshire Plein Aire Painters, New England Watercolor Society, a signature member of Vermont Watercolor Society and Monadnock Art Association and she is a juried member of the National Art League and the Salmagundi Club in New York. Recently one of her paintings won the top award at The Salmagundi Club in New York City. We spoke to Thieme about her work and the inspiration for her art.

Jeanne, tell us about your home studio.

My studio/gallery is on Pipe Dream Farm in Swansey (hence the name Pipe Dream Studio). Since my husband is a plumber and we were working towards making our dreams a reality we thought the name was appropriate. Most of my painting is done in my studio but I benefit from both in-studio and *plein aire* painting. Painting outdoors is "easy-access inspiration." Outside, one is challenged to paint fast with bigger brushes to catch fading light or changing shadows. Returning to the studio with these spontaneous, quick studies gives me time to look at what has transpired and turn them into final paintings. My studio/gallery is conveniently attached to my house so 10 minutes on a painting can occur easily as well as many hours. Directly in front of my easel is a large window where I can look out onto a pasture where most likely my horses will be grazing. Here shadows, light and color slowly move across the forest and field as the day passes by. Within these studio walls — besides my own painting — dozens of artists share painting challenges, insight, laughs, tears and excitement as together we maneuver the crazy world of being an artist. But teaching is a small part of this artist's journey.

Describe your typical day at work in your studio or painting *plein aire*.

My typical day begins early. Barn chores, perhaps an early morning horseback ride in the woods near my house for a little pre-painting inspiration and then at the easel for anywhere from 1/2 hour to 3 hours or more ... depending on the day. I find these shorter, more frequent painting visits to the studio throughout the day allow me to revisit paintings and prevent me from getting stuck in the hole of "overworking" a painting. Also, since I paint in watercolor my techniques are very wet as water and paint randomly flow across my paper. Drying time needs to be incorporated into my painting schedule too.



What about the Monadnock Region inspires your work?

Growing up in Stamford, Connecticut near New York City I always dreamed of a more rural life and yes, I was one of those horse-crazy little girls who wanted to live on a farm someday. Both of these dreams were far beyond my grasp at the time. As a young child constantly drawing and painting these two major themes I believed that someday I would indeed live on a farm and own my own horse. Now peppered throughout my website is the phrase: "If I paint my dreams they will come true." And indeed the earlier paintings of my dreams of galloping horses, expansive fields, forests and farms have come to pass. We bought our "starter home" 37 years ago in Swansey and we are still here at Pipe Dream Farm. Who knew that the Monadnock Region and Swansey were in my dreams those many years ago.

Horses seem to be a major theme in your work.

What about horses inspires you?

As our children came along, so did sheep, chickens and a pony or two. I did finally get my first horse and passionately learned how to ride and care for one. During this entire period, I kept painting, exhibiting and began teaching as well. Forays into the quiet of the woods and fields on the back of a horse offered me a horse-high view of painting possibilities all around me. This horse/artist relationship does seep into my work as I've experienced the strength, gentleness and wisdom of this large animal through these daily escapes. Horses often crop up in my landscape pieces but when I choose to paint just horses I paint the energy and motion of the horse rather than a realistic rendering. I am not a photo-realistic painter but rather I look

for brushstrokes, colors and movement through paint and water that suggest the physical anatomy of this equine energy and action.

Anything else you'd like to say about your work?

As my business has grown I have realized how important it is to be a "user-friendly" artist. Paintings are to look at, think about and marvel. This is not a career where only certain people can enjoy the work. Looking at art is for everyone and I enjoy "lookers" as well as "buyers." Every year on Columbus Day I open the studio during the Fall Foliage Art Studio Tour to two other artists and last fall together we brought over 100 visitors ("lookers" and "buyers") through our doors. Visitors hailed from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maine as well as local folks. My studio is only a phone call away for those to stop in to see what is new and ponder the process of painting.

What are you most proud of in your work?

Over the many years that I've pursued my own journey as a full-time artist there have been too many adventures to illustrate here. Heart-breaking disappointment, unexpected accolades, pure joy, excitement and fear. Last year was a culmination of many emotions as I am now a member of the Salmagundi Club in New York City where I received the Thomas Moran Award for excellence in watercolor and was an award recipient for the Ruth and James Ewing Arts among other happy surprises. But what I am most proud of in my work? I am proud that with perseverance and luck my dreams have come true as a successful artist, living where I always wished to be and doing what I love. ■



Photo by
Cill Truslow