

ROZHON AND WHEELER'S AUTUMN EQUINOX

In a time when many contemporary commercial art galleries are closing, business acumen and good old fashioned "people sense" is the "secret sauce" holding together the successful art partnership between gallerist Anita Trezvant and her cadre of artists, notably regional favorite Ann Rozhon.

Trezvant's Hope Gallery, located in Bristol, Rhode Island's charming historic downtown, celebrates 11 years in operation in December. It is a highly approachable space reflecting Trezvant's authentic personality. Her common sense coupled with a clever and experimental instinct often direct her to taking in new artistic voices in hope of attracting a broader audience of savvy collectors, sometimes exhibiting abstraction, new-media photography and design-focused sculpture.

"My customers want to take home something beautiful that they understand," she reminded me. "They are visiting downtown and want a piece of art that reflects the locality as well as matches their personal taste."

She is also wise in organizing seasonal exhibitions. These "mini-shows" are focused to spotlight veteran power artists whom Trezvant is representing, such as Rozhon, as well as to introduce new emerging talent, such as watercolorist Jessica Wheeler.

Most often, Hope's collection – always original, one-of-a-kind, fine art, fine craft, glass, textile, metal, pottery and a variety of mixed-media objects created by regional artists and artisans – is within the objet d' art arena (beautiful, small-in-scale contemporary-traditionalism).

Likewise, Rozhon, a respected and well-known Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)-trained sculptor with a modern sensibility, acknowledges and respects the tastes and needs of her fans, gladly giving them what their souls and minds are seeking. While she can and has produced amazing large-in-scale expressive figurative sculptures for museum installations, her admirers and buyers want sentimental impressionistic landscapes, water scenes, cityscape architectural paintings and smaller, more digestible vignette sculpture for the home environment.

"A woman who purchased my painting told me she looks forward to coming home after a long day at work to relax in front of it with a glass of wine," said Rozhon.

When I encouraged her to do more sculpture because of her outstanding style and skill, she politely pointed out, "Painting is my full-time job."

The story of how Rozhon became a successful painter, after years mastering terracotta sculpture for dynamic museum shows, reveals the serendipitous way in which the universe always provides what a person most needs at the right time. After Rozhan and her fellow artist colleagues were evicted from their Providence studios, she found herself without a

place to work. Her painter friends invited her to join them out on a plein air rendezvous in hope of pulling her back into creativity. She admits to being reluctant, defining herself as "not a painter."

Nevertheless, Rozhon went and immediately fell in love with the spontaneity and immediacy of paint-sketching while outdoors. Today, she continues to travel on plein air excursions, always returning with a new cache of paintings. "I love it because I have a finished statement within a few hours of work," she explained. "It's extremely fulfilling as an artist. Painting for me is freedom of expression; I can relax and really enjoy myself."

Indeed, Rozhon's paintings reflect her emotive expansion and happiness while in the act of creating. They are portraits of her in that they say more about the artist herself than the landscape they impressionistically depict; they are true revelations of who she is as a person: a warm and open observer, risk-taker and explorer who enjoys being engaged in the moment.

Although her brand of impressionism is highly popular with her collectors because of their calm vibrancy, it is her sculpture work that best defines Rozhon as a truly focused and trained artist. Her figures, many of which are given names, retain and evoke the style and manner of the American Moderns of the Great Depression era into mid-century; she is able to render in clay figurative forms full of nuanced personality.

HOPE GALLERY
435 HOPE STREET
BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND
SEPTEMBER 10
THROUGH
OCTOBER 31