

## ART VIEW story and photography by Marylou Butler



# A Stroke of Inspiration

For painter Nancy Scelsa, teaching others is as important as creating art

Painter Nancy Scelsa is one of those lucky people who found her passion at a young age and never looked back. “I knew from the second grade that I wanted to be an artist,” says Scelsa. “I never considered doing anything else.”

Growing up in Wickford, Scelsa was immersed in art every summer while attending the Wickford Art Show. “That really cemented my career choice for me,” she says. Following graduation from Paier College of Art in New Haven, she went to work for Sears in the advertising department. From there she worked as a graphic artist in the Creative Services Division at the *Providence Journal*. After the second of her three children was born, she left the newspaper, but decided to teach painting at home. Starting out in her basement with three students, what she discovered was that her passion for art was equaled by her passion for teaching. “To be a good teacher you cannot teach from ego, you must bring out your student’s unique interests and talents without putting your own stamp on their work,” she says.

Home teaching led her to spend fifteen years as Head of the Art Department at Overbrook Academy in Warwick. Twelve years ago, while still at Overbrook fulltime, Scelsa opened her own gallery and art school in East Greenwich. Now 200+ students and eight teachers strong, the school is an

integral part of the southern RI community. “We are an art family here with students ranging in age from five to 88,” she says. “I feel it is important to provide a nurturing place for young artists with all of the cutbacks in the schools. We have an intensive portfolio class for students getting ready for college and our students have gone on to RISD, Pratt, and more.”

The school offers classes in drawing, painting in a wide choice of mediums, cartooning and fused glass jewelry design. “We maintain a very supportive and fun atmosphere here. Whether you are a beginner interested in art or an established artist who wants to expand, there are classes or workshops that will be right for you,” she says. “At night we put on the classical music and watch the daily stress melt away while we create.”

Nancy Scelsa named her school Nancy Stephen in honor of her older brother who died at age 42. “He had hemophilia and always had to fight for his life,” says Scelsa. “He taught me what was most important in life and how to live. It is his influence that allowed me to follow my passion.”

*The Nancy Stephen Gallery and School of Art is located at 6 King St. in East Greenwich. 884-8979, [www.nancystephenartschool.com](http://www.nancystephenartschool.com).*

