

essential **arts**

## Drawn to Art? Visit Woodland Studios

By Lauri Lee



Photo by Eric Tadsen

Woodland Studios is a boutique art gallery with artisan printing and framing. It's best described as part store and part gallery for one-of-a-kind types of art. Prices range from \$20 to collectible price points for a variety of art mediums appealing to all types of customers. It's also the place to bring a treasured family photograph to have it printed and made into something special, or to have a custom-framed job designed and completed.

The studio carries original local art, printed art, investment art, glass wall art, mosaic glass wall art, metal wall art, carvings, fused glass, blown glass, pottery, sculptural steel, custom-made furniture, jewelry, hand-dyed scarves, and Scandinavian folk art artifacts. The gallery has wall sections of individual artists to create a museum atmosphere. But unlike a museum, the displays are intended to enhance the viewing of the art that can be purchased by an individual, interior designer, or collector. Visit [woodland-studios.com](http://woodland-studios.com) for a virtual tour.



Photograph by Eric Tadsen

In 2016, Alan Sheets opened Woodland Studios in historic downtown Stoughton. He was living in La Crosse working as an executive of a medium-sized company when a Japanese company purchased it. He chose to leave corporate management to enjoy his passion for art. When young, he had taken art classes at the Toledo Art Museum, one of top five museums in the country. Over the years, he collected a variety of original and printed art from famous American artists. With his expertise in art and investment art, opening a studio would give him a place to display and sell his collection, as well as the work of local artists.

The search for a town known as an artistic community led Alan to Stoughton for his art studio. A town of 13,000, Stoughton is just 18 miles southeast of downtown Madison. The vibrant community has the international vibe of the university, and attracts tourists from Chicago and Milwaukee. The opera

house, museums, theatre, restaurants, interesting shops, and beautiful homes with Norwegian architecture give the town its distinct character.

When Alan scouted Stoughton, he discovered a building on Main Street with an existing frame-and-print shop. While not for sale, the owners took it as an opportunity to retire when he made them an offer. The three-story building was constructed in 1889 and is on the historic register. The lower level of the building once opened to the outside, and ice blocks were delivered there by truck for cold food storage. An original stone fireplace still exists in the lower level. He knew this building had just the right atmosphere for his venture. The art studio would be located on the 3,000-square-foot main level, while the 3,000 square feet of the lower level would be used for the custom-frame-and-printing production area. The third level has two apartments.



Photograph by Eric Tadsen

Many people are buying highly collectible, museum-quality art of deceased master artists as an investment opportunity. The signed original art, lithographs, etchings, and engravings appreciate in value and could outperform the stock market. These pieces are hard to find as they are much sought after by museums, galleries, and art collectors. A prestige is associated with art that will never change, even if the value changes. Those who buy a piece of history get to enjoy the art for many years before later selling it for profit. A lithograph signed in 1940 by Works Progress Administration (WPA) artist Grant Wood is just one piece of investment art at the gallery. He was well-known as the painter of *American Gothic*, the iconic painting of a woman and man holding a pitchfork. There are around 50 investment art pieces in a 300-square-foot area of the store.

The heritage of Stoughton draws interest to the Norwegian and Scandinavian folk art artifact collection. Many collectors purchase these popular heritage items. After 1957, Norway no longer allowed people to bring artifacts out of the country, which makes them hard to find. The artifacts at the gallery were brought by immigrants to the United States from the early 1800s to early 1940s and handed down through many generations.

To be able to offer a wide range of styles and mediums, Woodland Studios shows and sells the work of local artists on consignment. The artists periodically hold exhibits. Some of the original and printed art currently on display are the works of Cassius J. Callender, Debra D'Souza, Gary Erickson, Sharon Fujimoto, Joe Garza, Laurel Grey, Derek Hambly, Doug Hatch, Peter Herman, Matthias James, Ann Kleckner, Lucy Kubly, Gary Kvalheim, Mark LaRowe, Brady Lueck, Mark Pflughoeft, Sara Rezin, Mitch Sigmund, Julie Sutter-Blair, and Karen Watson-Newlin. Local and regional jewelry artists also sell their enamel, fused glass, and metalwork jewelry creations. Local artists can contact Alan for details on having their art considered for the gallery.



Photograph by Eric Tadsen

Photographers, artists, and those wanting high-quality printing can have their original two dimensional artwork, photographs, or computer-generated art reproduced by Woodland Studios. The printing process uses fade-resistant, archival inks for small-to, very large- format printing on a wide variety of canvas and fine art papers. Prints can be ordered online from anywhere in the country. Interior designers often select a print and have it resized to fit into their client's home or business.

The studio also has a computerized mat cutting machine, full custom-framing shop, and vacuum press for dry mounting the work of artists. If it's worth remembering, it's worth framing. Over 3,000 wood and metal frames, shadowboxes, and floater frames are available for high-quality custom framing. Conservation is available to repair and clean an art piece if needed.

Woodland Studios features art from 1799 to present day. Art students or individuals who want to look at or study period art can visit the shop to enjoy what is usually found only at a museum. If you're looking for one-of-a-kind pieces of art or to add to your art collection, take the short drive to Stoughton.



*Lauri Lee owns Communication Concepts, a marketing communications business in Madison.*

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Frabjous Hubs of Influence

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## **nonprofit**

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