



PHOTO BY LYNNE DAMIANOS

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BY ARTHUR CLARK

An inquisitive friend and the inspiration of some 40 fellow artists at Fountain Street Studios, in Framingham, have reopened a rich vein of creativity in award-winning photographer Lynne Damianos. It's visible in *NatureScapes*, a striking photo series focusing on sky, water, garden and winter displayed in her spacious, fourth-floor studio at 59 Fountain Street, and in the pleasure she finds when others connect with her work.

Damianos cast the die for her career early on. She recalls the joy of attending opening nights at art galleries with her architect father and artist mother as a child in Pittsburgh, and her epiphany when she was introduced to the magic of picture-making by a friend in their high school darkroom. "I'll never forget seeing the white paper turn into a photograph when she put it into the chemicals," says Damianos, who not long after that frightened her parents when she went missing for a while with her camera on a trip to Acadia National Park in Maine. "I got so caught up in photographing blueberries, I lost track of time," she says. "My mother really got mad."

Damianos says she once dreamed of shooting for *National Geographic*, but opted to instead to build a "realistic" foundation for a career in the field and so shelved her natural, artistic side. She earned a degree in professional photography from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, NY, in 1981, and went to work for a studio photographer in Pittsburgh.

She moved to Massachusetts later that year, urged on by two fellow RIT grads here, and never looked back. After landing a job in a pioneer one-hour photo lab in Waltham, she moved up the employment ladder until she was teaching classes in Boston and Manhattan, all the while honing her commercial skills with assignments for clients she met on the job. In 1992, between positions at a high-tech photo lab in Framingham and a commercial studio in Watertown, she launched Damianos Photography.

Today, the graceful photographer continues deadline-driven "creative problem-solving on the fly" for commercial clients, using both digital and traditional equipment to make product, people and architectural images. Bold examples are hanging in the hallway at Fountain Street.

Those photos contrast sharply with the fine art that's inside studio #10 – in large and small

framed prints and note cards of natural scenes that reach out and engage the viewer. "I'm photographing things that I see all the time, but giving them an abstract look. It forces people to develop their own perspective of what it is or what it means to them," explains Damianos.

"For fine arts stuff, I really have to clear my head and decompress and let things flow. Sometimes I like walking around a place where I've walked all the time and finding something new, like pockets of air trapped in the ice" in Farm Pond, she says. Or she may spend hours stirring the water in a swimming pool, or rushing to catch a winter sky sunset behind barren tree limbs, to find the just the right image.

"I'm particularly drawn to natural subjects. I look for shape, light and texture," says Damianos. "I really like the idea of nature untouched – without the human element in it ... so that you don't know what the scale is." Damianos photographs on slide film, and the images are scanned and then printed on watercolor paper. That gives a "soft, natural feel" to the pictures, she notes.

Her move into fine arts photography came after a friend asked why none of her own images were hanging in her Framingham home. That was just about the time she moved into Fountain Street Studios in 2000, and went into business full time.

"My friend's question and seeing so much creativity here inspired me," Damianos says. But she admits she was nervous when she exhibited her work in the Open Art Studios at Fountain Street in 2001. "I felt like I was putting my naked self on the wall," she notes. Instead of photographing for a client, "the work was my own thing and I was totally responsible."

Since then, Damianos has continued to participate in Open Art Studios and has served as co-chairperson of the last two biennial exhibitions. She teaches locally and in Boston.

The photographer is clearly enjoying her new fine arts career. That pleasure was no better expressed than by 12-year-old who visited last fall's Open Art Studios. Viewing a shot of a half-frozen Saxonville waterfall on a greeting card, he told his mother, "I could look at this for the rest of my life" – and then he bought the card "and that made my whole day," says Damianos.

Views of the photographer's work and directions to her studio can be found at www.damianosphotography.com.