



# Double vision

Mother-daughter duo see gallery as platform for artists

By Nicole Bradford  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

If they are nervous about launching a brand-new art gallery amidst a recession, Lois and Becky Rule don't show it. In fact, Becky Rule — despite knowing the challenges of a startup business and being a new mom — tends to look at the glass as being half full.

"So many galleries shut down last year, a lot of competition has been eliminated," said the 32-year-old graphic designer and owner of **2Rules Fine Art**, which opened Sept. 2. "A lot of people ask if we are nervous about doing this in a recession, but you know, now more than ever, artists need a voice."

The "we" Rule mentioned is herself and her business partner, sculptor, teacher and successful entrepreneur Lois Rule — who also happens to be her mother.

The first parent-child duo to simultaneously attend **Georgia Tech's** College of Management, the two Rules already have an advantage as both hold business degrees and have built successful companies.

Even so, investing \$50,000 in a new business was a large step — and it was not without careful consideration. For more than a year, mother and daughter traveled to successful galleries around the U.S. to find out what they were doing right.

"We took the owners to lunch and picked their brains," Lois Rule said.

"What we found out from almost every one of them was to pick a ground-floor location with heavy foot traffic. You may not have a lot of people who just walk in and buy a piece of art, but that's how you build awareness."

Also important in determining a location is to find a "high energy" area already geared toward the arts. The Rules ultimately chose a 2,800-square-foot space in Marietta, which is currently undergoing a rebranding and includes events such as the First Friday Art Walk, a free, self-guided tour of the more than half dozen art galleries and other cultural venues.

Selecting a highly visible area in an arts hub was one step. Another was taking to heart a business model the Rules witnessed in the successful galleries they studied: diversification.

➤ See **DOUBLE VISION, 4B**

## 2Rules Fine Art

■ **Location:** 85 Church St., Marietta

■ **Founded:** 2011

■ **Employees:** 2

■ **Artists featured:**

- ▶ Anne Forman, Chicago-based printmaker
- ▶ Dennis Ichiyama, West Lafayette, Ind.-based letterpress artist and visual communications design professor
- ▶ Kang Joo Lee, New York City-based painter/printmaker
- ▶ Stephanie Rond, Columbus, Ohio-based painter
- ▶ Kay Vinson, Birmingham, Ala.-based painter



**2Rules:** Becky and Lois Rule, from left, spent more than a year researching successful art galleries before starting 2Rules Fine Art in Marietta. What they learned was location is key, so they chose a 2,800-square-foot ground-floor space in Marietta, which has heavy foot traffic and is geared toward the arts.

## COOL CUSTOMERS

Tips to ease their risk perceptions.

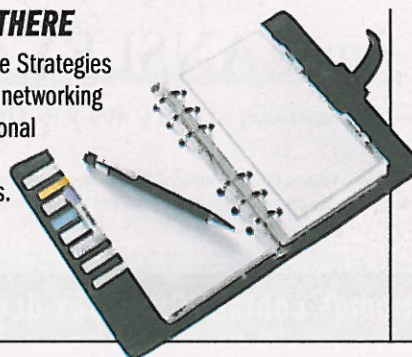


KEN BERNHARDT  
2B

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## Double vision

Continued from 1B

"You can't just sell art," Lois Rule explained. "These galleries are renting space out; they are holding classes and exhibits and hosting private functions."

In addition to multiple income streams, many galleries today also specialize in a particular type of art, such as a certain country or time period.

Within its 2,000 square feet of exhibit space, 2Rules features jewelry, ceramics, sculpture, prints, paintings and other media priced from \$100 to about \$2,000. The Rules, who both have backgrounds as artists but do not display work in the gallery, approach artists whose work reflects commercial processes and themes.

"Being a graphic designer, I've always been on the edge of fine art and commercial art with my work," Becky Rule said. "I wanted to find a way to promote that niche and the artists we choose must somehow fit into it."

Today, each partner spends 40 to 45 hours per week working in the gallery, lining up new classes and exhibits and promoting them. To that end, the younger Rule's background as a graphic designer saved an estimated \$20,000 in startup costs, since she designs all print materials plus the gallery's website.

The lion's share of the startup cost, they agreed, was preparing the physical location with display equipment and furnishings. The once vacant, L-shaped space is now designed to draw in visitors with

large, colorful prints and collages visible through a row of street-facing windows.

Certainly, their work is not done. "We found in our research it takes three years to break even," she said.

Such close familial relationships may seem daunting in a business environment, but most businesses spring from family ties — about 90 percent of them, if you ask Joseph H. Astrachan, a family business expert who serves as executive director of the Cox Family Business Center at Kennesaw State University.

"The biggest challenge is the emotional relationships among family members, and having open and honest relationships despite the baggage of having lived in the same household," he said. "If you can do

that, you'll have a strong business relationship."

Each Rule agreed that the other's background, education and skills made her the perfect business partner.

While Lois Rule holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in sculpture from the University of Florida and an MBA from Georgia Tech, her daughter holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in visual communication from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with her MBA from Georgia Tech to be awarded this year.

In 2002, Lois and her husband started **Container Science Inc.**, a consulting firm where she remains vice president of operations. Becky Rule has been a principal at the design studio **Rule & Renco** since 2007.

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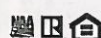
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