

## CONNECTICUT

WWW.COURANT.COM

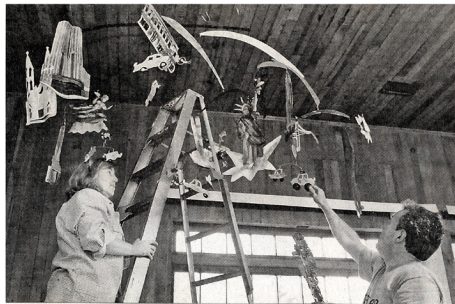
MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2006

3/4 • THE HARTFORD COURANT

## Sculptor Rossi Shifts Towns

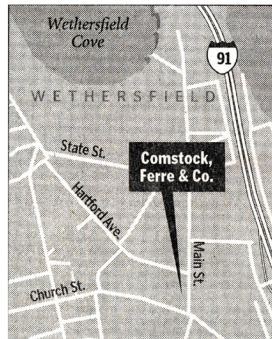
'Flights' Take Wing To Wethersfield

By Kelly Sheehan Courant Staff Writer



PATRICK KISZCRAFT / THE HARTFORD COURANT

WETHERSFIELD- Artist Karen Rossi was in the right place at the right time when she walked into the Comstock Ferre & Co. garden center in January looking to rent space for her new studio. "It was such a coincidence, because I was thinking about putting up a 'for rent' sign that day for the back building," Comstock Ferre & Co. General Manager Linda Cushman said. "It was a match made in heaven." Now, Rossi, metal sculptor of renown, is packing her whimsical artwork from her crowded Windsor Locks studio and moving to the seed company's spacious barn-like building - more space than she ever dreamed of. Rossi's claim to fame has been her 'fanciful flights' metal mobiles, where waitresses, babysitters, salespeople, dancers and animals float among clouds and reach for rainbows, surrounded by icons such as menus, pacifiers, calculators, ballet shoes and pearls. Her trademark sculptures, mobiles, fabrics, stationary, calendars, puzzles and giftware are sold and exhibited throughout the country. In Connecticut, Rossi's work can be seen at the entrance of the Shops at Evergreen Walk in South Windsor. One mobile hangs in Pine Grove Elementary School's library in Avon and her sculptures are outside the South Windsor Library. Her murals also decorate the walls of South Windsor high school and St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford. Finding a place suitable for her studio



THE HARTFORD COURANT

has been an ongoing struggle for Rossi, a Meriden resident. Two years ago, the Windsor Locks building where Rossi was renting was sold, and she was asked to leave. Although she found a house nearby, it was too small to accommodate all of her artwork and materials. "A lot of things I was doing seemed to stop," Rossi said. "I became very isolated and wasn't able to have receptions or open houses. It got her asking, 'Where would be a move up?'" Comstock Ferre & Co. was just the place. Rossi will use the back building as her office, gallery and studio to sell her merchandise in the company's gift shop. Not only is the earthy environment inspiring, she now has enough room to host classes, receptions and open houses, she said. Cushman said she hopes Rossi, who is known to keep close ties with communities through volunteerism, will attract more artists to Wethersfield. "It's something that Main Street lacks," Cushman said. "I wanted to make better use of the unused space, and something like this will allow the public to enjoy it." Rossi said many Connecticut towns are trying to draw more artists in residence. "I hope I could bring more artists to Wethersfield, but it's tough," Rossi said, "I'm not sure if I realize the attention that my work gets, and sometimes I underestimate the exposure I've gotten. I'm just me, so I don't notice." With her new spacious studio, Rossi plans to continue inspiring Connecticut residents. She said it took Cushman three times to convince her that she could rent the Comstock building. "I'm really excited about it," Rossi said. "It's going to be fun."