

## BIZ fact

### 176,500

Number of jobs in Long Island's professional and business services sector in October, down 3,000 from a year earlier

Source: NYS Dept. of Labor

## FACTORY GROWTH SLOWS IN THE STATE

Factories in New York State grew more slowly this month as shipments rose and new orders slipped.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York said Friday that its Empire State Manufacturing index declined to 18 in December from 19.4 last month. The index is down from a three-year high of 30.2 last month.

Still, any reading over zero signals growth. The index is watched closely by economists because it provides a first look at the health of U.S. manufacturing each month.

A measure of shipments increased at a faster pace in December, while a gauge of new orders rose at a slightly slower pace.

Hiring slipped but remained positive.

U.S. factories are benefiting from solid global growth and a cheaper dollar, which makes U.S. goods less expensive overseas. Those trends have lifted exports of manufactured goods.

A gauge of inventories fell to just 1.4, a sign companies are clearing out their stockpiles. That could boost production in future months.

And there were signs of mild inflationary pressures.

A measure of the prices paid by factories for raw materials rose five points to 29.7, though that is below levels that were reached earlier this month. — AP

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MW Designs NY owner Marianne Wegener paints a window at Bay Park Marine Service in Oceanside. ■ Video: [newsday.com/business](http://newsday.com/business)

# DESIGNS

## on the holidays

### LI window artists bank on celebrating the season

BY DAYSI CALAVIA-ROBERTSON  
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For Long Island artists who run decorative window painting businesses, the holiday season is a gift.

"It's the time of year when window art is the most popular," said Marianne Wegener, owner of North Bellmore-based MW Designs NY.

"Everyone wants to celebrate . . . and covering their windows with festive designs is an easy way to attract attention and business. It's a high-profit time for us."

Wegener, who studied design and technical theater at Syracuse University, said the season kicks off in September, when businesses request Halloween, Thanksgiving or fall-themed designs, and runs

through mid-December, when Christmas, Hanukkah or winter wonderland artwork is in demand.

She averages about 70 jobs during the holiday season, "and the number of actual windows painted is easily double that."

Melissa Digiose, 41, of Ridge said her custom art business, MD Design Studio, gets so many window art requests during the fall and winter she can't always take them all on.

In addition to businesses that want their windows painted, Digiose gets calls from people who want holiday art on the windows of their homes.

The spike in clients and the condensed time frame bring in big bucks that can help these businesses stay afloat during less busy months, said Wegener, who supplements her

off-season income by doing custom chalkboard art, wanted by restaurants for menus or couples for weddings, as well as wallpaper designs, hand-drawn stencils and murals.

For Digiose, window art is an add-on to her other more profitable year-round services, which include canvas painting parties and residential wall murals.

Thomas Shinick, an entrepreneurship and marketing expert and adjunct professor at Adelphi University's business school, said companies could also increase profits in the off-season by creating package deals that include lower rates for holiday projects if clients agree to decorate their windows at different times of the year like Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Easter.

"These artists and entrepreneurs need to drive the point home to their customers that Christmastime is not the only time to dress your windows," he said.

"They shouldn't show off for the holidays and have boring, naked windows the rest of the year. They should create an expectation for people to want to swing by the store and see what design is up. It should always be fresh and fun."

Rates at MW Designs run from \$125 for a residential-size door up to thousands for a diner or showroom with more than 20 windows. On average, clients can expect to pay about \$300 for about five hours of work.

Digiore, who studied art at

See WINDOWS on A32

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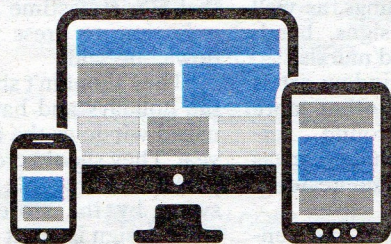
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## LI BUSINESS



Wegener customized this design for a Farmingdale pub. She averages about 70 jobs during the holiday season.

## HOLIDAYS A BOON FOR WINDOW ARTISTS

WINDOWS from A31

The Academy of Art in San Francisco and the New York Institute of Technology in Westbury, said her rates start at \$50 a window, but “can easily become pricier” depending on the size of the project, the level of detail and the distance she has to travel.

While some artists work in reverse on the inside of the windows, others paint on the outside with weatherproof paints.

For businesses, “customization is important,” said Maria Carulliponzo, marketing director at Peak Performance, a physical therapy business that has been an MW Designs client for a couple of years for its four locations.

“Marianne has painted a bunch of cute snowmen doing different therapy exercises and many other fitness-inspired window murals, which our patients constantly compliment,” she said. “It’s fun holiday decor, but it’s more than that because it’s highly tailored to what we want to show as a business, that we’re willing to invest money into something beautiful and unique and that we’re proud to be a part of the community.”

Some businesses, like Steve Candon’s State Farm Insurance office in Franklin Square, decorate their windows year-round.

“You only have a few seconds to grab someone’s attention with any type of advertising,” Candon said. “This is something that people seem to really enjoy, and they’re always kind of looking forward to the next design.”

For Scalice Land Surveying in Lindenhurst, Digiose created 16 custom windows featuring snowmen and penguins wearing hard hats and clutching clipboards and surveying tools.

“I’ve pretty much done it all — dentist offices, pet grooming shops, pizza places, the Wyandanch firehouse, and lately, more



Winter-wonder art is not just for businesses or storefronts. Gloria Geraci of Plainview had Melissa Digiose of Ridge liven up her door and six windows.

and more homes,” said Digiose. Plainview resident Gloria Geraci, managing director of a legal recruitment firm in Manhattan, took her inspiration from a neighborhood diner. “I noticed all the windows were painted and they just looked so lovely, so I thought ‘Hey! I would love this at my house!’” Geraci paid Digiose \$325 to paint her front door and six windows. The door features four col-

orful, scarf-wearing, carrot-nosed snowmen collaborating to place a golden star on top of a Christmas tree, and the windows sport big red ribbons.

“When Melissa was painting the snowmen, people kept passing by and stopping to talk to her, which is kind of a bummer because I was secretly hoping to take credit for it myself,” Geraci said laughing. “It’s definitely been a big hit in the neighborhood.”