

The background is a complex abstract artwork by Marthe McGrath. It features a dense layering of colors including yellow, blue, white, red, and purple. The texture is highly varied, with visible brushstrokes, splatters, and areas of what appears to be torn paper or collage. In the upper left quadrant, there is a rectangular area containing Korean text, possibly from a newspaper or document, which is partially obscured by the artwork's layers. The overall composition is dynamic and layered.

# **The Imagination Tree**

**Community Magazine**

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**Meet Marthe McGrath**  
**Abstract Artist**



# Meet Artist Marthe McGrath



*Marthe McGrath is a resident artist at Reston Art Gallery & Studios.  
To see more of her work, please visit the following websites:  
[www.M2artist.com](http://www.M2artist.com) and [www.restonartgallery.com](http://www.restonartgallery.com)*

I began my training in art as a child. My grandfather was a curator at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. I spent countless hours there with him as he told me stories of each artist and how he or she created the masterpiece we were viewing. Lots of classes followed, mostly at the Corcoran, as my family felt I

had the “gene” to be great. Life and a family of my own put a hold on that plan.

As a career I worked with artists and designers, creating custom area rugs from around the world for their clients. Now retired, I’m able to pursue my life-long love of painting. I’m drawn to bright colors and bold

compositions. I use mostly acrylic paint but also inks, oil, pastels, charcoal, graphite, and anything else I come across. Occasionally I introduce collage, generally using papers I have created myself. I paint with brushes, palette knives, my fingers, chopsticks, whatever. I’m not constrained by any rules in spite of my classical background.

I’ve traveled to many exotic places—Istanbul, Delhi, Hong Kong, Marrakesh, Havana—as well as throughout Europe and the United States. The cultures, colors, sounds, bustle, music, landscapes — they all enter my compositions in abstractions. For me, painting is transformative. It mesmerizes me, creating an energy I like to think shows in my work.

**Editor:** What does your work intend to articulate?

**MM:** A good, positive attitude regarding the human condition.

**Editor:** Does your work observe existing social issues? How about current political issues?

**MM:** No.

**Editor:** What/Who are your biggest influences?  
Jackson Pollock & Willem De Kooning.

**Editor:** How have you developed your career?

**MM:** Basically, I am retired after a long-term career in an art-related field. So, I now have the time to paint!

**Editor:** How do you seek out opportunities?

**MM:** I belong to numerous art and artist organizations, both national and local. I also seek opportunities to exhibit my work in regional and national shows. I really enjoy the →





*Clockwise from top: "Open Window I & II", 24"X24" acrylic/mixed media on canvas  
 "A Couple of Things" 24"X36" acrylic/mixed media on canvas*

energy of networking with other artists.

**Editor:** How do you price your work?

**MM:** Having tried several formulas, I've settled on pricing by size.

**Editor:** What project are you working on now?

**MM:** I'm painting for upcoming shows, including the Great Falls Studio Tour, a Bethesda show and two galleries in Leesburg, VA.

**Editor:** How has your work developed since you started?

**MM:** I paint daily and find that my viewpoint and techniques

evolve with practice. Although the essence of my creativity continues, subtle changes arise on a gradual basis.

**Editor:** What's a favorite place for you to see art?

**MM:** I frequent the DC area galleries, especially the Phillips. I also enjoy





**“I paint from within myself. Sometimes I have a specific idea for a series and complete sketches before starting, often not. Painting creates an energy that I like to think shows in my work.”**

outsider art and graffiti.

**Editor:** Where are you finding ideas for your work?

**MM:** Travel is always a catalyst for inspiration. While in Southern India this past March, I was moved by the vibrant colors of the Holi Festival as well as the energy of Every day life.

**Editor:** Do you collect anything?

**MM:** My home reflects my varied tastes and interests from

my travels worldwide, ranging from Cuban street art to Tibetan Buddhas.

**Editor:** Have you ever purchased an art work?

**MM:** I started collecting art about 50 years ago. At that time, due to finances, I purchased mostly limited-edition lithographs. My preference was always one of a kind artwork. Eventually, I was able to afford one of a kind originals and continue to purchase to this day.

**Editor:** What's the first art work you ever sold?

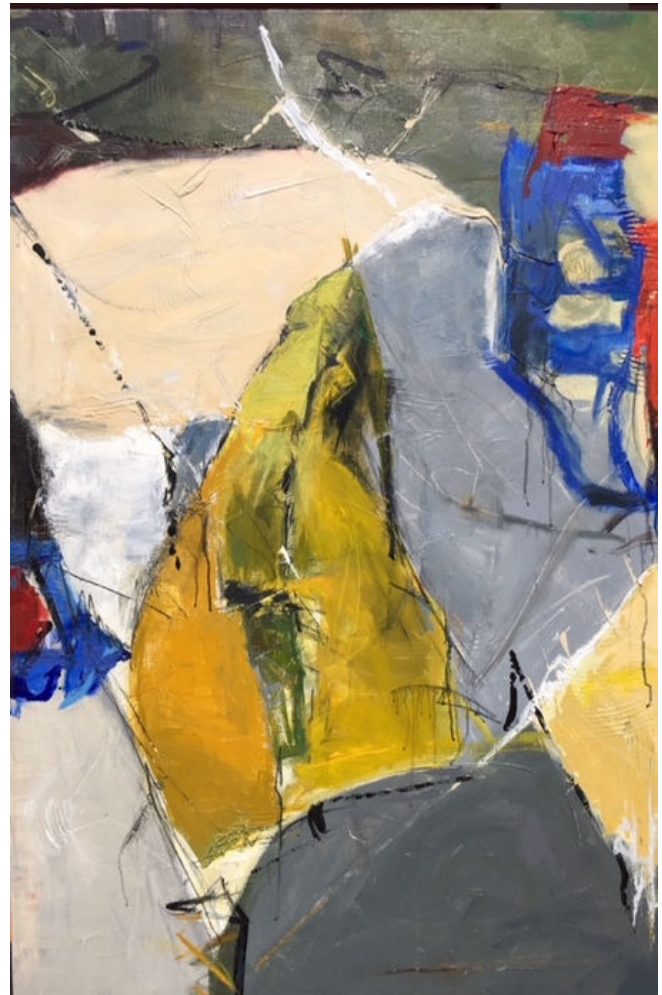
**MM:** An abstract piece entitled, “Cocoon.” I sold it to a couple, who lived with it and loved it and, consequently, bought a second piece, “Blackbird Singing.”

**Editor:** What's the weirdest thing you've ever seen in a museum or gallery?

**MM:** The Burning Man exhibit at the Renwick Gallery is both bizarre and wonderfully fun. →



*“Riverbend I” 36”X48” acrylic on canvas*



*“Riverbend II” 36”X48” acrylic on canvas*





Top: "Lazy Afternoon" 24"X18" acrylic on canvas; Bottom: "Finding a Perfect Place" 24"X18" acrylic on canvas



**Editor:** What's your art-world pet peeve?

**MM:** The inability of most artists to support themselves through their artwork and lack of recognition of women artists.

**Editor:** What's your favorite food/restaurant?

**MM:** I love Indian and most ethnic cuisine. Dining out is a good way to connect with old friends and new acquaintances.

**Editor:** Do you have a gallery/museum-going routine?

**MM:** Yes. I research current gallery shows in the major galleries but also attend a lot of receptions for artist friends.

**Editor:** What's the last great art book you read?

**MM:** "Clear Seeing Place," by Brian Rutenberg, a NYC artist.

**Editor:** What work of art do you wish you owned?

**MM:** Anything by Willem de Kooning.

**Editor:** What international art destination do you most want to visit?

**MM:** The Biennale in Venice 2019, to paint. I plan to go to Art Basel in Miami this December and I would like to visit the Getty in Los Angeles.



*"A New Vision" 30"X30" acrylic on canvas*



**“Depending on my mood, I may start with a color or two that please me or with lines drawn exuberantly and without hesitation on canvas. It is an intuitive process and I become mesmerized, losing track of time.”**

**Editor:** Who's your favorite living artist?

**MM:** Brian Rutenberg. He paints mostly in oil. I find his work vibrant and reflective.

**Editor:** What are your hobbies?

**MM:** Hiking, travel, theatre and metal working.

**Editor:** Which artists and how they may have influenced you?

**MM:** Diebenkorn, Matisse, Joan Mitchell, Bonnard, both Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Chagall, Modigliani, Basquiat, Rauschenberg, Grace Hartigan and many more. All of these artists portray vibrancy and energy in their work, which I find inspiring.

**Editor:** What part of the creative process excites you the most?

**MM:** The freedom of beginning a painting.

**Editor:** How do you know when a piece is done?

**MM:** It's done when it is sold. I frequently revisit older paintings with fresh ideas. I've been known to touch up my paintings even as they are being hung!

**Editor:** What inspires you?

**MM:** Life inspires me. I am also stimulated when working in a group setting surrounded by other artists.

**Editor:** What do your pieces say/express about you?

**MM:** My art is bold, bright and energetic.

**Editor:** What is the process you go through when creating a piece?

**MM:** I paint from within my self. Sometimes I have a specific idea for a series and complete sketches before starting, often not. Depending on my mood, I may start with a color or two that please me or with lines drawn exuberantly and without hesitation on canvas. It is an intuitive process and I become mesmerized,



*“Follow the Yellow Brick Road” 24”X36” acrylic/mixed media on canvas*

losing track of time. Painting creates an energy that I like to think shows in my work.

**Editor:** What is your favorite work of art and why?

**MM:** Any one of the interior scenes by Matisse. I love his playful blend between realism and fantasy. His paintings make me happy.

**Editor:** Thank you, Marthe. It's been an honor.

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