MANASSAS ART GUILD INC. Newsletter

Manassas Art Guild, Inc. • PO Box 3565 • Manassas, VA 20108 • www.manassasartguild.com

May 2025

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Manassas Art Guild
May Membership Meeting

WHEN: Wednesday, May 21, 2025
WHERE: Central Library Meeting Room A
8601 Mathis Ave
Manassas, VA 20110
TIME: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Please bring 1 or 2 paintings for critiquing. We will go over the elements of composition with the paintings.

Congratulations to the artists who were accepted for the Annaburg Manor Art Show. A couple of artists sold paintings at this event. Also, congratulations to artists accepted to the Warrenton Art Show.

The following artists displayed at the Clifton Show:

Jacyln DelVacchio, Nina Gribov, Laura Lavarnway and Josie Tullo. Stephanie McGee displayed on her own and Maria Briganti and Maureen Guillot displayed with p-ART-ners

Message from Laura Lavarnway
Email: laura.lavarnway@comcast.net.
Manassas Art Guild President

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, May 21	6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	MAG Meeting Community Room Central Library
Saturday, June 21	8:00 am – 2:00 pm	Bee Festival, Liberia Plantation
Wednesday, June 18	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	MAG Pizza Party, Burlap and Daisies, Woodbine Shopping Center 13480 Dumfries Rd, Manassas, VA 20112
Saturday, June 21	8:00 am – 2:00 pm	Bee Festival, Liberia Plantation



AND EVENTS

Bee Festival- Saturday June 21, Liberia Plantation Grounds, 8601 Portner Ave, Manassas, VA

Best of the Region Art Show – at The Art Factory, 9419 Battle Street, Manassas, VA 20110, June 3, 2025- June 15, 2025 Reception Saturday June7, 2025 6-8 pm.



Artist for the Month of May
Deborah McDermott

Deborah McDermott is a resident of Manassas. She is inspired by the beauty of nature, everywhere, and enjoys doing landscapes. She has always like dabbling with sketching, and water coloring. In retirement, she has explored using acrylics. She received her training at Northern Virginia Community College and George Mason University. She uses reference photos of places she has visited and paints with acrylics.

Stores Where MAG displays:

Jirani Coffee Houses - 9425 West St, Manassas, VA 20110
Ground Central Station - 9360 Main Street
Art Factory - 9419 Battle Street Open Monday – Saturday 10:00 – 5:00
The Things I Love - 9084 Center
Black Metal Mercantile - 9105 Center Street

Volunteers are needed for AOTM for the months of June and August. This is a worthwhile program for displaying your art in the community. If participation is low, the program may be discontinued.

June
August
September: Maureen Guillot

Volunteers for AOTM needed for June and August. Please contact Laura Lavarnway
laura.lavarnway@comcast.net



Congratulations to artists accepted for the Best of the Region Art Show:

Michele Frantz, Janet Hansen Martinet, Stephanie McGee, Mary Reilly, Carol Rusaw, Lisa Stewart, and Jacyln DelVacchio.

Congratulations to MAG member Jaclyn Del Vacchio. Her print 'Captivate' was selected to be part of the ShenArt's ArtScape 16 Banner Contest. As part of this program, her original piece was exhibited at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley with the opening reception held on May 13th. Each selected work in ArtScape is then made into banners that are produced through the sponsorship of local businesses. The banners are then displayed from lampposts in an outdoor art gallery in downtown Winchester.





Manassas Art Guild April Membership Meeting featuring MAG member Valerie Larson demonstration about 'Marketing Your Art'

on a high **note**

Learning from the Masters, Learning from Life: VALERIE LARSON, ARTIST

By Katherine Mercurio Gotthardt

Through myriad moves, adventures, and experiences, art has been a constant in Valerie Larson's life. The visual artist and graphic designer has lived in Manassas for more than 20 years, but her route was a journey across the globe and through the decades.

Larson was born in Takoma Park, Maryland. Her father's position as a foreign service diplomat took the family to Ecuador, Finland, and Germany where Larson lived until she was 13. They then moved to Washington, D.C.

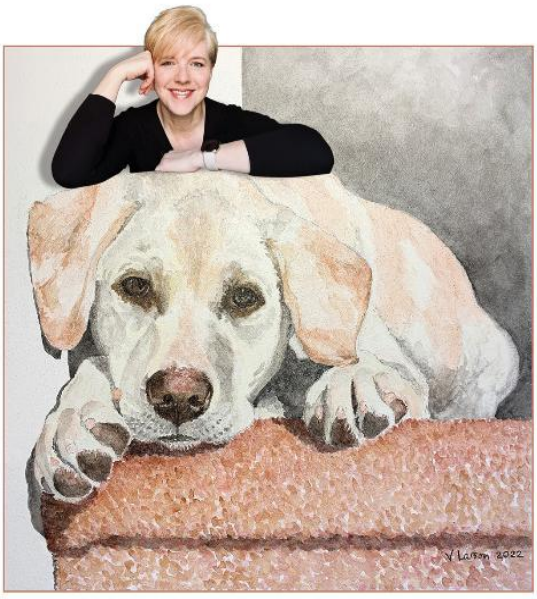
After completing high school in the area, Larson earned a B.A. in Fine Arts, specializing in watercolor, from the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. While there, she met her husband, Rich, and the couple moved to Maryland — first Rockville, then Germantown — until Rich Larson's work brought them to Manassas in 2001.

Manassas is where the Larsons raised their children Robert and Christina, and it's where they remained as Valerie Larson grew to be a familiar face in the local art community.

In 2018, Larson joined Manassas Art Guild where she said she has met dear friends and talented artists. The same year she began selling her work at Calico Jack's in Manassas. She then joined Art a la Carte Gallery in Occoquan in 2023. And while she has done graphic design and illustration for over three decades now, Larson's heart lies in fine art.

Learning from the Masters

Larson began creating at a young age. Attracted by watercolor and pen and ink, Larson admired artists like da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dürer, and van Gogh, who she said is her "all-time favorite artist.... fearless, with an innate desire to share his appreciation for the beauty in this world." Larson said she thinks of him often as she creates.



A whimsical design for one of Larson's social media posts. Design by Valerie Larson.

Larson also learned from the impressionists and enjoys working with light. She appreciates how it "drapes over people, animals, places, and objects to reveal their three-dimensionality," she said.

Emulating the masters, Larson developed her skills over the decades, creating detailed, engraving-style drawings that include architectural subjects. She also learned to perfect watercolor portraits of animals, people, and places.

For Larson, art transcends technique. Art is a powerful mood creator, said Larson, who described herself as a positive person always looking for the beauty around her, whether in small moments or grand landscapes. "Those emotions come through



A collage of Larson's various watercolor subjects, including pet portraits, still lifes and landscapes. Design by Valerie Larson.

when a painting is successful," she said. "It makes me smile to see people understand the joy I felt when painting a subject."

Her work is also deeply rooted in philosophies about learning and life. According to Larson, Michelangelo said at age 87, "I am still learning," and those are some of the words she lives by.

"It's important to remember that we will never know everything and can continue to learn from other artists and the world around us," Larson said. "The beauty of art is that there's always something new to discover, evolving as we learn about new materials and techniques and have new experiences in life."

Like many artists, Larson said profound loss has influenced her work. The loss of her son Robert to a reckless speeding driver many years ago impacted her tremendously. But loss also helped her understand what matters most in her life. "Our most valuable possessions in this life are our memories and relationships, and I love knowing that my custom artwork celebrates both, whether it's a treasured pet, place, or experience," she said.

Citing this philosophy, Larson recalled recently receiving a commission request outside her normal scope. A family friend requested a portrait of the Huey helicopter he flew in Vietnam in the 1970s. After extensive phone calls and researching specifics about the Huey model he and his fellow Team Cougar pilots flew, Larson said she succeeded in creating what became a treasured painting.

"The painting represents much more than a helicopter," according to Larson. "It's about the camaraderie and lifelong friendships he made because of his life-changing experiences."

Larson was touched when the friend who commissioned the work sent her a Team Cougar pin and made her an honorary member of their team. "I will wear it proudly on my coat lapel," she said.

Challenges Accepted

Outside of overcoming life's obstacles while striving to bring her artistic vision to life, Larson said she has struggled with finding balance between commissioned work and the other art her soul craves. She said she is a "work in progress" in that regard.

Meanwhile, she also has had issues with artistic identity. A self-described neat, organized, "recovering perfectionist," Larson questioned, at times, whether she was a "real artist."

"I'm not bohemian, dramatic or flighty, the typical stereotypes associated with artists," she said. "I like logic, math, organization and cleanliness." Those traits seemed contradictory.

Then Larson discovered the famous artist Georgie O'Keeffe also loved order and cleanliness in her work area, and, according to Larson, O'Keeffe lined up her paint colors neatly for the next day's work. "That's when I knew the two concepts could live in harmony, and my need for a clear mind and space is only a means to an artistic end. It has no bearing on whether I'm creative or not," she said.

Larson also used to worry that bystanders would be critical of her work when she painted in public or participated in an artists' outdoor event.

"I've discovered happily that people just enjoy watching the process and talking with me about my work," she said.

Now, Larson enjoys giving painting demonstrations at Art a la Carte Gallery as she talks to bystanders. "It's also fun when you can inspire a young visitor to try a new medium or encourage them to pursue the type of art they enjoy most," she said.

Keeping her work in the public eye are Larson's winning images displayed on banners in downtown Manassas. The banners are part of Historic Manassas Inc.'s competition that features local artists' work on lamppost banners in Old Town Manassas from April through November.

"I've had a variety of pet portraits and landscapes featured on banners," she said. "If you're walking around Old Town, make sure you look up and enjoy all of the beautiful artwork featured on 70 lampposts."

More of Larson's work can be seen or purchased at Calico Jacks at 9115 Center Street, Manassas, and Art a la Carte Gallery and Gifts at 310 Mill Street, Occoquan. For questions and commissions, visit vlartdesign.com. pwl

Katherine Mercurio Gotthardt is an award-winning author and poet who has worked with Prince William Living for more than 10 years. While she dabbles in drawing and painting, she will tell you she is jealous of "real" visual artists. Learn more about her at KatherineGotthardt.com.

'Clifton Day'
Friday May 16, 2025











