

## **Artist paints from her soul**

Written by Page H. Gifford, Correspondent  
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**Her canvases explode with wild color and she abandons the standard forms of painting in favor of painting what is in her soul. She is a maverick when it comes to her art. What Maria Carter sees first is color, then form, when it comes to her paintings.**

**“You have to find your voice. Inspiration comes from what you see – patterns of colors and imagery from what is around you. I have found my voice,” she said. Carter exudes energy when speaking about her work and it’s contagious when other artists are in her presence.**

**Carter’s art would be classified as abstract impressionism, rich with color and form. She is continually motivated by the natural beauty that surrounds her and it’s evident through her translation onto the canvas.**

**“I am always amazed at the ever-changing landscape that displays different colors and shapes from one day to the next,” she said. She recalled watching the seasons evolve from shimmering water reflections on the lake in summer to the snow encrusted tree limbs of winter. Those images have influenced much of her work.**

**She has been painting for 16 years and began her artistic journey in a local parks and recreation class when living up north. Her teacher focused on color and that remained ingrained in her mind as she explored styles and mediums.**

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**“I tried watercolor but preferred acrylics,” she said. “They were easier to clean up and have the ability to apply multiple colors and layers. But at some point I would like to try water soluble oils.”**

**She began painting abstracts because they allowed her the freedom to create. She discovered that she was unable to adapt to the more structured realism in painting and that painting the details was too tedious and stressful. Abstract impressionism allowed Carter to explore color and texture and arrange it in a way she was unable to in some traditional forms of painting. The less restrictive use of tools, including large canvases, large brushes and pallet knives helped her to loosen up her style and concentrate on her vision instead of the details.**

**Every artist is different: some thrive on detail, shadow and light, while others, like Carter, thrive on texture and color.**

**She explained her approach to a project, saying, “Each painting starts with an image – either a scene from nature or a color pallet taken from other images I see along the way, such as an exhibit of Chihuly glasswork at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, or my girlfriend’s intricate quilts.”**

**Currently Carter is excited about the work of artist Jonas Girard, whose canvases erupt in splashes of color and patterns.**

**“Seeing his work has changed my view of what I wanted to paint,” she said. She plans to put large canvases on a lazy susan and flick paint on it, using squeezable condiment bottles filled with liquid acrylic paints. Some painting purists would shudder at the thought, but Carter likes the flexibility and the freedom of this technique. Anyone who has seen Girard’s stunning work would agree it is worth a try. Carter is the one to try it.**

**As a member and former president of the Fluvanna Art Association, she has been instrumental in helping bring technological advances to the group, including an updated**

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**website and hanging system for exhibits and shows. She bows to past members who started the group but has brought it into a new age with others who share her vision.**

**“We have now moved beyond a group of art enthusiasts and are growing beyond the boundaries of Fluvanna County,” she said. “We are seeing members from Charlottesville and Louisa. We have more diverse programming and mediums, including sculpture, glass, and photography. We are not just painters, but we draw, use pastels, pen and ink.”**

**Carter said she is excited at the future prospects of the group. She is also a member of the Firnew Farm Artists Circle in Hood, Virginia.**

**Carter, like most artists, realizes that art is personal but must also be satisfying in its creation. Struggling to produce something that isn’t satisfying ends up discouraging the artist from finding his or her true voice.**

**“The sensation of painting is more satisfying than the project itself and has allowed me to grow artistically and provide an avenue for emotional expression,” she said. Carter’s work shows that she has found her artistic soul.**