

# **News Release**

## **Villanova University Art Gallery**

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Website: [www.artgallery.villanova.edu](http://www.artgallery.villanova.edu)

**For Immediate Release**

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## **The 'Unadorned Landscape' Is Celebrated in Jane McNichol's Upcoming Exhibit at Villanova**

**Villanova, PA** – While most people find their inspiring vistas at hilltops and roadside overlooks, painter Jane McNichol often heads for the lowlands.

McNichol's 'Wetland Series' of large-scale landscapes on canvas form an important part of her upcoming exhibit "Natural Introspection" at the Villanova University Art Gallery. Her minimalist, near abstract canvasses, writes a reviewer, "give us a sense of infinite openness, of clear, clean, newly oxygenated horizons such as might have occurred or existed at the birth of the world."

That she should achieve such a crystalline effect is even more remarkable in that a number of the works in McNichol's Villanova show are of a New Jersey seashore preserve pressed upon by one of the nation's most densely populated and environmentally compromised regions. "I am drawn to the open spaces and natural light of the land," says the transplanted Philadelphian for whom Manhattan is now home. "These spaces can be frightening and deeply spiritual."

A free public reception to meet the artist will take place Friday, January 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the gallery in the Connelly Center on the Villanova campus. McNichol's solo exhibit opens January 6 and continues to February 9, and is sponsored in part by the Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts.

Balancing outdoors against indoors, McNichol's show will also feature many of her still life paintings and monoprints of her outdoor work. Of her indoor work, she says:

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“I’ve always been fascinated with the light that comes in the windows (of her studio in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn). The objects that I paint are backlit by the intense light of the outdoors so that the part of the still life that is closer to me appears darker. How to paint an object that is lighter in color farther from me and darker in the area that is closer to me creates a challenging spatial puzzle.”

All of the paintings in McNichol’s exhibit are new or recent. Among them are scenes of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, a 39,000-acre coastal habitat near Atlantic City named after the late conservationist U.S. Congressman from New Jersey. Other coastal depictions are from the artist’s travels in North Carolina, Long Island, the Florida Keys, and elsewhere along the Eastern seaboard where tidal marshlands meet the water and the horizon.

Once an en plain air painter, she has since moved indoors, and has found the results enriched by so doing. “Not only is lugging the canvasses, paints and other paraphernalia physically demanding, but unexpected changes in weather can have drastic consequences on a work in progress,” says the artist. Working from sketches, photographs, and memory, she paints by easel in her studio.

“Doing it this way helps me to more completely take in a setting. I may not begin to paint a scene for a month, perhaps even a year afterward. It gives me time to live with it. Painting in a controlled atmosphere provides me a way to bring the magic to where I am.”

Part of that ‘magic’, says a collector of her paintings, “is work that is fresh and lyrical. It sings a subtle song. It brings joy into a troubled world.”

She is a fan of unadorned landscapes, such as the flat, mist-shrouded bog lands of Ireland where “fingers of land extend to the ocean, reaching for America.” A serendipitous summer deluge she caught by camera from a train became the backdrop for a series of paintings of the midlands of France before, during and after the storm. In her work, she seeks to capture nuances, “vistas built up through thoughtful, thin layers of paint creating landscapes that capture the invigorating colors of light.”

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Even though some of her paintings have a long gestation period, McNichol approaches her work with a sense of urgency. She worries about the consequences that the press of civilization will have upon such places as the Forsythe Refuge: “The spirit of the individual facing the future head on is what has made the American culture the vanguard going into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But, as with any culture, we cannot, and should not, forsake our past. If our future is to become so technologically dominant, we will need paintings such as mine to keep our spirit rooted in our land.”

If she had one objective for her Villanova exhibit, she says, it would be to give those who experience her work pause as they head from home.

“What I would hope is that the next time someone is driving down a highway and thinking that they’re not seeing anything, that they’ll think again. There is a great deal out there to see, to appreciate, and preserve.”

Earlier this year she received a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation in New York. Other awards include an Anna Hyatt Huntington Bronze Medal from the Catherine Lorillard Wolf Foundation and a grant from the Friends of the Contemporary Art Center in North Adams, Massachusetts.

Also a MacDowell Fellow, McNichol has exhibited her paintings, prints and photographs in one person and group exhibitions in museums, galleries and juried shows across the United States. Her paintings hang in more than 40 private collections and numerous corporate ones, including Reader’s Digest, McGraw Hill and Wyeth Laboratories.

A native of Philadelphia, McNichol earned a bachelor’s degree in studio arts from Temple University and studied in Rome, Italy, with Temple’s Tyler School of Art.

For exhibit hours, telephone the Villanova University Art Gallery at (610) 519-4612. Exhibited works are for sale. As an artist-friendly gallery, Villanova takes no commission on sales. All proceeds go to the artist. Samples of Jane McNichol’s work may be previewed on the gallery’s website at [www.artgallery.villanova.edu](http://www.artgallery.villanova.edu).

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