



"Sunrise" (panel #1 of triptych) oil pastel and acrylic on canvas.

Marielle in front of her painting titled, "Gymnopedie," acrylic on canvas.



art and the city

BY JIM MAGNER

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Artist Profile: marielle MARIANO

For Marielle, art is exploration. Searching. Searching first for the questions and then reaching inside for the creative answers. Not just for herself, but for the students she works with in the Fairfax County school system. Marielle Mariano is both an artist and art therapist, and the two passions are virtually indistinguishable.

Art is the great equalizer for children with disabilities. Creative ideas can grow and flower in a magical way. The special idea comes alive through painting, drawing, printmaking, modeling or sculpture. With different techniques, the child becomes

more comfortable with surprises and with ways to gain control when other life-forces seem overwhelming.

Marielle is also the East Coast coordinator for the Chalk4Peace project. Children use color chalk on sidewalks to visually define "peace" and make it personal. When the image washes away, the idea remains and gets stronger as a lesson learned.

Marielle's personal works are portraits of the unpredictable. Not fixated on a particular way of making art, she explores ... searches. Art has meaning, and ideas are lasting whether they are captured

through painting, photography, printmaking, mosaic or drawing. There are a hundred variations on each technique, and she tries them all to find the perfect revelation of the idea.

Her self-expression may be best found in acrylic painting. She uses swirls to embody the flow of life – the unpredictable, often chaotic way that life happens. Lately, she is using photography, not for its own sake, but as an element of her art.

Marielle earned a bachelor's from Georgetown and a master's in art therapy from Eastern Virginia Medical School. She has shown her work widely



"floating lily, II", digital photo printed on archival paper.



"Memorial Bridge" cyanoprint.

and is widely collected. She looks to all things natural, manmade or spiritual – “all that touches my soul or stirs me to search for understanding and release.” For Marielle, art is a passage through a field of surprises and the way to unify the erratic. Her work can be seen this month at Results the Gym on Capitol Hill and at www.artistmarielle.com.

Capitol Visitor Center

Yes, it is big, with acres of marble and a couple of sizeable skylights, but there is not much in the way of art or artistry. It has displays of historic artifacts and some statues of semi-famous people that have been relocated from other places in the Capitol. There are theaters, restaurants, gift shops and 26 public restrooms. People who think Disneyland is the ultimate cultural experience will love this place.

Who cares if it's cold and artless? The primary purpose of the \$621 million “center” is to control visitors and protect members of congress from crazy people, and it probably accomplishes that fairly well.

However, because the security screeners are just inside the door, you still have to stand out in the cold waiting to get in if there are more than a few people in line. Security is tight, and it's like getting on a plane. (The security checks could be closer to the actual entrances to the Capitol – you can at least walk into an airport without stripping down.)

You have to get tickets ahead of time to take the rotunda tour, but there will be no opportunity to walk the corridors

where real law is being made without special VIP passes and escorts.

On the outside? No more strolling on green grass or sitting beneath graceful trees. The East Front now has all the charm of a military base. Frederick Law Olmsted would be very sad.

Jim Magner's Thoughts on Art

Grand public buildings in classic times were known for their architecture, art and artistry. Not the new Capitol visitor center. Big, yes. Grand, no. It's nothing like the Capitol building itself, which is a wonderland of art.

Visitors will never again have the experience of strolling through the building at night when it's quiet – ghost like – as it was possible only a decade ago.

As a senate staffer in the '70s and '80s, I was happy to stop and talk to visitors from all over the world who said they could never have that access in their own country. And I joined other staff, sitting on the grass in the evenings, talking about legislation and what it meant to be an American. The grass is gone, and I'm afraid that happier America is finished also. Gone with the trees.

Yes, many of my old tree friends that I have known and painted for 30 years have disappeared. And not just in the immediate construction zone. The changes have taken their toll on other old treasures, like the ancient gnarled American Hornbeam that stood at the northeast corner of the grounds and the magnificent English Elm at the

southeast corner of the building – as old as the building itself and as grand as the dome. Now a huge empty space signifies a new era. Few will mourn these heroic witnesses to a fantastic history, but I miss them greatly.

That whole era of open government and personal freedom is a wisp – a fading memory – a loss that we can blame on loonies and foreign terrorists. Hooray for security. We can pretend that we have freedom without risk and that the wise and privileged people on the other side of the barriers will think of us while they keep themselves safe.

At the Museums

Pompeii and the Roman Villa
National Gallery of Art
East Building
4th Street and Constitution Ave. NW
To March 22

The Caesars – Augustus, Julius, Caligula, Nero – all the important old boys, had grandiose villas around the Bay of Naples. The less important, but no less pompous, also had fine homes with murals of the grander villas painted on their walls. Heck, even the poorest houses had murals. They all loved art and the good life, and life was good. The dining room was the center of the home, but gardens were essential – lush with sculpture and exotic plants. Gods and muses abounded. The Romans were really into Greek mythology, history and art and copied it copiously.

Then, in AD 79, Mount Vesuvius

blew. It shook a little – then boom. Pompeii, Herculaneum and other Roman towns were buried. That was lucky for the archeologists who found them, beginning 1738, and lucky for us.

The discoveries began a mania for Greek and Roman architecture, “Neoclassicism,” in Europe and America. And nowhere more than Washington. There are more marble monuments and Corinthian columns around here than you can shake a senator at.

This is a major exhibit, organized in three sections: Roman villas; Roman interest in Greek art and mythology; and Influence on European art. The focus here is on the birth of a center of art – not its destruction. But it's the drama of beauty unveiled that still captivates us. 202-737-4215, www.nga.gov.

At the Galleries

'Winter Waltz'
Capitol Hill Art League
545 Seventh St. SE
Jan. 10-31

CHAL opens the all-media exhibit juried by Trinka Margua Simon with a reception from 5-7 p.m. Also beginning at noon, there will be a series of workshops to showcase CHAW's upcoming classes for kids and adults: ceramics, dance, rock & roll, darkroom techniques, drumming, water color, life drawing and other arts disciplines, theater, Pilates and Feldenkrais. For all the special events, call 202-547-6839 or visit www.chaw.org. ★