

ARTIST H.K. ANNE

Energy

UP CLOSE
AND COMPLICATED
BY GALE WALDRON

The sign in her studio says, “BE BRAVE. JUST PAINT.” That credo is what drives this artist. On most days, you’ll find H.K. (Helen) Anne in her Lorton studio, just painting and putting herself bravely out there.



H. K. Anne

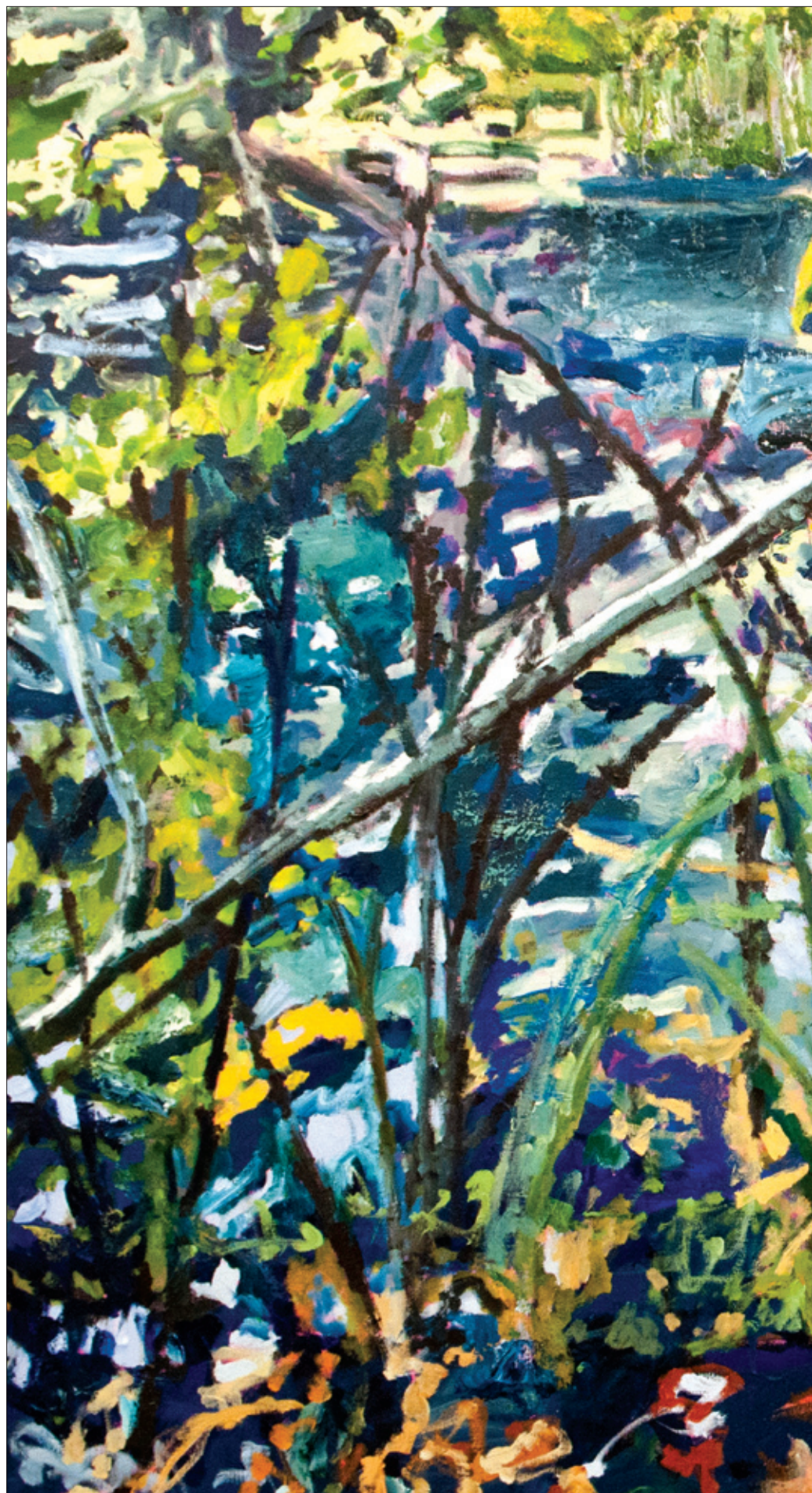
Now living in Gainesville, Helen was born in Indianapolis. She drew as a child, and she also learned shorthand and typing in school so she could earn a living, which she did during a career in the Indiana state government.

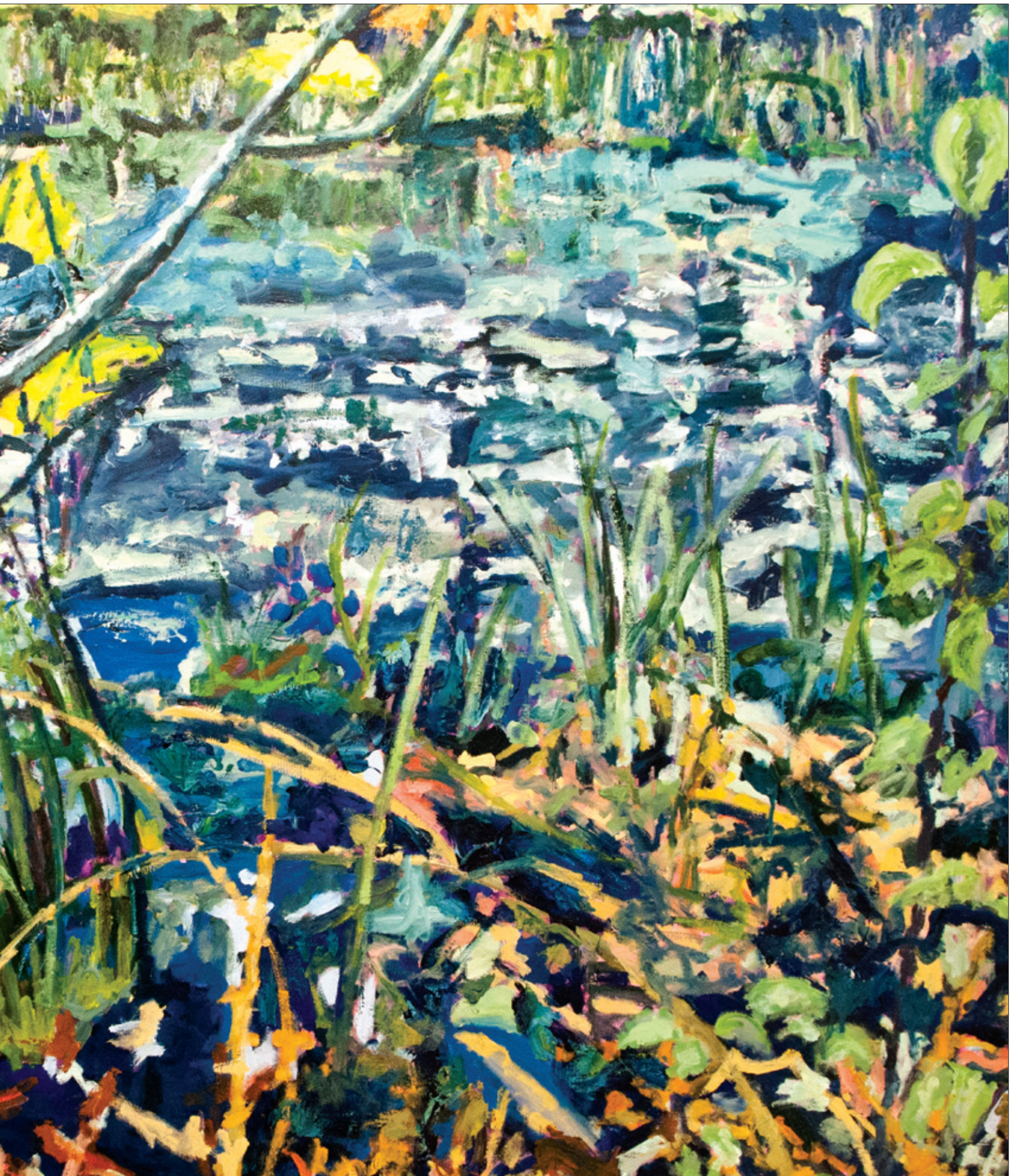
She recalls her first oil painting class at the East Side Art Center

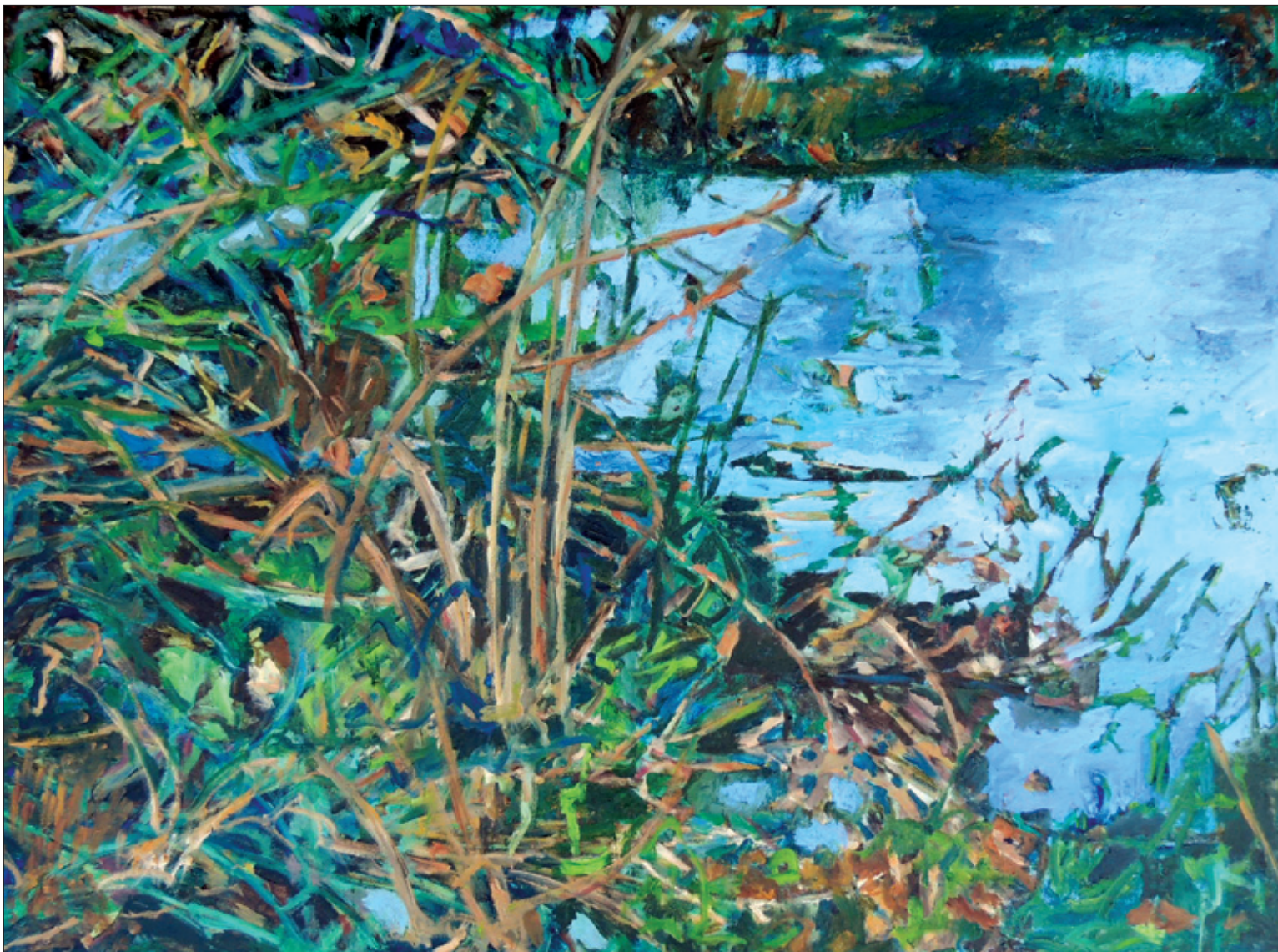
when she was 18. “I used two entire tubes of paint—white and burnt umber—and it was like icing a cake on canvas,” she says with a laugh. It was the beginning of Helen’s love of paint and her method for laying it thickly on the canvas.

In her married years and while raising three children, Helen was a docent at the Indianapolis Museum of Art where, over 15 years, she was able to enhance her education in art history. She painted at home and at the John Herron Art School of Indiana University and volunteered as an art teacher in her children’s schools. She shares another of her credos: “Keep your fingers in it, and work in the arts wherever you can,” advice she passes on to her fellow artists, urging them take all the art history and studio arts available to them because, she says, “they feed on each other.”

Helen moved to Connecticut in 1990 where she lived for the next 18 years. She focused on 19th-century art history and studio arts at Sarah Lawrence College, earning her bachelor’s degree in 1995 while immersing herself in art, learning, discussion and critiques.







When she spotted an ad for the M.F.A. program at Western Connecticut State University, she scavenged through her closets and assembled a portfolio, prompting yet another H.K. credo: “Never throw anything out; you never know when you might need to pull a portfolio together!”

Accepted into that two-year program, she worked “full-time day time” in her studio and also discovered her knack for *plein air* painting. With professor-mentor John Wallace’s prompting to paint big, she started large-scale works, and under the guidance of Professor Margaret Grimes, she started to view her work in a different way. “Margaret suggested that we landscape artists were in the lineage of the Hudson River artists of the 19th century. It took me a while to associate myself with these artists, but I do now. Many of their paintings were panoramas of the landscape and were metaphors for the possibilities of this new country. Most of my landscapes are up close and complicated, which I feel reflects our time in history in that we are confronted with so much information.”

With her M.F.A. in hand, Helen moved to Virginia in 2007, and soon thereafter, in 2008, applied and was

injured into the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton. She has been “just painting” ever since.

Helen uses a small brush, a large canvas, a lot of color and a Van Gogh palette. She takes pictures—many, many pictures on rolls of film—studying them, folding them and looking for the right combination/composition for translation onto canvas. She typically paints in a series so that she can give viewers a feel for a place.

She describes her paintings as “heavy-handed and in your face.” In your face, because, Helen explains, “My paintings have a lot of energy, and sometimes you need to step back to take it all in.”

Interested in the ever-changing, ever-shrinking landscape, Helen notes that “cow pastures no longer have cows; bucolic fields have surrendered themselves to new homes; scenic byways have been widened to allow for more vehicles; and climate change has added floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and other natural and human disasters. Just as our lives are in flux, so is the landscape.” She sees her paintings as an historical account of the 21st-century landscape and the emotional connection we have with our environment.

Helen is currently working on a series of Great Falls

Above: “Silver Lake, Haymarket, Virginia,” oil on canvas, 36” x 48”

Previous pages: “Limestone Road, Ridgefield, Connecticut,” oil on canvas, 48” x 60”

Facing page, top: “Suzanne’s Peonies, Leesburg, Virginia,” oil on canvas, 36” x 48”; and “Algonkian Park, Northern Virginia,” oil on canvas, 60” x 56”



landscapes, and she is painting away, being brave and gaining attention, having recently been awarded “Best in Show” honors in The Art League’s Large Works Exhibit for “Wetlands,” a 60-by-144-inch triptych of Silver Lake in Haymarket. She was also invited into the prestigious Mid-Atlantic New Painting exhibit opening on January 24 at the University of Mary Washington Galleries.

A longtime fan of American writer and mythologist Joseph Campbell, Helen often quotes from *The Hero’s Journey*:

“You enter the forest at the darkest point, where there is no path. Where there is a way or path, it is someone else’s path. You are not on your own path. If you follow someone else’s way you are not going to realize your potential.”

Helen invites viewers to journey through her landscapes but confesses, “I don’t necessarily give the viewers a way into my paintings, but I invite them to find their own paths. I hope they enjoy the journey.”

Visit Helen Anne in Studio 512 at the Workhouse Arts Center. é

H.K. Anne | www.hkannefineart.com



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