

# Your Neighbor

## The spirited art of Jean Morley

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A clear sense of exhilaration leaps off the surface of a painting by Jean Morley.

It's as if she has seized a moment filled with effervescence entwined with a sense of rapture, like floating along the underside of a cloud. Morley's work is now on display at the Ruth Keeler Library through the end of June. The small but diverse exhibit greets you at the well-lit entrance. Prepare to linger.

Morley's story of illness and survival has fueled her work. In 1984, she and her then husband moved to North Salem where they raised their three children. Fast forward to 2018 when she was diagnosed with late stage cancer and given two months to live.

"I started to get my affairs in order," she said. "I did a lot of praying and my three children, who I'm very close with, have

been living through this with me."

Morley studied fine arts in college and has been an artist all her life; her parents were both artists and art educators (her mother is 95). She was Director of Creative Services at John Wiley & Sons Publishing for 34 years, but retired when she found out she had cancer.

"I did a lot of praying that first year — I was so focused on dying," she said.

But Morley said it was her son, a radiologist, who prolonged and saved her life. While she was being treated initially, he studied her case, and advocated for her to receive better treatment including not just chemotherapy but also alternative treatments. The two-month end-of-life mark passed and Morely took one day at a time.

"What control did I have?" she said. "The world changes on a dime."

When the COVID pandemic happened and everyone was locked inside, Morley said for her, a switch flipped, and she stopped waiting around to die.

"My dining room became my studio, and I painted on my dining room table," she recalled. "I started painting big and small."

She had developed neuropathy in her hands, often the result from cancer treatment, and was unable to use paint brushes. Morley was drawn to colored inks and their ability to dance on the paper. She preceded to 'air paint' using either a hair dryer, an air brush, or her own breath by blowing the ink around on the paper. "I stand when I work and listen to music. Moving the ink around, especially the larger pieces, is a physical process for me. As I move with it, I become one with it."

These gestural movements subliminally resonate with the viewer in the ethereal "Blue Flush" which sweeps us up in layers of varied blues and blossoming gradients, converging in a quiet rustle; flecks of gold give the piece a loftier dimension. More

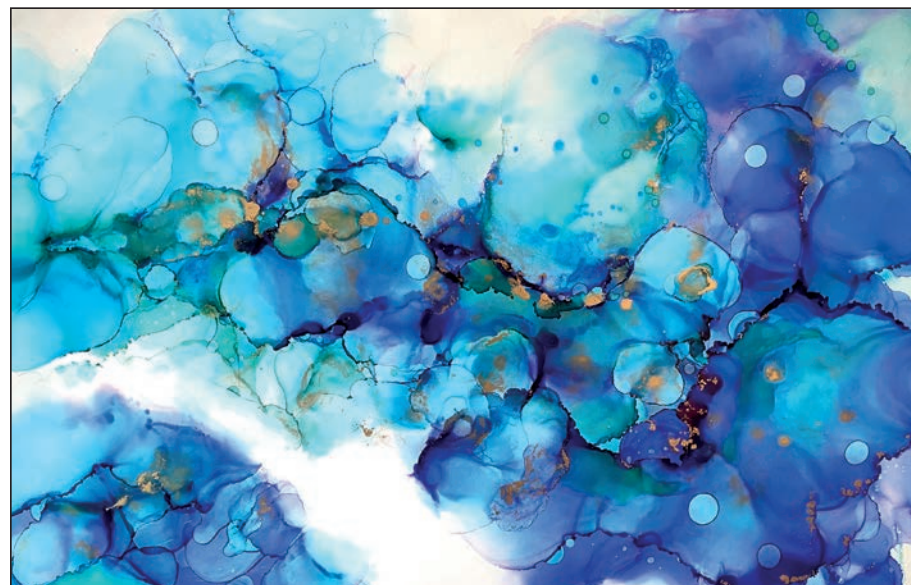


PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEAN MORLEY

Jean Morley beside her exhibit at Keeler Library.



"Winter Joy"



"Blue Flush"

viscous is "Polar Expression," a turbulent expression churning sprays of gold and orange lending to free-fall out of a black hole. Layers of primary colors in "Winter Joy" converge and sway in a rhythm conducive to an out of body experience. Morley's flower series upholds the fluidity of her abstract work. Subtle and delicate, her flowers are borne of a discerning eye for gentle detail creating weightless petals that quietly hover on the paper.

With the steady encouragement of her children, Morley is putting her work out there to sell and has over ten thousand followers on Instagram. Her new website, [newnorthcollective.com](http://newnorthcollective.com), features her work which will also be on Fine Art America, the large on-line art marketplace. Her show at the library offers signed original paintings, matted prints and greeting cards, most are for sale and 10 percent of the proceeds will go to St. Jude's Children's Cancer Hospital.

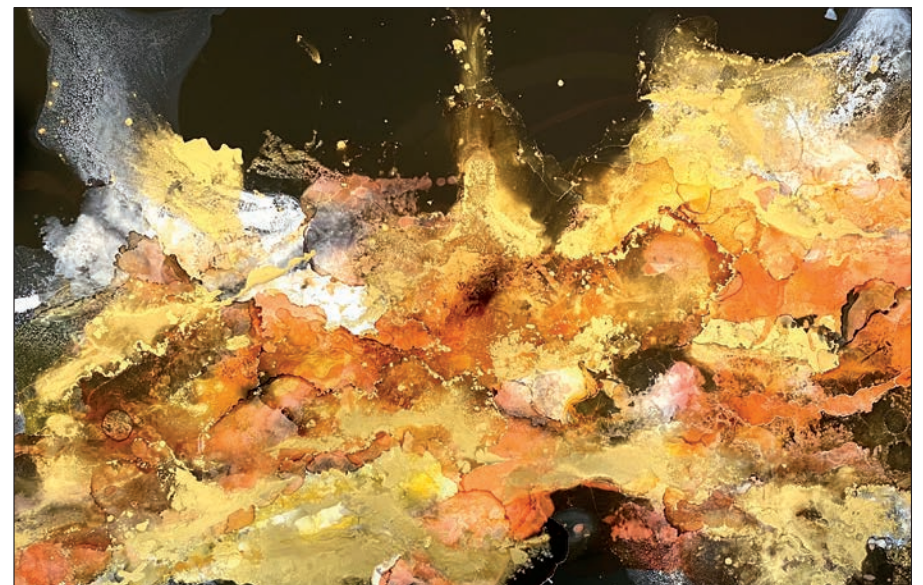
"I'm engaged in this type of healing process," Morley said. "Cancer is a curse but with every curse comes a blessing. I wouldn't be painting the way I am painting if I hadn't been diagnosed with can-

cer. It ignited something for me."

Jean Morley's artwork will be on display through June 30 at Ruth Keeler Memorial Library, located at 276 Titicus Road in North Salem.



"Flower Series"



"Polar Expression"