



once UPON A time

Marjorie Glick's enchanting, large-scale watercolor paintings fuse direct observation with metaphor and intricate technique with the power of story.

By Meredith E. Lewis

Right Timing To capture the scene depicted in *Tidal Pathway* (watercolor and gouache on paper, 30x60) Marjorie Glick had to plan carefully; the pathway to the island can only be seen at low tide. "I was intrigued by the braided tidal patterns and the clarity of the water," she says.

As a child, Massachusetts artist Marjorie Glick spent a great deal of time wandering around in the woods. Entranced by its light, shade and color, the woods captured her imagination and brought her beloved fairytales to life. “The forests in these stories have magic and mystery,” Glick says. “They serve as metaphors for themes of being lost then found, solace, a quest, a journey from darkness to light, hope and magic. In fairytales, nature is the backdrop for how characters grow, change and

transform. For me, nature has been the backdrop for my development as an artist.”

Many years later Glick is still captivated by natural beauty and the deep archetypal metaphors ascribed to it in many artistic genres, from fairytales to the monumental works of the Hudson River School. Moved by beauty, grandeur, weather, space, light and air, her own paintings capture magnificent New England landscapes—forests, waterfalls and floral vistas—in large, color-saturated and emotive

compositions. “I prefer natural subjects that have a vivid, dramatic presence and, for me, evoke the inner landscape of the remembered image,” Glick says. “I work in contemporary realism, creating lush-colored watercolors with heightened color and light that are composed of many transparent layers, bringing nature into crystalline focus.”

A few of Glick’s works, such as *Healing Place* (on page ●●) and *Enchantment* (on page ●●), boast titles that suggest a fusing of tangible with intangible realities, while others rely entirely on



large-scale color mixing

For Marjorie Glick’s large-scale watercolors, she works wet-into-wet, floating many pre-mixed colors together across the damp paper. In order to achieve a fluid effect, she must apply the paint quickly and have all of her colors ready before painting begins.

Since a traditional palette doesn’t have enough mixing space to create the large number of colors she uses in her paintings, Glick loads her favorite colors onto a china plate, which serves as her starting palette. Working from the plate, she’ll mix upwards of 20 colors (for large areas, such as skies) in individual 3-ounce paint pans before she begins painting.

First, small quantities of the colors are individually tested and mixed together on wet paper (see the sheet of paper at the top of the photo above). Glick chooses her favorite combinations from these tests then mixes them, highly concentrated, in larger quantities in the pans. Additional colors are created by diluting various mixtures of the previously tested and mixed combinations.



Brought to Light Of *Coastal Forest in Sun and Fog* (watercolor on paper, 30x40), the artist says, “I was struck by the sunlight coming through the fog, revealing a landscape that was hidden only moments before.”

Glick's impressive brushwork to achieve magical effects. Either way, each piece in Glick's body of work unites direct observation and technique with metaphor and storytelling. In order to achieve a storytelling quality in her paintings, Glick employs a number of recurring images. She assigns meaning to many of these themes, among them islands (suggesting our sovereign nature), reflections of islands and sky (seeing all points of view at once), forests (solace and mystery), fog (concealment and revelation), doors (passages and possibilities), waterfalls (change, cleansing and renewal) and porches (the tangible interior and the vast intangible of everything beyond).

"Iconic images have inherent symbolism for me," Glick explains. "Sometimes I know at the outset that I'm working with a metaphor, while other times I discover it during the painting process. In *Magical Place* (on page ●●), so named for the dramatic, fast-advancing shadow, I was reminded of a magician's cloak. The trees, which

"In a typical-size painting, I would be limited to a few colors when rendering a small area," Glick says. "But when one paints large-scale, the size of the painting is often six times that of a traditional painting. One inch of surface suddenly becomes six inches, and in this space it's possible to introduce a great many colors—in some instances, as many as 20 colors in a single layer. For example, one can wet an area and drop in several different colors at a time in order to capture a minute color change. These colors can then be left to separate into many more parts, creating subtleties impossible to render in the typical-size painting. In effect, each six-inch area in a large-scale watercolor becomes its own painting."

A larger surface also allows Glick to couple looseness with detail. Expansive strokes with a large brush serve her well at the outset of a painting. At this stage she moves her whole arm around the paper to establish the overall lay of the land and the direction and placement of light

"There's drama in the large-scale image. The large scale gives the viewers the sense that they can walk into the world of the painting."

once were whole and full of leaves, now broken by strong wind, symbolize transformation and the powerful forces of nature. Reflecting on these metaphors while I paint enhances my color and design choices."

Working large, Glick takes the power of her metaphors to even greater dramatic heights. "There's drama in the large-scale image," she says. "The large scale gives the viewers the sense that they can walk into the world of the painting. Painting in a larger scale makes certain images more vivid and compelling, and paint can be applied in expansive, expressive strokes of color."

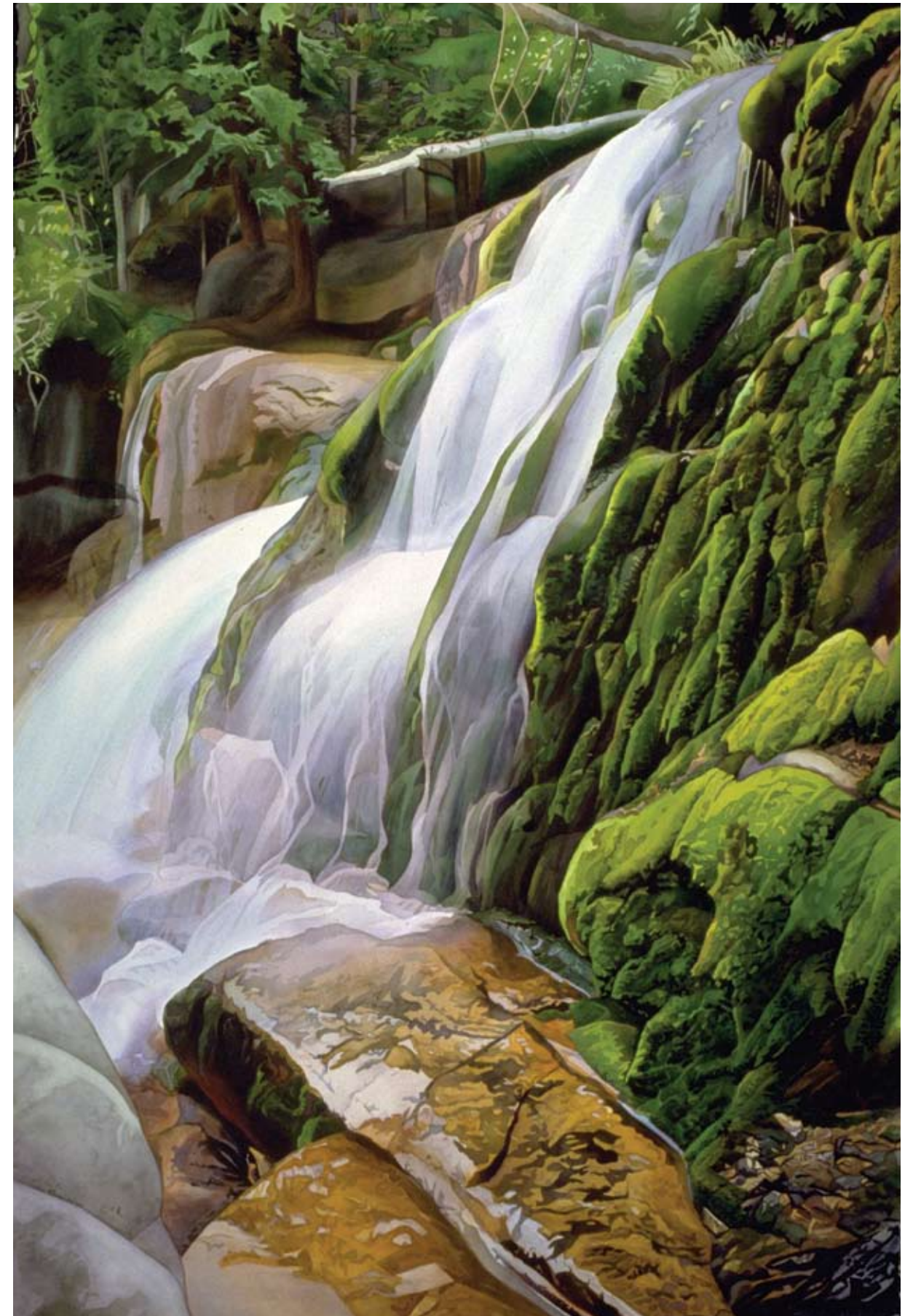
Working large also enables Glick to include more color information per square inch in her paintings. Floating elaborately mixed colors wet-into-wet across the page allows the artist to use as many colors as possible simultaneously—and allows for a myriad of unique color shifts and passages—all in a single layer of paint. In a smaller work too many colors per square inch might yield a muddy mess, but on a larger surface there's more room for experimentation and, moreover, subtlety.

and shadows. At this stage colors are free to move and melt and move again, and Glick will even shift and tilt the paper, working it from different angles. Later, with the overall effect of the scene in place, she can revisit the smaller details of the painting with smaller brushes.

Glick's techniques ultimately allow the viewer the greatest access into the picture and hint at aspects of the landscape that the work cannot include, such as the sky beyond the lip of the paper or the tree-line directly opposite the painted scene within which the viewer (figuratively speaking) stands. Glick achieves this affect through a complicated technical regime that captures not only color, light and atmosphere, but also authenticity, or specificity, of place. In short, Glick is world-building.

Once a scouting expedition has yielded Glick her subject, she photographs it extensively from

At Peace "The perpetual energy, mist and sound of the water resonate with me," says Glick. "In *Healing Place* [watercolor on paper, 60x40], I wanted to re-create the peaceful and restorative experience of being at a waterfall."



every angle with a digital Canon Rebel and an older Minolta 35mm slide camera. The digital Canon allows Glick to take numerous photographs and later manipulate them on her computer, while the slide camera is more effective at capturing the subtle nuances of color in a scene. Glick photographs her subject from 360 degrees. Although she tries to capture within the camera frame a near-final composition, later, in the studio, she will sometimes combine or crop components of shots to arrive at a more ideal composite image. She may also experiment with boosting colors digitally on her computer.

In either case, knowing what is above, below and behind a scene gives Glick a legitimacy that is easy to read in her paintings. “By going 360 degrees, I don’t necessarily use the pictures, but I want to have the feeling in all my works that you’re standing right there,” she says. “I want to put my experience of being there, of standing there, into the picture, to bring it all back when I paint.”

As Glick photographs the scene, she attempts to capture the particular qualities of the landscape that inspired her to paint it in the first

place. “Before I take a picture or make a sketch, I identify a feature that I want to emphasize,” Glick says. “I then ask myself if what I see through the lens communicates what I think is essential to the image. I work intuitively, taking many pictures from different vantage points, as well as some close-ups of details.”

Before heading back to the studio, Glick also completes several on-site watercolor sketches and color studies. These serve as additional reference material for the final picture. For *Coastal Forest in Sun and Fog* (on page ●●), the artist sought to capture the transition of light through fog. Here she ended up combining two reference photos and a studio sketch, drawn from memory, to create the final composition. Using a combination of projecting and gridding, she then transferred the image to her paper. Glick spends considerable time thinking about her image, and she often explores her feelings about a subject by remembering the place in her journal.

Having transferred the final drawing and made sure she’s satisfied with it, Glick begins experimenting with her paints. “Color excites me,” she says. “I’m interested in color, because I can

use it to create light-filled paintings that mirror the beauty of nature. For me, color is what makes an image compelling and vibrant. Every color in the painting needs another color next to it to make it come to life. I heighten the colors I see by finding the perfect combination of hues to express what moves me and what I remember most vividly in regards to a particular image.”

Glick spends as much time mixing her paints as she does painting her picture. Before she touches her brush to her paper, she mixes all the colors she will use in the first layer of the painting. Getting all the colors just right in value, hue and shade gives her the confidence to allow them to



A Long Story Short With more than 200 roses represented, *Enchantment* (watercolor on paper, 58x76) took Glick more than 10 months to complete. “When I began this painting I was reading *Sleeping Beauty* to my daughter, so the inspiration for the painting was the impenetrable rose thickets in the fairy tale,” she says.



Darkness Approaching “I was fortunate to be in this spot when, in the golden last light of day, a dramatic shadow began its approach and, in a matter of moments, enveloped the landscape in darkness,” says Glick. “To heighten the effect, I contrasted the dark shadows with saturated colors of orange, yellow and gold on the rocks and trees in *Magical Place* [watercolor on paper, 34x48].”

paint paper brushes

Marjorie Glick makes use of a wide variety of artist tools and materials.

Paint: Her favorite colors are as follows (by brand): *Winsor & Newton*: cadmium yellow deep, cadmium yellow medium, cadmium yellow pale, permanent rose, scarlet lake, permanent alizarin, perylene maroon, cobalt blue, French ultramarine, Winsor green blue shade, Winsor blue green shade, sepia, burnt umber, burnt sienna, indigo, dioxazine violet; *Schminke*: May green, Jaune brillant, mountain blue; *M. Graham & Co.*: Azo yellow, bismuth yellow, cobalt teal, cobalt violet; and *Old Holland*: Scheveningen blue. She occasionally adds titanium white into the blues of her skies to hide the imperfections of a large wash.

Paper: Glick prefers to work on Arches Emperor 1,000-lb. 40x60-inch cold-pressed watercolor sheets.

Brushes: Large Isabey squirrel mop brushes and Da Vinci kolinsky sable brushes with sharp points (Nos. 8 and 6) are her brushes of choice.



Intensity “*Marsh, Radiance* [watercolor on paper, 30x40] reflects a dramatic moment in which everything was bathed in light,” says the artist. “To enhance the effect, I heightened the blues and yellows.”

combine freely on the page. Her first task here is to observe the subtle color shifts and transitions captured by her reference photographs. “Everything begins with careful observation,” she notes. “In any given color area, no matter how small, I see a color change from top to bottom and left to right.” For *Coastal Forest in Sun and Fog*, Glick needed to produce a contrast between the fog and the sunlight. She chose opaque, “chalky” watercolors, including Old Holland Scheveningen blue and cobalt violet, for the dense fog, adding cobalt blue, rose dore and cobalt teal. Vivid, transparent colors, such as cadmium yellow, Hooker’s green, May green, quinacridone gold, perylene maroon and Winsor blue gave weight to the foreground. (See the box on page •• for a full list of the artist’s favorite colors and paint brands.)

Like a traditional watercolorist, Glick works light to dark, wetter to drier, in multiple layers of transparent color. The artist’s preferred paper (1000-lb. Arches cold-pressed) is extremely stiff, which allows her to wet and re-wet it without the risk of buckling. Since Glick doesn’t affix her paper to a rigid surface, she’s free to move it around as she works. Painting all over the surface also helps to keep the paper from rippling. Sometimes, to keep her interest fresh and organic, Glick will even work on a painting upside-down.

Large sections of paper are brushed with water to receive the first layer of paint. Many different colors are floated together at this stage, and Glick allows them to move freely on the paper. She does little to preserve the white of the paper, preferring highlights to take on a pale, pure hue.

After the first layer has dried, Glick rewets large areas of the paper and, taking care to preserve the highlights, floats a second layer of light color over the first. “This is the most exciting part of the process for me,” she says. “I float in many different colors recording minute color transitions.” Additional layers add richness to the color and forms on the page. As Glick notes, with each layer she takes care to shift the applied colors slightly to allow new colors to interact in unforeseen ways.

Applied light to dark, wet-into-wet layers build in intensity and in equal value across the painting. Glick pays particular attention to how wet the paper is at each stage and uses differing amounts of water, specific brushes and varying pressure for each layer. Light colors command lots of water and a brush that is upright and fully loaded like an eyedropper, while subsequent layers require less

water, stronger color and firmer strokes with the heel of the brush to achieve greater expression.

For *Coastal Forest in Sun and Fog*, Glick divided her image into large areas of cool and warm tones. The water, sky and distant trees were cool, while the foremost trees, moss and pathway were warm. Glick applied water to the cool areas of the paper first with a big mop brush, leaving the warm sections white. She then floated numerous shades of blue, pink and grey onto the damp paper. Moving next to the moss, the artist applied an underpainting of yellow-greens and, while they were still wet, floated in darker greens, leaving light areas for highlights. Once dry, a cool layer of aqua and mint green was washed over the warm layer. To create shadows and depth, darker greens and yellow greens were layered over the lighter greens, and then Glick moved to the trees. Painting back to front in four layers, she worked first on the background trees, and then on

the foreground trees. The left-hand corner background and the path were added last in a final layer of wet-into-wet color.

Glick’s greatest challenge in working large is maintaining the loose, intuitive and spontaneous feel of her sketches in such commanding, finished works. Mistakes that don’t show up in small paintings are easily spotted in big ones, and everything—from the drawing to the color-mixing—has to be well-orchestrated from the start for the painting to be a success. “When you’re doing a little painting, you can mix a little bit of paint on your palette,” she says. “You don’t have to know everything when you’re starting, but when you’re working large, you do have to have a plan.”

When it works, when all the passes of color come together as a whole to reinvent the artist’s experience in a place, all the planning becomes well-worth the effort. “A painting is a success when it’s the perfect, soulful balance of compelling image and color with ‘perfect pitch,’” Glick says. “My favorite paintings are those that resonate with my memory bank of everyday experiences of nature, and, at the same time, touch my heart.”

Revisiting the magic of places beloved in childhood helps Glick to do just that. Each watercolor can take her anywhere from four to 12 months to complete, but that investment of time allows her to experience the enchantment of her subjects and to ponder the deeper meanings of her paintings as she paints them. “The natural world is vanishing before our eyes,” she says. “I hope to document it, record its vitality, and, through making beautiful images, instill a little calm and contemplation back into the world. I want to connect people to nature’s rejuvenating powers, and remind people to take care.”

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Get the stories behind some of Marjorie Glick’s other paintings at www.artistsnetwork.com/article/wc-glick-gallery.