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# THE UNPLANNED JOURNEY OF FINE ARTIST *Jill Krutick*

BY DONNA MORIARTY

*Rewind to autumn of 2019: fine artist Jill Krutick was living the dream. Her abstract paintings, displayed in scores of private and public permanent collections and in her own studio in Mamaroneck, were selling well.*

Prestigious art museums in Florida, Montana, and Mallorca, Spain, were exhibiting her pieces, and she was even tapped for a group gallery exhibition, *The Feminine Sublime*, slated for the spring of 2020.

Not bad for someone who, just ten years prior, had reached a career pinnacle as a media analyst and Wall Street executive. "It was a completely unplanned journey," Krutick says. "I never intended to be a full-time artist."

Like many children growing up on Long Island, the young Jill Krutick took lessons in piano, figure skating, and painting. And while her talent might have steered her toward a creative path, she embarked on a business career, working at esteemed firms like Salomon Brothers, Citigroup/Smith Barney, and Warner Music Group.



Twenty years in to an impressive career by any standards, Krutick's backburned love for the arts and creative expression, along with a husband and two teenaged children, called more loudly for her attention. She left corporate life, began taking classes at the Art Students League, and painting in her Scarsdale home after the kids were in bed. Giving away her canvases as gifts to friends and family, painting provided release and rapture, which grew along with her technique.

She began displaying her art locally, in office buildings and banks. Her first public exhibit—for the Pelham Manor Club in 2011—was followed by small shows at libraries, women's clubs and arts associations, then galleries in Manhattan and Westchester and in the permanent collection of one of her former employers. By then, her paintings were literally selling off the walls.

In 2018, she opened Jill Krutick Fine Art, working on larger and more complex paintings as she explored her medium. "The more I painted and made contact with people connected to the art world, the more doors opened to me," Krutick recalls. "It set off this blossoming of my curiosity. It's a pleasure to explore interests later in life once you've established yourself, to do whatever is most joyful to you."

When the pandemic upended the entire world, Krutick's scheduled shows were canceled or postponed by at least a year - with one notable exception: the virtual component of what should have been a glitzy reception for the Oculus in New York City. Throughout the spring, the venue displayed selected works of art,

Krutick's among them, on a massive billboard 40 feet above Times Square. The exposure gave her an idea.

With help from her assistant, Simone Kurtz, Krutick created her own "virtual" gallery, complete with dramatic lighting and stylized placement of her paintings on walls that convey the look and feel of being in her space. "People can enter virtually and walk around, looking at my paintings as if they were visiting a gallery," she marvels.

feeds. "I'm on TikTok, which appeals to a younger audience, a lot of them trend setters and art lovers," she says. "But people of all ages can access my work. Anyone who can click a link can visit my exhibits, interact with me, and watch my process."

Krutick knows the importance of collaboration in extending her creative reach. Of her assistant, a Pratt Institute alumna who has managed the studio since it opened, she says, "Simone is a treasure. She's a talented photographer, videogra-

pher, artist and designer who helps me with all my projects." Krutick also hired a manufacturing company to reproduce her art on wearable items, and now sells them in her online Etsy shop. "Painting truly is a passion, and the more I do it, the more I feel inspired to do it in different ways," she says.

Some of Krutick's earlier works are still on display in a few Westchester locations. And while the virtual studio on her website is open 24/7, she encourages in-person visitors, by appointment, to her studio gallery on Mount Pleasant Avenue. The Covid-related decline in foot traffic prompted her to offer her 1,500 square foot gallery space for use by local groups with arts-related missions.

A woman clearly unafraid of taking risks, Krutick says her years in corporate America taught her to boldly embrace challenge. "I try to bring that to my art, to shake things up and try something new each time," she says. "You never know what you'll discover until you open the door and walk through it."

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Inset: One of Krutick's pillow shams on her Etsy.com store.

Crayon Forest

By the summer of 2020, the explosion of virtual communications in all aspects of daily life enabled Krutick to connect with new people, new avenues of expression, and new ways to create art. She launched *Painting Story Times*, a series of short YouTube videos that depict her inspiration and artistic process. She provided the narration, her calm voice paired with mesmerizing closeups of her hands as they swirled paint on canvas.

Today, Krutick continues to experiment with new technology and platforms beyond the usual Facebook and Instagram