

Meet Betsy Cole

[Local Stories](#) March 24, 2020



Today we'd like to introduce you to Betsy Cole.

Betsy, please share your story with us. How did you get to where you are today?

For all the bright colors and abstract shapes that define my paintings, I must confess that I am a bit of a traditionalist at heart: family is incredibly important to me. My children and grandchildren provide great joy and inspiration, and it is my hope that I am beacon of sorts for them. Some stars fizzle out, but it's my

goal to shine bright, helping others to the very end. There are many ways to do this, both practically and artistically, but for me, at ground level, is Family.

In terms of career, I started out as an interior designer which meant creating spaces for others. I loved it for many years, and there is most definitely an artistic dynamic that was exciting: multimedia color installations if you will. Working with skilled artisans and designing custom pieces was the most challenging and rewarding: unique tables or architectural structures that were "pieces of art." In a way, I was an artist without really knowing it. I loved working with wall paints, furniture, and fabrics, and my skill at using colors became a real signature to all my designs.

But inside—in terms of my own passion—there was a real emptiness. No real sense of "being me." I wanted to create my own visions. As I got older, I knew it would be a tragedy to confront death without ever having embraced what I always wanted to do—to paint. It took all my strength and determination to make even the slightest attempt. The fear was overwhelming.

Little swirls came first. Then bigger swirls. It all felt a bit silly, and I was incredibly self-conscious. I tried my hand at figurative art, but that instantly triggered a desire to make everything absolutely perfect. Next came a "circles phase." I dove deep into art history and got the hang of many artistic techniques, but the studio classes always ended in misery and tears: the teachers were harsh and full of "musts" and "shoulds." A toxic atmosphere of judgment.

On a trip to Bali, I met an abstract artist who became my mentor. Three more trips followed. Life was serene there, I felt safe, and the fears melted away. I discovered freedom and learned there was no "right" way. Whatever I did was just fine. I learned to paint what spilled out with no expectations and to paint with a new feeling which I now call a connection to spirit—something beyond me and my world. I gained confidence and my life changed completely.

Has it been a smooth road?

How well I remember receiving my first big box of crayons as a small child that had copper, silver and gold. I was absolutely giddy! I loved to color and play with my finger paints. But this happiness did not last long. Events happened and decisions were made. Year after year, I would browse in art stores, buying up pens and paints, but they always ended up stashed away in drawers. I was always intrigued by artists but to actually try painting? Impossible. Or so it seemed.

There have been many challenges in my life starting at a very young age. Sexual abuse tore my life apart and I shut down. I was no longer good enough. I was emotionally paralyzed. I survived over the years because of an inner determination that grew stronger with each challenge—family alcoholism, a serious bike accident, divorce, and breast cancer. My greatest challenge has been undoing my rigid ways of seeing the world through fear and judgment. But I confronted these inner demons and the constant fear of failing. I needed to build trust and self-confidence. If we can see the challenges through, we discover that they actually make us stronger but that isn't always easy. Gradually, a belief in myself and trust in others began to appear, and it has continued to grow throughout my life.

We'd love to hear more about your art.

Color! I absolutely love color—bright, bold colors. This is a definite carry-over from my work as an interior designer. But there is a deeper aspect, something more spiritual. When it came to interiors, I learned to listen to my clients, and I found it easy to interpret my clients' visions. Now that I paint, the task is to listen to my heart (not my head) and transform feelings into colors on canvas. It's all about how it feels, and I try not to make any judgments and to accept what each day brings.

Sometimes I wish I would have started painting earlier. Sounds easy, right? But to be honest: I don't think I could have done that. I paint the way I paint because I entered the dark forest and came out the other side. The difficulties and fears are now matched with wondrous insights and joys. I see now how I

needed all those fears to learn how to become fearless. Dreaming a life lived differently has a kind of magic and fantasy to it that is fun to do occasionally, but in my heart I truly believe that I could not have lived my life in any other way.

What sets you apart from others?

My bold use of color, my feelings in my work, and the energy in my paintings. I suppose you could say that a different aesthetic principle is in play. While it is wonderful to sell my art, the mercantile component is less important than the emotional authenticity of my paintings. I meditate first and there is no planning or thinking, no judgment and no expectation. The colors I select represent my feelings of the moment. Painting becomes play. I never know what's coming. And my love of bright colors probably came from that giddy little girl I once was who loved her crayons.

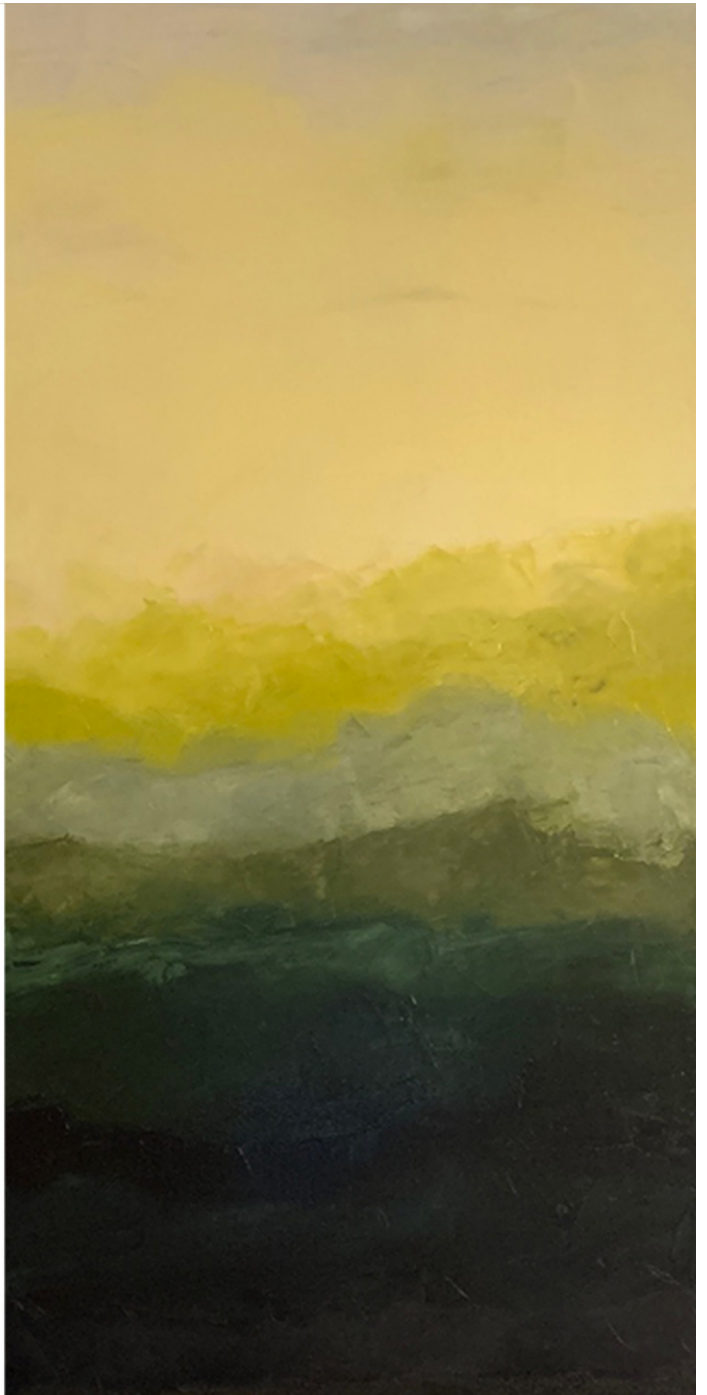
Art gives me healing energy. This is what I was meant to do. This is who I am meant to be. Wonderful things have already happened in my relatively short career as an artist. I am truly grateful: Grateful for the courage which allowed me to embrace my long lost passion and for the ways in which I can use my art to help others. Life is a baffling, scary, and a miraculous journey. How fortunate that I believed that it is never too late to try.

Let's touch on your thoughts about our city — what do you like the most and least?

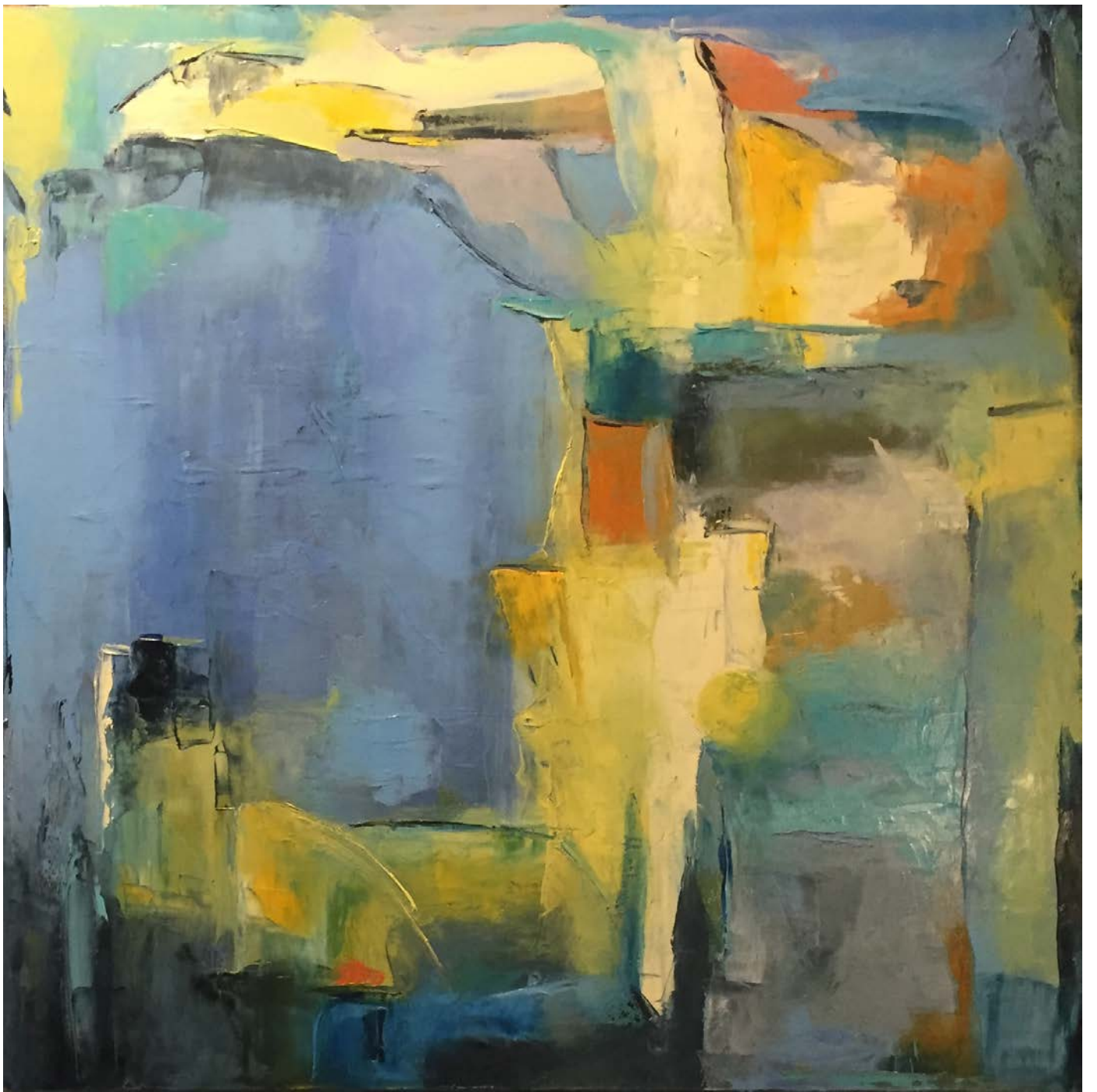
Without doubt: its support. Boulder is a hugely supportive city in many ways. I moved from here after fifty years in Denver because I needed less... well, less of just about everything: a certain simplicity. I have two children here, and the quieter lifestyle suits me perfectly. Although like most people, I don't care for the increased traffic, but I now have a little routine involving yoga, daily walks with my dog, and spirituality. Synchronistic connections abound. A fantastic bonus is all the art programs and organizations in Boulder, Louisville and Longmont. I am thrilled to be here and am happy to immerse myself in art every day. All the pieces fit.

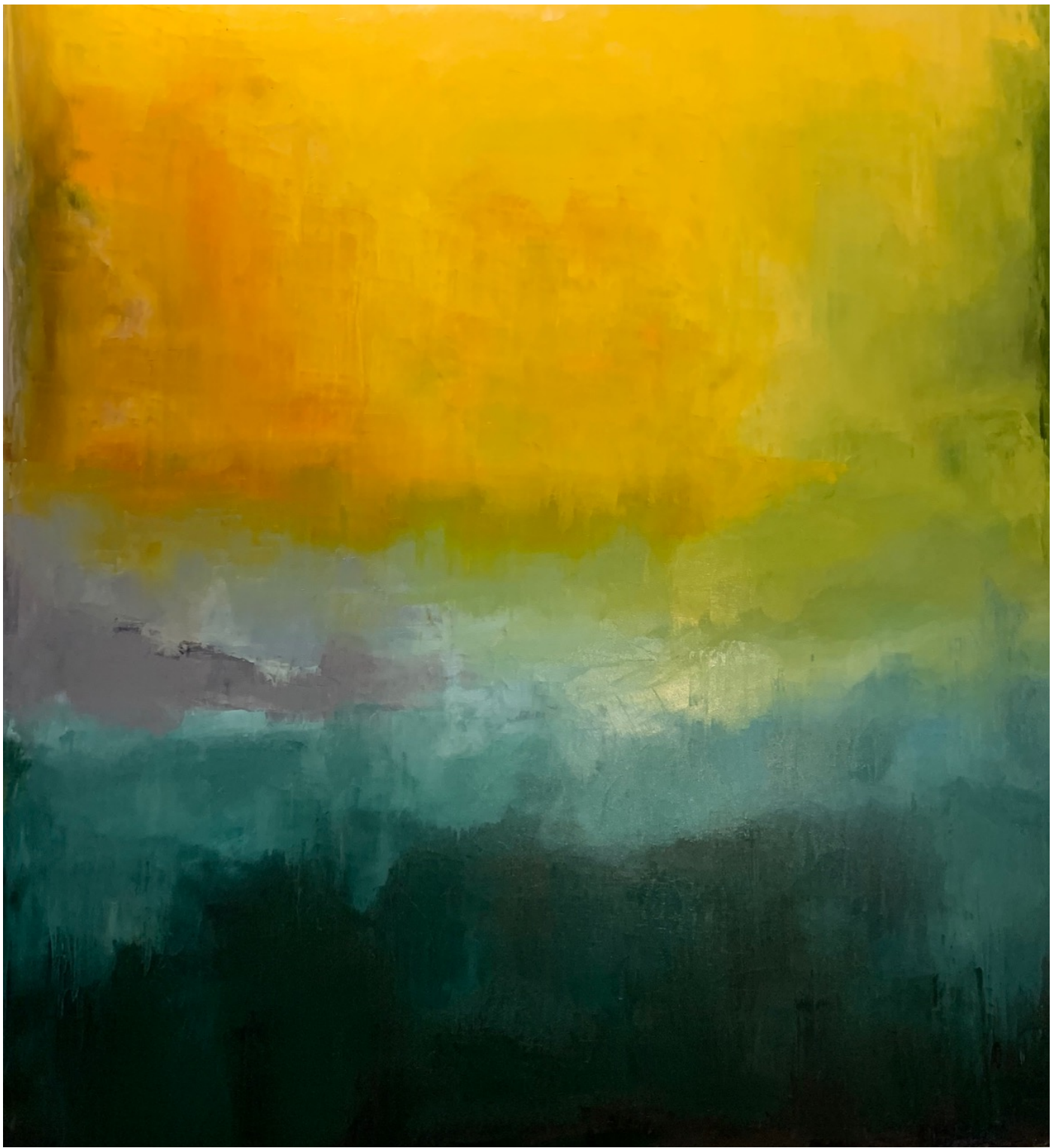
Contact Info:

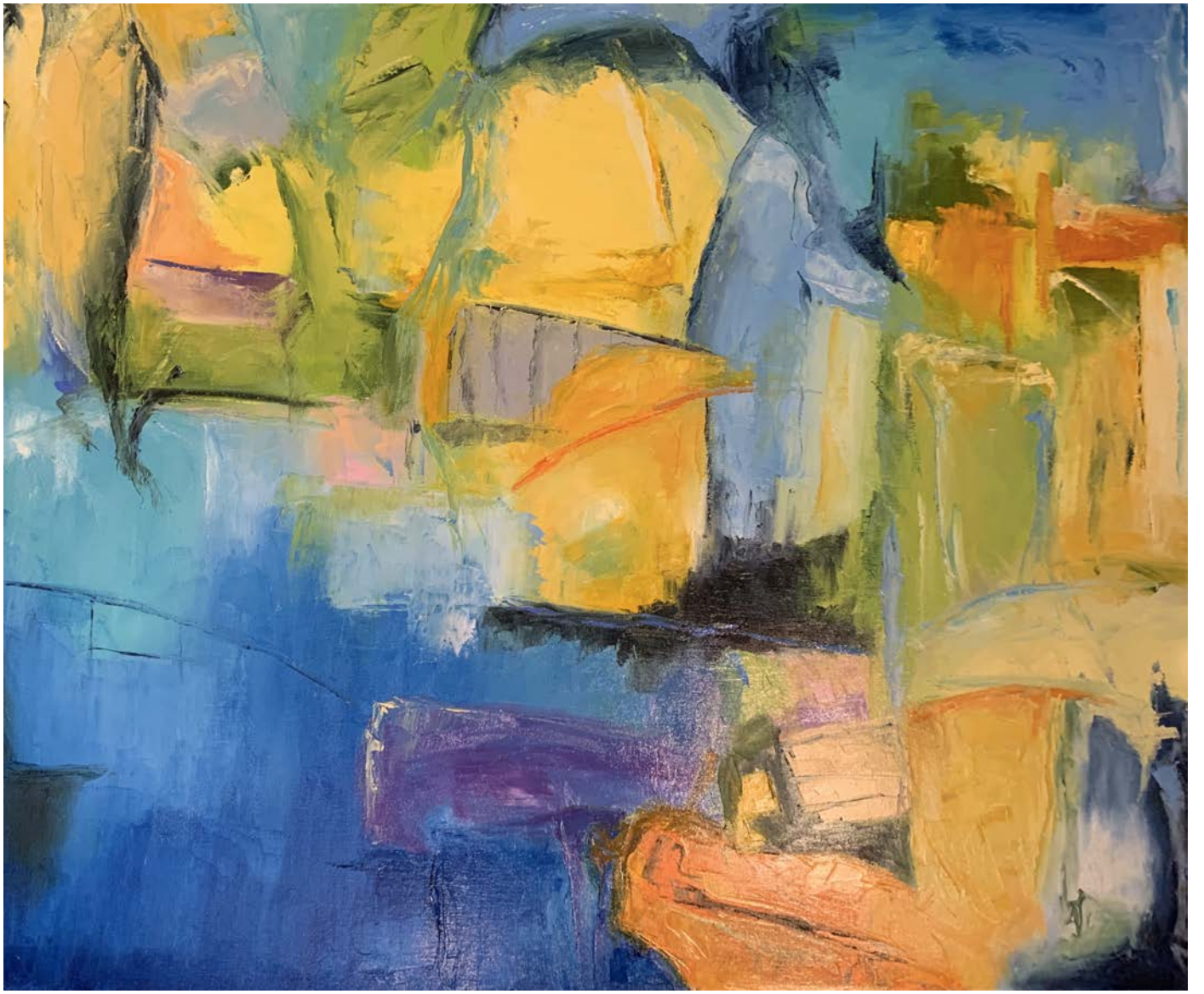
- **Website:** <https://www.betsycoleart.com/>
- **Phone:** 303-877-1822
- **Email:** paint@betsycoleart.com
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/betsycoleart/>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/betsycole6>

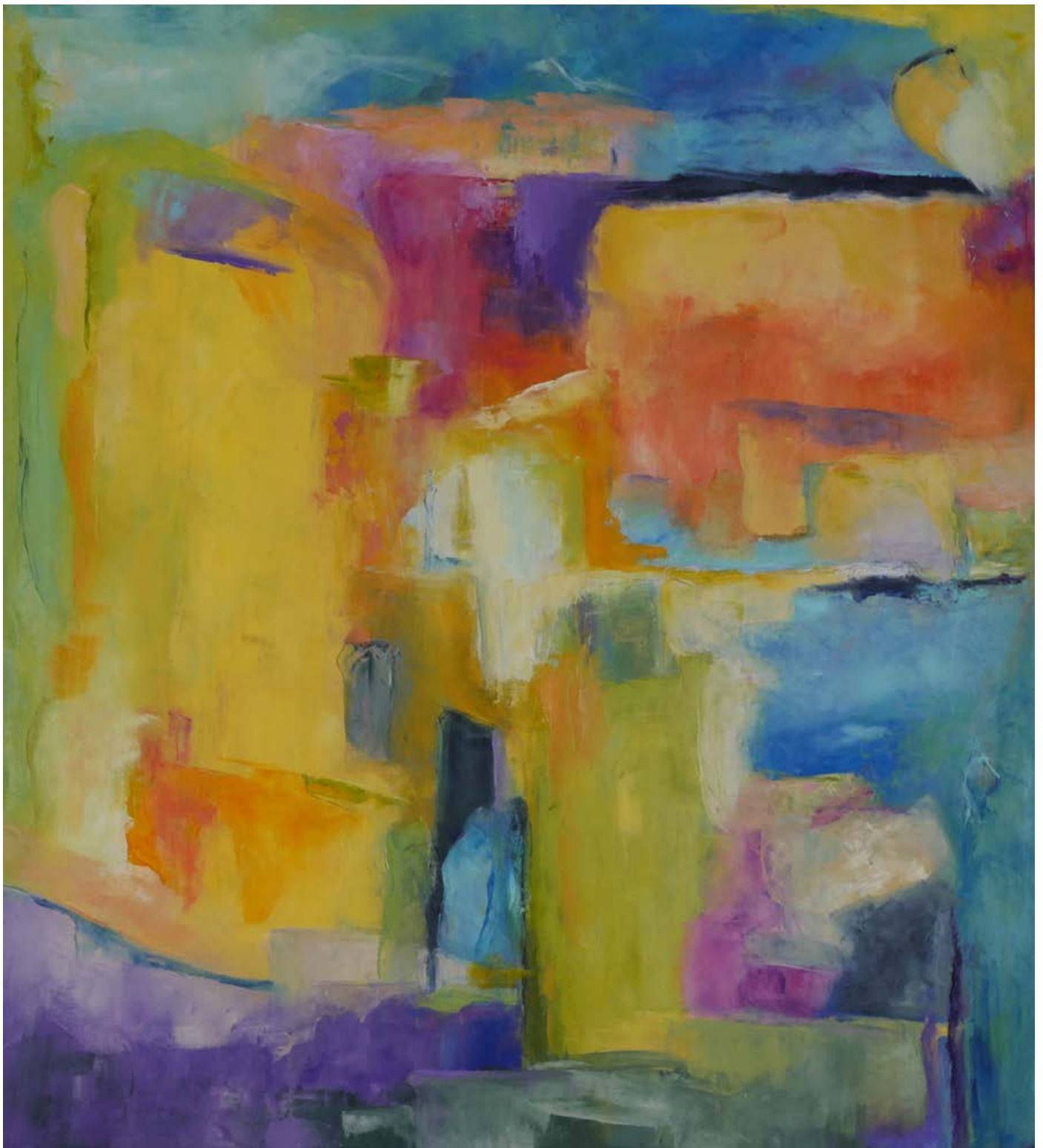












[Suggest a story](#): VoyageDenver is built on recommendations from the community; it's how we uncover hidden gems, so if you or someone you know deserves recognition please let us know [here](#).

Related Items