

ON THE COVER

The Heavens Unfold by Nancy Gordon Moore

Portions of the following are based on an interview with the artist on October 7, 2021.

Nancy Gordon Moore likes painting with cold wax and oil. She added this technique to her repertoire of painting skills during a workshop with Pam Caughey in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Moore found an excellent instructor and new friend in Caughey who shared her longtime experience using the cold wax technique.

Cold wax comes in a jar and looks a lot like Crisco. It is made from beeswax and resins that keep it soft. Artists blend it with oil paints to get the colors for their palette, then it can be applied thickly to build up texture or used as a thin layer to create translucency. Moore said it is like painting with buttercream frosting. When applied thickly the artist can carve into it. Mark making with a graphite pencil works too. *The Heavens Unfold*, the painting on the cover, was done with cold wax and oil. Even with the flat, two-dimensional image, viewers can “sense the versatility of the cold wax, with layers of different weight and opacity/transparency.” Moore said that this painting reminds her of the beautiful pictures of the cosmos from the Hubble Telescope.

After retiring from her position as Executive Director for Governance at the American Psychological Association, Moore began her new career as an artist. In the past, her “studio” was part of a room in her house. Knowing she needed a proper studio, she joined an artist’s cooperative in an old mill where other artists worked—which she found stimulating, supportive, and sometimes a bit distracting. Her suite mates commented positively on Moore’s willingness to learn new things. Moore admits to having been a “serial hobbyist” where she learns everything she can about her current hobby be it antique gardens or building computers (which she learned from the motherboard up). She is committed to her painting but often tries new approaches to keep it interesting.

Moore’s new project is building her own studio. She wants to be able to walk out her back door and begin painting. As a night owl, she often works late in the night and knows she will feel safe doing that in her new studio. She designed the studio with skylights, large windows, and big doors to let in a lot of light. She considers it an investment in herself.

During her first year following retirement, Moore found herself hopeful, excited, and looking forward to her new life. Then a year

later the pandemic hit. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) had an impact on her art. She had been feeling very productive as the paintings just flowed each day. Her painting continued but her emotions were more evident in her work—one piece looked a lot like the virus. She found herself using vivid colors, reds, and oranges. She engaged in frantic mark making with tangles and bursts of marks in the paint. The cold winter was particularly tough. Losing a good friend slowed her pace until her productivity just stopped. Spring brought her back with its renewed life and color—she started producing again.

Moore’s approach for doing a painting is in three stages: play (add lots of whatever you want), subtract or add as it starts to take shape, and refine it with final details. She said that most painters seem to have a point in a painting where they are stuck. For her, getting unstuck is very rewarding and when she does not find a way to change it, she paints over and starts again. Her identity has changed, she now introduces herself as an artist and is grateful for having it be her life. It has given her a sense of purpose as she transitioned out of the 9–5 world of work. She has gained confidence in her painting and is aware of having an individual element in every one of her images. A gallery owner told her that her works look like her—he can recognize her style. That affirmation let her know her transition had been successful.

I invite *American Psychologist* (AP) readers to look at *The Heavens Unfold*. What do you see? Moore saw the deep cosmos with its distant stars and millions of galaxies. Most of us do not view the night sky through a powerful telescope but we have all seen pictures from the Hubble Telescope. The metaphor of the unfolding heavens strikes a positive note as we end this year with signs that the virus is waning. Our lives may begin unfolding in new ways that we had not imagined just 2 years ago. This is my last art essay after 23 years of finding the artists, talking with them, and telling you about them and their work. I am so very grateful to every one of the artists and to all the readers who maybe learned just a little about art as you read the essays. I could not have done this work without the support of Ray Fowler who gave me the chance, Kate Hays who was the best teammate ever, and the support of Sue Harris and each of the AP editors over the years. Thank you.

Sandra M. Fowler
Art Editor