

# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***Journeys Imagined, Paintings by John Moran, on View Through February at Adkins Arboretum***

John Moran’s paintings are like stories in the process of unfolding. On view at the Adkins Arboretum Visitor’s Center through Feb. 26, *Journeys Imagined*, his exhibit of watercolor, oil and acrylic paintings, brims with rich, glowing color and animated trees, hills, clouds and abstract forms. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., Feb. 19 from 2 to 4 p.m.



***John Moran, “Nearing the Distance,” oil on canvas, 18” x 24”***

Although his paintings almost always suggest landscapes, they hover strangely between representation and abstraction. Colorful, inviting and often playful, they are full of the dreamlike, half-formed shapes you might glimpse in your imagination.

There’s a curved, cream-colored shape in “Nearing the Distance” that seems like a boat afloat in a sea of purple and violet water with islands and dark hills beyond. But none of it is distinct. The “boat” might just be a reflection of a pale cloud in the upper left or a shimmer of moonlight across the water.

Moran’s paintings are evocative of many things, but you can never be quite sure of what, and it’s this uncertainty that makes them so appealing. With no idea how a painting will turn out,

Moran begins with some washes of color, then he paints in more colors and shapes, alters them, scrapes some paint away and paints some more. It's a process of continual change as he experiments with how colors and shapes react to one another.

"It's never planned," he said. "I'm working on a painting now that's all blue, but yesterday or the day before it was all red."

Now living in Chester, Moran grew up in Washington, D.C., and began taking art classes in his late twenties at the American Academy of Art in Chicago. For 25 years, he lived in West Virginia and continued to paint, mostly creating plein air watercolor landscapes, while raising his family, farming and working at a government job. After his retirement in 1997, he chose to concentrate on art and in 2006 earned an MFA from the Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Over the years, Moran has developed his own very distinctive style, though occasionally there's a nod to Arshile Gorky, Joan Miro, Salvador Dali or some other artist. Because he is so fascinated with the process of painting, he relishes the work of many different kinds of painters, listing Francis Bacon, David Hockney and Wayne Thiebaud as some of his favorites.

For Moran, the process of painting is almost more important than the finished work, and he enjoys the unexpected accidents that happen along the way. Dripping paint might turn into tree trunks or a coal-black mass might suggest a rocky seacoast, while a band of sooty red and luminous scarlet shapes below it call to mind molten lava churning deep in the earth.

There is much that is unpredictable and even slightly mystical in his paintings. Moran likes to think of them as visual poetry, never static and always open to new interpretations.

"I don't know why these are what they are, and I can't explain it," he said. "I think it's another language. Painting expresses something that can't be said in words."

*Journeys Imagined* is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Feb. 26 at the Arboretum Visitor's Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org) for gallery hours.

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*Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. For more information, visit [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org) or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.*

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