

An Abstract Artist Delights From Painting Within Her Comfort Zone

New York City painter Mary Didoardo thrives on improvisation and throwing creative caution to the wind.

By Mario Naves



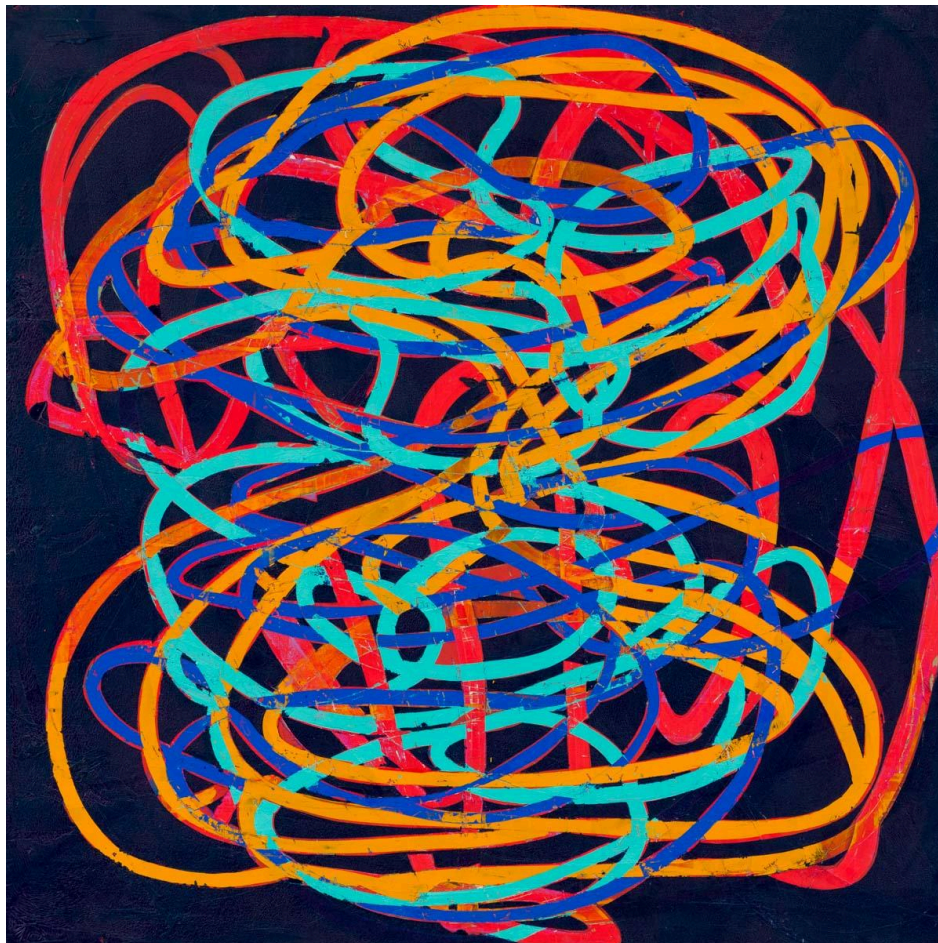
'Introvert,' by Mary Didoardo, 2026. Kathryn Markel Fine Arts

Among the abundance of clichés surrounding the creative process, “getting outside of the comfort zone” must be near the top. We have an idea of what it entails: An individual tests the limits of the materials or processes being employed and attempts to waylay any preconceptions that might hamper artistic growth. Falling on one’s backside is the risk; achieving unimagined heights, the hope. A 20th-century poet, T.S. Eliot, wrote of how “only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

The veteran New York City painter, Mary Didoardo, knows the drill. Her recent abstractions, the subject of an exhibition that has just opened at Kathryn Markel Fine Art, "[Story Line](#)," evince a temperament that thrives on improvisation, blind alleys, and caution thrown to the wind. Ms. Didoardo says that this approach has led to "a happy culmination of my life's work." The reason for this abiding satisfaction? Because it allows Ms. Didoardo to operate *within* her comfort zone. Clearly this artist didn't get the memo.

Or maybe the memo isn't as encompassing as we might think. A clue to Ms. Didoardo's notions about creativity and comfort can be gleaned from a 2016 interview in which she mentions the French painter, sculptor and printmaker, Henri Matisse. Ms. Didoardo is particularly taken with his efforts in collage, the so-called "cut-outs:" They thrill me . . . [the] time has come where I can have the pleasure and joy that Matisse had in his work."

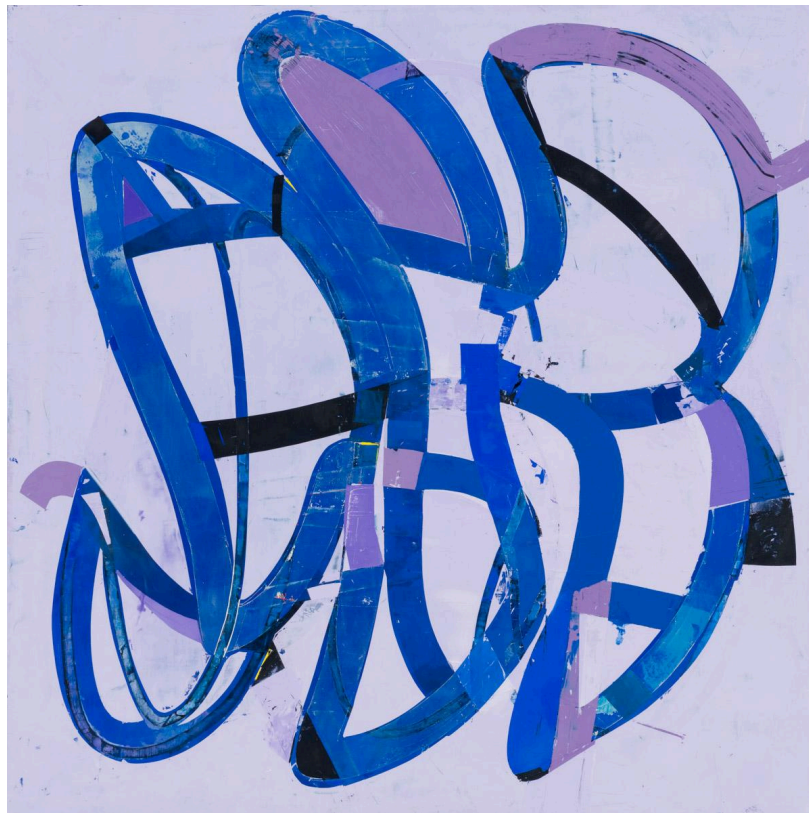
Matisse would have been the first to tell you that pleasure and joy are hard-won. The French Master would also have likely agreed with a credo popularized by an American Master, Fred Astaire: "Never let them see you sweat." Ms. Didoardo's glyph-like tangles of overlapping lines and shapes are, in their immediacy and crispness, reminiscent of notebook doodles or graffitied tags. The compositions are arrived at through an incremental and labor-intensive process. A lot of scribbling and a lot of masking takes place making a lot of room for surprise.



'Mindbend,' by Mary Didoardo, 2026. Kathryn Markel Fine Arts

Patience, especially for a slow-drying medium like oil paint, can be a virtue and is definitely a necessity. Ms. Didoardo's approach involves the repeated layering of pigment and a selective preservation "excavation" may be the better word of those layers. Nothing in the compositions is taken for granted just as nothing in them is beyond equivocation. The resulting images are made up, then, of the image's *pentimenti*, a painterly term stemming from the Italian word for repentance. How grievous a sin it is to build upon one's first steps depends on how well or constructively they are transformed.

"Mindbend" (2026) is a brilliant example of Ms. Didoardo's methodology, not least because its range of pinks, oranges, teals and blues are intensely radiant. What at first seems a monolithic clump of diagrammatic lines muscling its way toward the perimeters of the canvas reveals itself as an interpenetrating spatial network, a densely woven cluster whose rhythms are elastic, but whose contours are unpredictable. Ms. Didoardo posits a world in which connectivity is paramount and prior states of being are inescapable. Speed, in this artist's hands, proves itself commensurate with deliberation.



'Little Egypt,' by Mary Didoardo, 2025. Kathryn Markel Fine Arts

The calligraphic and the cartoonish comfortably coexist in Ms. Didoardo's paintings. Whether "Little Egypt" (2025) namechecks a famed bellydancer or a Queens neighborhood is up for grabs, but its hyperbolic rhythms are pure Looney Tunes. "Helium Rose" (2025) reads like a microscopic lifeform interrupted by a jolt of electricity just as "Introvert" (2025) proves extroverted in its tensile amalgam of hard-and-fast synthetic colors. And so it goes with pictures that are declarative, lithesome, clarified and true. "Story Line" is Ms. Didoardo's finest exhibition to date.