



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 1, 2023

Contact: Sandy Wright
contact@riverworksart.org
301.922.8507

ARTIST SHERYL MASSARO SHARES GLIMPSES “OF THE ANGELS”
Riverworks Art Center exhibition explores the power of paintings and poems
to express the inexpressible

POOLESVILLE, Md. — With visions of celestial beings, flashes of nature, and everyday scenes both dreamlike and real, Sheryl Massaro connects the cosmic with the commonplace in “Of the Angels,” a new Riverworks exhibition that sees hard questions about life as new inspiration for reflection and hope.

Featuring 17 oil paintings paired with excerpts from Massaro’s translations of the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, “Of the Angels” explores vivid imagery and subtle emotions that help us recognize and affirm our universal experience. “I’m fascinated by life’s undertow,” Massaro says, “the unspoken, unseen energy that bonds artists and poets with their viewers and readers.”

“Of the Angels” will be on display from **Wednesday, November 15, 2023, through Sunday, December 31, 2023, at Locals Farm Market, 19929 Fisher Avenue, Poolesville, Md.** This show is the ninth Riverworks “Artist in the House” exhibition to be featured on the second floor of the historic house at Locals.

An opening reception will be held at Locals on **Sunday, November 19, 2023, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.** The reception is free and the public is invited to attend.

The reception will also mark the first book signing of Massaro’s translation of the *Duino Elegies*, a series of ten mystical poems by Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926). Often cited in popular culture for their references to angels, the *Duino Elegies* are long, challenging monologues in which Rilke yearns to make sense of love, suffering, beauty, the fragmentation of the modern world, and the humility of all humanity before the vastness of creation.

Each painting in “Of the Angels” is paired with an evocative excerpt from the translation, which Massaro hopes will give modern readers, especially young people, an entry point into these eloquent but daunting poems.

“When I first read the *Duino Elegies*, I was a depressed 18-year-old,” Massaro recalls. “I didn’t understand what the heck Rilke was saying, but suddenly I was aware that another human had grappled with big life questions and, in that, I was not alone after all. That was a relief.”

For Massaro, oil painting is a way to ponder those questions from uncommon perspectives, with what she calls “a deeper, ‘off-to-the-side’ look at life.” Viewers of her work will immediately note a richness of color with a hazy, dreamlike quality that evokes poignant emotion, an effect she achieves by painting not only with brushes and palette knives but also with flexible pottery ribs, spatulas, sea sponges, rags, brush handles, and even her own fingers—whatever it takes to connect with the viewer.

“Sheryl’s desire to make art that reaches out to others is why her show is such a great fit for us,” explains Riverworks co-founder David Therriault. “As a painter, a photographer, and a poet, she’s living proof that art doesn’t need to set boundaries. Viewers who take the time to absorb her words and visions will come away moved.”

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ABOUT SHERYL MASSARO:

Frederick-based oil painter, poet, and photographer Sheryl Massaro is a Resident Artist at the Frederick Arts Council Studios, where she works from her Art & Pen Studio. Her paintings are carried by DISTRICT Arts Gallery and the FAC/Hurwitz Gallery in Frederick.

Massaro holds an MFA in Creative Writing/Poetry from American University and studied with Allen Ginsberg, Stanley Kunitz, and W.S. Merwin. She has taught workshops at the Writer’s Center in Bethesda and at the Presbyterian churches in Darnestown and Frederick.

Massaro’s 2023 translation of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Duino Elegies* was funded in part through a stipend from the National Endowment for the Arts through the Frederick Arts Council.

Massaro will have two other books published before the end of 2023: *Afloat*, a collection of poems about our kinship with water; and *A Generation*, a three-decade collection of poems. She writes the monthly “Everyday Poetry” feature in the *Frederick News-Post*.

During her 35-year career as a federal employee with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, Massaro was involved in speechwriting, press work, public affairs, and public service marketing.

See more of Sheryl Massaro’s work at her website: www.sherylmassaro.com.

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Established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2022, [Riverworks Art Center](#) offers a wealth of arts and culture programs in a restorative rural setting, including art classes, introductory workshops, community roundtables, Storytellers presentations, theater and music classes for children, fine arts exhibitions, outdoor concerts, community festivals, weekly jam sessions, and more.

Riverworks is rooted in the small town of Poolesville, only 40 minutes outside the D.C. Beltway and just half an hour south of Frederick, with Sugarloaf Mountain rising eight miles to the north. The surrounding 93,000-acre Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve offers hiking trails, riverside views, farm-fresh produce, independent restaurants, African American historic sites, Civil War trails, local beer and wine, and more.

Riverworks holds events at three locations in and around Poolesville:

- **Alden Farms** (19215 Beallsville Rd., Beallsville)
classrooms, studios, art library, event pavilion, and sculpture garden
- **Locals Farm Market** (19929 Fisher Ave., Poolesville)
art gallery, jam sessions, local artisans market
- **Historic Methodist Church** (17617 W. Willard Rd., Poolesville)
outdoor stage and future home of the Riverworks Performing Arts Center

In its first year, Riverworks has hosted nearly 100 art classes, programs, and public events, many of them low-cost or free, with the goal of cultivating creativity and connection in the rural corner of Montgomery County and with visitors from across the D.C. region.

To learn more, visit the Riverworks website: www.riverworksart.org.



Established in 2020 at the height of the Covid pandemic, [Locals Farm Market](#) at **19929 Fisher Ave., Poolesville, Md.** is a vital restaurant in the historic heart of Poolesville that serves as a welcoming first stop for visitors exploring the Ag Reserve, a community gathering place, an art gallery, and a marketplace for the work of local artists, writers, artisans, and farmers.

Locals is open Wednesday and Thursday 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday and Saturday 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Locals hosts Riverworks jam sessions open to musicians of all ages and experience levels every Friday night from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Music-loving audience members are welcome and encouraged to attend. The Locals menu emphasizes fresh ingredients from area farms. Guests can eat, meet, and relax in a shade-covered outdoor setting or indoors on two floors of the historic 1840s Veirs–Stevens House.

The second floor at Locals hosts rotating Riverworks “Artists in the House” exhibitions featuring the work of respected local and regional artists.

To learn more, visit the Locals website: www.localsfarmmarket.com.

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