



THE EMPRESS OF WATER

By Sabina Dana Plasse

Wood River Valley artist Wendy Pabich is the owner of Mad Honey Studio, a water scientist, artist, and, most of all, an adventurer in life and the natural world.

Originally from Massachusetts, Wendy found her way to Idaho in 2002 for a Sun Valley Trekking backcountry ski trip where she met Bob Jonas, founder of the Wild Gift, who suggested she come to Sun Valley to study watershed nitrogen issues. The following year she did so with her students from MIT, from where she had already earned a PhD in Water Resources and an MS in Environmental Policy and Planning. Needless to say, Pabich's education reflects an illustrious list of institutions, which also includes an MS in Coastal Geology from Duke University and a BA in Geography from Dartmouth College. She has been painting since she could walk and as a child, she spent untold hours perched on the granite outcrops of New England's coastline, absorbing the nuances of the sea.

Potentiality by Wendy Pabich. Acrylic and mixed media on gallery-wrapped canvas, 48" x 72" x 2.25" at Mitchell Contemporary.



“Making art is a magical vehicle for full expression, integration, and connection. I continue to push my creative boundaries with ever-more bold use of color and form.” –Wendy Pabich



Blossom by Wendy Pabich. Acrylic and china marker on wood, 30" x 40".



Healing Waters I-IV by Wendy Pabich. Acrylic on raised wood panel, 30" x 30".

"It's my outlet," she says. "I have always been equally right- and left-brained, and that yin and yang is reflected in my process as intuition and pattern. Painting is very therapeutic for me. Every time I paint, it reveals something to me about myself."

Wendy's paintings are deeply informed by her work and life experiences, particularly those related to water and the environment. As a water lover, she has led graduate students to the wilds of Patagonia to help protect some of the world's greatest unfettered rivers and applied her science and policy skills to making her local world a better place. She has taught wilderness skills and sustainability in the Himalaya, floated icy rivers in Alaska, navigated the length of the Grand Canyon, skied endless powder glades, and been helicoptered out of the Northern Ice Fields of Patagonia in the wake of a geologic-scale glacial lake outburst flood. Wendy has also been practicing yoga for decades and trained as a yoga teacher in the Sacred Valley of Peru. To say she has a passion for water barely scratches the surface of her dedication to one of life's most valued and important resources.

"I love it," she says. "I have a deep connection to water and continue to explore it in my work. It's been rewarding to see how my water pieces are resonating with people. I think water is profoundly calming to them."

In her recent works, which are on view at Mitchell Contemporary and in her show, *Liquid and Blooms*, at Zenergy Spa Gallery in Ketchum, she captures mood through color and form. Her intuitive painting process relies on sentiment and feeling, rather than a preconceived notion of outcome.

The end result might be her goddess-themed works or her floral paintings at Zenergy. "It was what was coming through me. Painting is a cathartic experience where I dig deep and make it happen. Sometimes I will walk away from a painting, put it in the garage, and return six months later to do a fix and it's done. It's always unknown."

Wendy often begins by covering her canvas with color blocks, and etches around them to reveal form and purpose. Painting is an active process where she moves about the canvas, at times painting barefoot with her canvases outside on the ground or leaning over a table. With bigger works, she may lean them against a ladder. She's analytical and visual and is able to intuitively navigate the canvas to produce balanced patterns and compositions. For Wendy, this is her flow, but it's also the same pattern recognition skills she uses in science and in her water studies. Her work is almost a mystery until she sees it on the canvas.

"Making art is a magical vehicle for full expression, integration, and connection," says Wendy. "I continue to push my creative boundaries with ever-more bold use of color and form. My paintings are colorful interpretations of the energy and iconic beauty of the West. My goal is to bring that sense of warmth, peace, and connection to the homes and work spaces of my clients."

Wendy Pabich will give a presentation on her work at Zenergy Healthclub Spa & Boutique in the spa area on Saturday, December 14, 4:30-6:30pm, at Zenergy Health Club and Spa, with an artist's reception in the Zenergy Yoga Studio and viewing in the Zenergy Spa Gallery. For more details, visit zenergysv.com.