

Mary Montague Sikes is living her childhood dream of becoming an artist. A passion for color and a love of nature are evident in the diverse works of arts she has created for over 30 years in her Virginia studios. After studying painting, sculpture, and ceramics at the University of Mary Washington and the College of William and Mary, she earned her MFA in painting at Virginia Commonwealth University (ranked the #1 public university school of arts and design in the country by U.S. News and World Report). She continues to study with well-known painters, including Robert Burridge, Mary Ann Beckwith, Janet Rogers, Mary Alice Braukman, and many others. Most recently, she has developed a passion for encaustic and mixed media painting.

An avid traveler, Sikes has toured the United States, Canada, Europe, and much of the Caribbean. With a camera always in hand, she enjoys photographing spectacular locations and remarkable landmarks. The flamboyant colors of the Southwest and the Red Rock scenery of Sedona, Arizona especially intrigue her. Over the years, she has created numerous large canvas paintings of the Rocky Mountains which were the subject of her master's thesis. Many of her paintings are bright abstract works on canvas that depict her love of texture and color.

Her interest in old historic hotels and the photographs and paintings she made of them led to publication of her coffee table book, *Hotels to Remember*. A series of 20 different Giclees were created of the 20 hotel paintings featured in this book.

Sikes has developed a passion for experimental mixed media paintings. After discovering the Robert Doak brilliant, lightfast, concentrated watercolors, she began working on Yupo (a synthetic "paper") as well as canvas to create her latest inspirational, multi-layered works. Using her intuitive skills, she develops "Master Meditation" paintings for individuals along with a written poetic interpretation.

An award-winning artist in pastels, acrylic paintings, sculpture, and photography, Sikes has been featured in numerous one-person and group exhibitions. Her paintings are in public and private collections throughout the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean.

Sikes has written eight novels, a coffee table book, short stories, and hundreds of articles. Her novel, *Eagle Rising*, is set in Sedona AZ. Her latest book, *Daddy's Christmas Angel*, was awarded first place in the 2013 Virginia Press Women Communication Contest and third place in the National Federation of Press Women Communication Contest in awards presented in Salt Lake City NV in August 2013. Her essay and a poem are included in *Harboring Secrets*, an anthology released in September 2013 by Chesapeake Bay Writers.

A signature member of the Maryland Pastel Society, Sikes is also a member of the Metropolitan Richmond Artist Association, This Century Art Gallery in Williamsburg, Gloucester Arts on the Main, Pastel Society of Virginia, Chesapeake Bay Pen Women, Chesapeake Bay Writers Club, Virginia Writers Club, and the Virginia Romance Writers.