

# FINE ARTIST

2021

Global Pandemic  
Systemic Racism  
Economic Crisis  
Social Isolation  
Nature Neglect

A large, expressive red brushstroke signature that reads 'LAVELLE'. The strokes are thick and textured, with visible brush marks and some white space within the red areas, giving it a dynamic and hand-painted appearance. The signature is set against a light, irregularly shaped background that resembles a splash or a cloud.

**LAVELLE**  
PAINTER WITH A PURPOSE

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EDUCATION

MULTIPLE  
SCLEROSIS

Helen Lavelle never  
paints without a reason.

Her reasons are layered and complex  
and begin with the untimely death  
of her sister from the disease of alcoholism.

Her reasons also come from the pain she saw squeezed out during the Civil Rights era, and the plight of persons of color today in the United States, not just to get ahead, but simply to stay alive.

They also come from the quiet hum of a pulsing earth, whose fate seems uncertain without deliberate change from all of us.

Her reasons for painting are rooted in a lifelong quest to experience the colors she saw only once at 8 years old that

simply do not exist—at least not on this planet. Her reasons come from a neurological disease that for a time robbed her of her ability to see color at all, but an illness she learned to shove back to the margin.

Maybe most artists steer the sum of their lives' experiences into a singular body of work. That's not enough for Lavelle. She goes beyond capturing her experience. She understands that her work has a broader purpose. And so, as part of a brand

new initiative, a portion of the proceeds from her various collections support causes that are important—causes that move the needle on issues that have always weighed heavy on her heart.

As the world teeters under the weight of the coronavirus pandemic, Lavelle puts purpose behind her paintings. She's doing something about things that matter—parts about our world she can make better for the rest of us.

“It was a renowned Irish-born artist who challenged me to paint it all—even the coyotes getting in with the sheep.”

Helen Lavelle  
with mentor  
Timothy Hawkesworth

HELENLAVELLEARTIST.COM



## PORTRAIT

On the edge of the industrial part of Scranton, Pennsylvania, the city where she launched her award-winning advertising agency, warm sunlight soaks through tall windows as Lavelle whisks around her studio.

Wrapped in a long artist's smock, with her tousled hair tied loosely at the back, she wheels out a large easel and rolling workbench. Her model for the day takes her seat on a short stool. The earthy smell of oil paint hangs heavy in the air as Lavelle wipes cheese cloth over the large aluminum panel, with devoted intent blotting up a deep umber color she had primed it with.

"I'm not going for likeness. I'm going for spirit," she proclaims, swapping out her umber-laden rag for solid oil pigment, drawing wild lines that have no apparent purpose or order. The solid pigment thunks against the artboard with reckless enthusiasm. If she wanted a perfect likeness, she'd just take a photograph, she says shrugging. Every subject casts off its own energy, she says. They throw an unending stream of vibration and color for anyone to catch. She wants to memorialize that. Showing likeness is important, but it takes a backseat to capturing energy. "When I'm painting, I feel so much joy, no matter what the subject is," Lavelle says, but then quickly qualifies her joy. "There's no question about it,"

she continues. "My art and inspiration for my art have been fueled by a lifetime of grief."

Born in 1956, Lavelle grew up in what was then a gritty Pennsylvania coal town, the eldest of 10 children, in a vast family descended from Irish immigrants. Her parents supported her creativity, but didn't quite understand it. Alcoholism ran thick through the branches of her family tree. While experiencing never-ending death and destruction, she learned first-hand what heartbreak and horror feel like. "Beautiful people who were the most important in my life began to die—and die young."

Her secondary education in Communication Arts was not enough. She moved to Philadelphia, was educated at Moore College of Art and Design, the nation's only all-women's art school, before beginning a trailblazing career in advertising—a field long dominated by white men. She fought for balance in her industry and earned the respect of her peers.

As her career blossomed, she attracted international accounts, prestigious awards and a spot as chairwoman of the Council of Governors for the American Advertising Federation. Her pursuit of painting faded into the background. "In a way her painting went underground. She was building something else," long time friend and fellow artist Maria Archer said. Archer,

who lives outside Philadelphia, met Lavelle in art school. The two have remained close and supported each other ever since. "I think there was some time there when she really didn't get to practice her art. But things were sort of being fertilized. She was nurturing the spirit of her art."

Then, on Oct. 20, 2011, her sister Alveretta died. "Alvie drove everybody nuts, but she was a complete treasure to all of us," Lavelle said. "She was larger than life. She always appreciated that I had the ability to paint." Alveretta's death flipped a switch, and the artist knew that she must paint again. "Something snapped in me, and I knew life was short," she said. In the years that followed, while continuing to build her marketing business, Lavelle feverishly pursued her painting. She sought guidance from the best artists she could find. She traveled to Italy, France, Greece and to her ancestral roots in Ireland to hone her craft. "When the time did come, I think she was bursting at the seams," Archer said. She won awards. She sold her work. She attracted collectors. Her art has been featured in magazines and exhibitions. Lavelle smiles at the mention of a recent show *31 Women*, an exhibit held in the Boston market and cast in the spirit of Peggy Guggenheim's groundbreaking NYC exhibition held in 1943. "Seventy-five years later and female artists have yet to break through," Lavelle quipped.

## PURPOSE

Aside from her business and her art, Lavelle spends much of her days advocating for nonprofit initiatives and helping many get off the ground. In 2019, she served on the vision team for The Recovery Bank, a downtown Scranton center that provides a host of resources for people climbing out of drug and alcohol addiction, including peer support, self improvement programs and career assistance.

For the AAF, she chaired the Legacy of a Lifetime Awards, which honored advertising professionals for their contributions to diversity, creativity, leadership and education. Her new initiative weaves together each of these story lines. Advocacy work meets marketing prowess. Both meet her art, with a portion of proceeds advancing their newfound purpose. "People need help. That's the bottom line," she said. "There's always going to be some place in my soul where I am led to help."

## PALETTE

Color defines her work. She's known for it. People often call it out and ask her where it comes from. As the portrait in front of her starts to take shape, she works dark lines on top of muted tones. She slows to squeeze out a plug of cadmium red onto her palette. On another spot, she mixes a pad of cerulean with cobalt and Prussian blues. Streaks of color electrify the

portrait and bring life to the painting that's taking shape. "I'm excited by vibrant color. When I see color, I see energy," she says. But it wasn't always that way. In her mid-30s, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, or MS. The neurological disease eats away at the protective sheath around nerves, and has unpredictable, sometimes devastating symptoms. In Lavelle's case, for a time it paralyzed one side of her body and partially blinded her. "I lost the ability to see color, specifically red," she said, explaining how reds had turned black to her eyes. "It was very frightening. Red was the first to go."

Amid around-the-clock-care at home, she fell asleep one afternoon and, when she awoke, looked across the lake outside her window. On the other side, a fisherman rowed a boat in a red jacket. "The ability to see that color was restored," she said. "Even through my tears." Since then, vibrant colors have dominated her palette. She's aggressive with them, showing energy from landscapes, figures and portraits that seem otherworldly, yet unwittingly natural.

In her studio, those wild lines on the panel that earlier looked like nothing begin to reveal a likeness. She looks back and forth between her model and the artboard, cocks her head and purses her lips. "You're not there yet," she says, half to her subject, half to the painting. "But you're coming in."







# Painter with a Purpose


## BLACK LIVES MATTER

Lavelle grew up watching the Civil Rights Movement build. She drew on the orations of Martin Luther King, the poetry of Langston Hughes and the music of the Harlem Renaissance. She gets angry when she hears people say that racial divisions will work themselves out in a generation or two. She knows that waiting around hasn't worked so far. "We need to see each other's souls," she said—which is what her Black Lives Matter collection accomplishes.

Sales from her collection support Cardinal Change, an innovative and collaborative startup which

brings lessons of diversity, equality and inclusion to workplaces and universities. Constance Cannon Frazier is the founder. She and Lavelle worked together with the American Advertising Federation—Connie as Chief Operating Officer, Helen as Council of Governors Chair. Both worked to change the complexion of the advertising industry, to pursue more equitable representation among leadership, to include more persons of color and more women. "Beliefs influence behavior, behavior determines culture and culture shapes society," Frazier said. "Helen's art does all that."





# Artist as Advocate

## WOMEN IN RECOVERY

Because she experienced the disease of addiction ravage her own family, Helen Lavelle joined a recovery support network for family and loved ones of addicts 34 years ago. She understands that the illness, while it wrecks anyone who falls prey to it, does a particular kind of damage to women. “The stigma associated with the disease is unparalleled,” she said.

In 2019, she served on a Vision Team that created The Recovery Bank, which connects people in recovery to real help through peer support—yes, helpers who are in recovery themselves link arms with those who are just starting down the road to wholeness—mindfulness, the arts and research-proven strategies for bringing lives back from the brink. Through sales of her art, she supports special programs for women in recovery.





HELEN'S ART WILL HELP  
BRING LESSONS OF  
DIVERSITY, EQUALITY,  
AND INCLUSION TO  
WORKPLACES AND  
UNIVERSITIES...  
WHERE SYSTEMIC  
CHANGE MUST BEGIN.

- Constance Cannon Frazier  
Principal & Founder  
Cardinal Change



## BLACK LIVES MATTER

Deep wounds need more time and care to heal. The Black Lives Matter collection, inspired by change agents who have breathed new life into conversations about equity and inclusion, offers a special kind of salve. A commission from each sale supports Cardinal Change, a startup that begins to alter thinking about race, starting with fresh ideas planted in executive suites and spread across organizations.



ART THAT INSPIRES.  
ART THAT TRANSFORMS.  
ART THAT FUELS  
LIFE CHANGING OPTIONS  
FOR THE ADDICTED.  
SO GRATEFUL.



- Christine E. Kiesinger, Ph.D.  
Founder, CEK Communication



## WOMEN IN RECOVERY

The disease of addiction takes an especially brutal toll on women. More so than men, women experience the worst parts of it—and are more likely to suffer overdose and relapse than men. Their plight is why proceeds from the Women in Recovery collection help fund programs designed specifically for women to help break through the barriers of guilt and shame.



MOVED BY NATURE,  
WITH A CLEAR  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
THE SACRED. WE ARE  
BLESSED BY HER ART  
AND GENEROUS SPIRIT.



- Lala Hull Zeitlyn  
Board Member  
Spring Hills Foundation



## AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENT

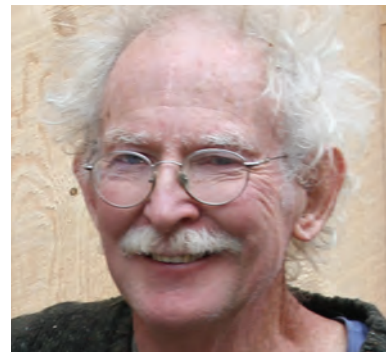
Grassroots groups like the Spring Hills Foundation are leading the way. With the plight of the small family farm at the heart of all they do, they show us what a healthy planet could be like if we used more care in tending to it. Helen Lavelle's Agriculture and Environment collection helps support this charitable organization committed to sustainable agriculture, conservation and education.



HELEN BRINGS TO HER  
PRACTICE A KNOWING THAT  
IS CLOSER TO THE WISDOM  
OF THE HEART THAN THE  
CONSTRUCTS OF THE MIND.



- Timothy Hawkesworth  
Founder  
Pagus Gallery



## ART AND EDUCATION

Artists are seekers—forever yearning to experience all that will influence and inform their work. Helen Lavelle found the right inspiration and instruction from many, but in none more profoundly than in Timothy Hawkesworth. At his workshops, artists confront their own conditions and learn to create from them. Lavelle's Art and Education collection helps fund scholarships through Pagus Foundation so aspiring artists may study with this master.



I INVITED HELEN TO  
SHARE HER EXPERIENCE,  
STRENGTH AND HOPE.  
SO THAT MEDICAL  
STUDENTS COULD SEE  
A PATIENT WHO REFUSES  
TO BE A VICTIM.



- Dr. Michael Kim, D.O.  
Neurologist



## MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

No two cases look exactly the same. Multiple Sclerosis can rob its victims of their mobility, their senses and their financial stability. That's why sales from the Multiple Sclerosis collection help support patients and their families live with this devastating disease on a variety of fronts. By funding financial aid and research programs, patients can find a little extra help specific to their needs.



THANK YOU!

- Helen Lavelle  
Fine Artist,  
Creative with a Cause



## HELEN LAVELLE

An artist and an advocate. A communicator and a collaborator. Devoting her life to chasing the light and capturing spirit. With an attitude of gratitude. Whether it be with oil paint on canvas or with the launch of a multi-media, multi-platform advertising campaign, Helen Lavelle delivers her message with brazen authenticity. And has the awards to show for it.





# Creative with a Cause

## SPRING HILLS FOUNDATION

Hidden in the hills of Northeast Pennsylvania are 400 acres of conserved farmland, Hull's Spring Hills Farm. Helen Lavelle's Painter with a Purpose initiative includes a collection inspired by the beauty of this small family farm. A portion of the proceeds from each sale of her landscapes supports the Spring Hills Foundation. The foundation seeks to preserve the farm and spread its message of responsible, organic farming and sustainability. The place offers exposure to those values and traditions by providing an unplugged escape for students of all ages, as well as artists seeking respite and a place to reset and create.

Renowned Irish artist Timothy Hawkesworth has lead workshops at Spring Hills for many years. The farm is lovingly cared for by four women—Susan, Lala, Lucy and Margaret—

artists, educators, farmers. The sisters inherited the estate from their parents, who were prominent figures in local civics. "Our parents really didn't want us to be raised in the city," Lala said, explaining how, even in the late 1940s and '50s, before those ideas saturated popular culture, they prioritized the outdoors and fresh air. "They wanted us to connect with nature."

Hawkesworth moved to the farm when the pandemic hit. He claims the wooded hills, teeming with both domestic and wild animals, offer creative inspiration he could never even find in Ireland. "This has the raw wildness, a total indifference and force," he said. "You don't need to go to art school. You need a quiet time by the pond. It's right here. It's very accessible."





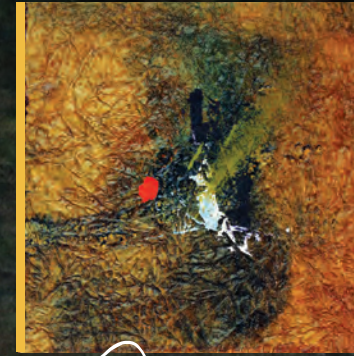
# A Spiritual Practice

## LISTEN AND LEARN

Helen Lavelle's Irish roots have deep meaning to her. Her heritage grounds her. It shapes her worldview and her work ethic. She's traveled to Ireland annually for the past four years to paint under the tutelage of critically acclaimed Irish artist Timothy Hawkesworth, director emeritus at Pagus, a nonprofit that offers workshops and curates exhibits in the Philadelphia market. Pagus also empowers youth in Ghana, Africa, to be change-makers in their own communities.

"There's nothing like being mentored by someone like Tim Hawkesworth," Lavelle said. "The way Tim brings out who you are through his famed 'morning talks' are more about meeting life head on than wielding a brush." Lavelle has created a collection of Irish landscapes which helps fund scholarships through Pagus for aspiring artists to study under him. "I don't care if you're working with Tim on the moon. Every artist needs to be exposed to this guy," she said.





# Healing through the Arts

## MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

For two decades, Helen Lavelle mostly hid her battle with multiple sclerosis, even though at times it robbed her of her mobility and sight. “I don’t talk about it a lot, but I believe it has fueled my art from the beginning,” she said. “I’ve never allowed myself to become a victim to it, I just didn’t.”

To see her move about her studio, to engage with her community, to soak into the places that she loves, you’d never guess she was once so afflicted. While the mysterious, incurable disease can be devastating as it

shreds the protective coating around nerves—including those in the brain and spinal cord—many people learn to live above it. Lavelle is one of them.

The medical causes she supports through charitable sales will likely spread far and wide. To start, she’s prioritizing MS education, financial aid and caretaker support. “Everybody’s disease is different. Everybody handles the disease differently,” she said. “I know that there are people who need to get help. I know I did.”





## ARTIST STATEMENT

“Treasuring the spirit. Celebrating the soul. Co-creating the art. As an artist, I feel I have a responsibility to look beyond the obvious. Intense observation and a sacred engagement with the subject, the materials and the universal energy is my process. Nothing gives me greater joy than bringing forth a piece of art that I know I did not create on my own.”

—Helen Lavelle *LAVELLE*





Helen Lavelle's Painter with a Purpose initiative supports important causes that have deep, personal meaning to her in order to change the world for the better.

These causes include nonprofit groups and organizations that advance positive outcomes in addiction recovery, conservation, creativity, wellness, diversity and inclusion.

Visit **[helenlavelleartist.com](https://helenlavelleartist.com)** to discover more and to purchase from the collections.

**LAVELLE**  
FINE ARTIST



