

# 'Strong art involves struggle'

*Lockdown for artist Lydia Johnston prods her to take risks*

**L**YDIA JOHNSTON is always exploring more – and deeper.

Getting a new lease on life is the effect Lydia Johnston's art process has on me. After a visit to her Hondo Mesa studio last June, I walked away excited by the prospect of looking at my day-

**GALLERY GLIDER**  
By Virginia Clark

to-day life as a canvas – a specific, creative expression of whatever is flowing within me in

any given moment.

Johnston is a self-taught artist who moved to Taos in 2015 from a 30-year hiatus in Vermont. Taos light and wide-open skies hooked her immediately, she says, and she is still as jazzed by it now as when she first arrived.

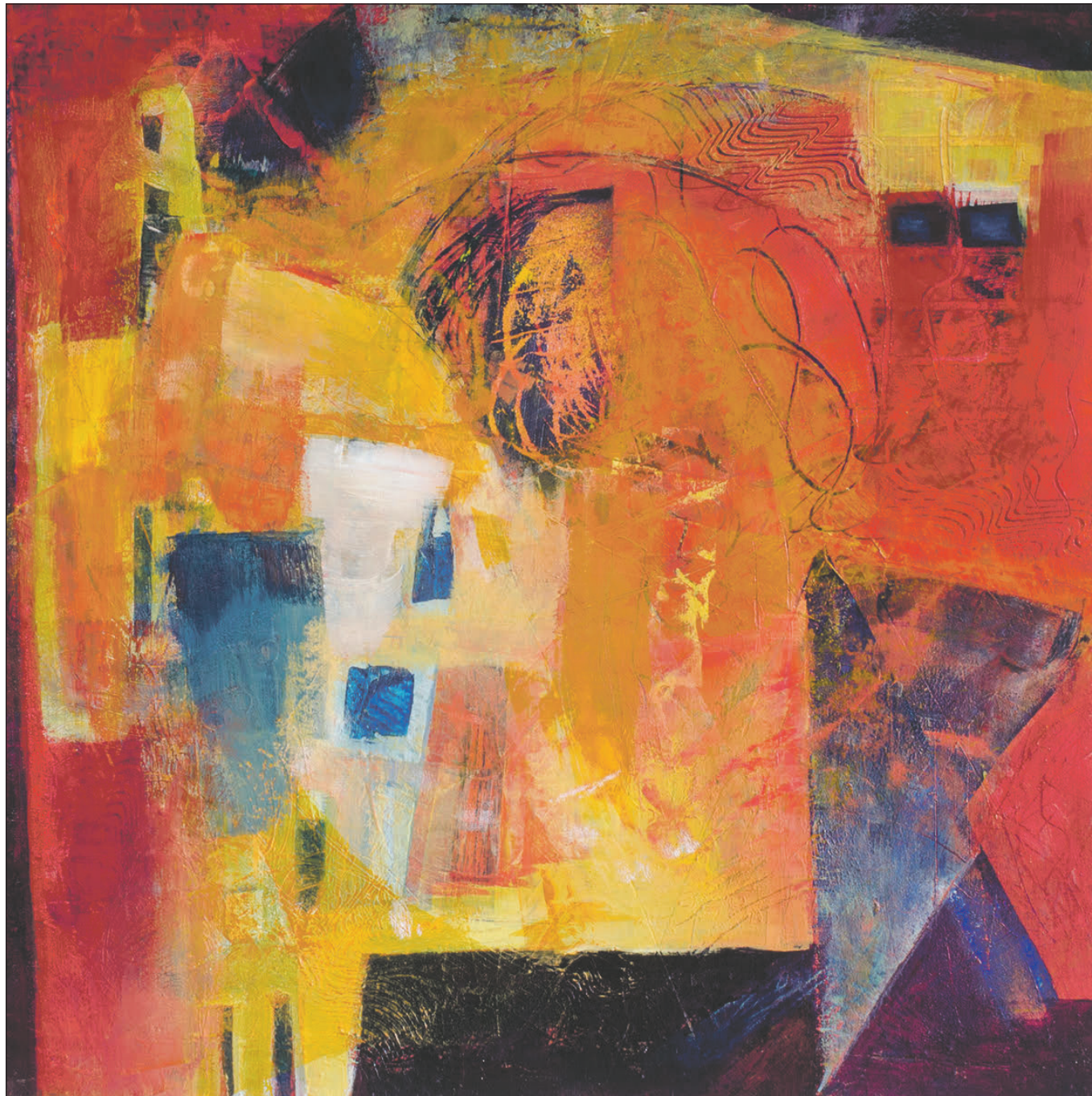
She is represented in Taos by Paseo Norte Gallery, a virtual gallery since the pandemic forced closure of the physical location, and can be seen at [paseonortegallery.com](http://paseonortegallery.com) and Facebook.

In the '90s Johnston did collaged textiles and art quilts – she hand-dyed all her fabrics, noting she always wants visual texture, mostly looking for “control over color;” finally moving into oils in 2006. She works in “groupings” these days, five to six or more differently sized canvases, all depending where she's at artistically at any given moment, which she expands upon in our interview here.

**How did the lockdown affect you – depression or the opposite, more jazzed by the extra time?**

Honestly, not having to go into town and deal with external things was great. I'm much more jazzed up and excited by what I'm working on now. It's created the perfect opportunity for me to experiment and explore new ideas.

My studio is at my house, so I had more time to focus on my art. Of course, I'm very concerned about this pandemic and very saddened to not be able to travel to see my family, but it has created a perfect opportunity for



**'Infinity', 12-by-12-inch mixed-media on board**

me to spend more time painting.

**How did you hear about the Art2Life Creative Visionary Program and how has it helped you during this part of life in the pandemic?**

I heard about the Creative Visionary Program from various artists I admire and follow on Instagram. I'm a self-taught artist and have always felt this

gives me the freedom to follow my intuition – my art comes from deep within me without being influenced by teachers. But CVP seemed different.

In early February I was recovering from some minor surgery and so I decided to check out the free workshop to introduce CVP. The timing was perfect. This program sounded like just the

thing to help me develop my art further and strengthen my voice. It was online so could be done from my home and includes a community of artists from all over the world. So I took the plunge and enrolled – this was right before the pandemic began.

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