

From the Studio:  
Mark Valenti



Over the coming weeks, we will be providing inside views into how our artists continue their practices to create new works of art, while sharing perspectives of their current, everyday lives, but for this announcement we are delighted to highlight DC Moore Gallery's Mark Valenti. Valenti has been a member of our gallery staff since 2004, and works side by side with our artists organizing the presentations of their exhibitions, handling their work with care, and providing crucial support to the entire team.

We are excited to welcome your thoughts about these features, as this initiative will bring together our friends, families and colleagues. Please follow us at our gallery's [Instagram](#) or [email](#) us with questions or comments.

**From Mark Valenti:**

I have a home studio here in Brooklyn, and I work from memory, so I've been able to continue painting throughout this crisis. Although it's hard to concentrate and see normal activities as meaningful, I'm doing my best to stay engaged and paint as often as I can, almost every day.

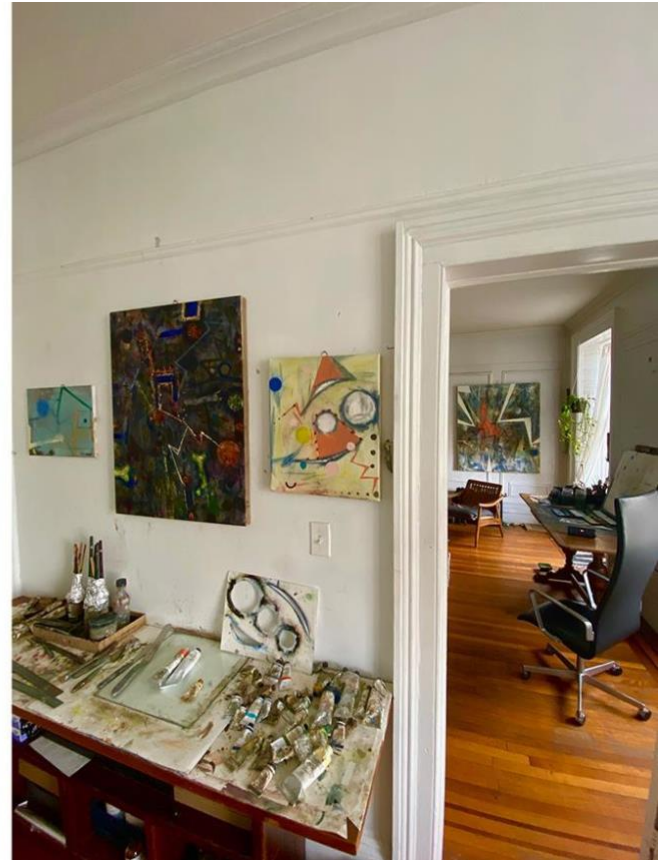


Mark Valenti's oil painting studio.

My perfect studio day starts around 4 PM, working continuously with no distractions for three or four

hours. I don't usually listen to music. My street is quiet, and I end up not really hearing it anyway. Getting into the right state, both mentally and emotionally, can take most of the day. I find having a regular sleeping and eating schedule is essential.

My oil painting studio is tiny, but it has great ventilation and soft northern light. I do have another adjacent, larger room that I use to make work on paper and contemplate dried oil paintings.



Left: Mark Valenti's cat Lea. Right: Mark Valenti's studio.



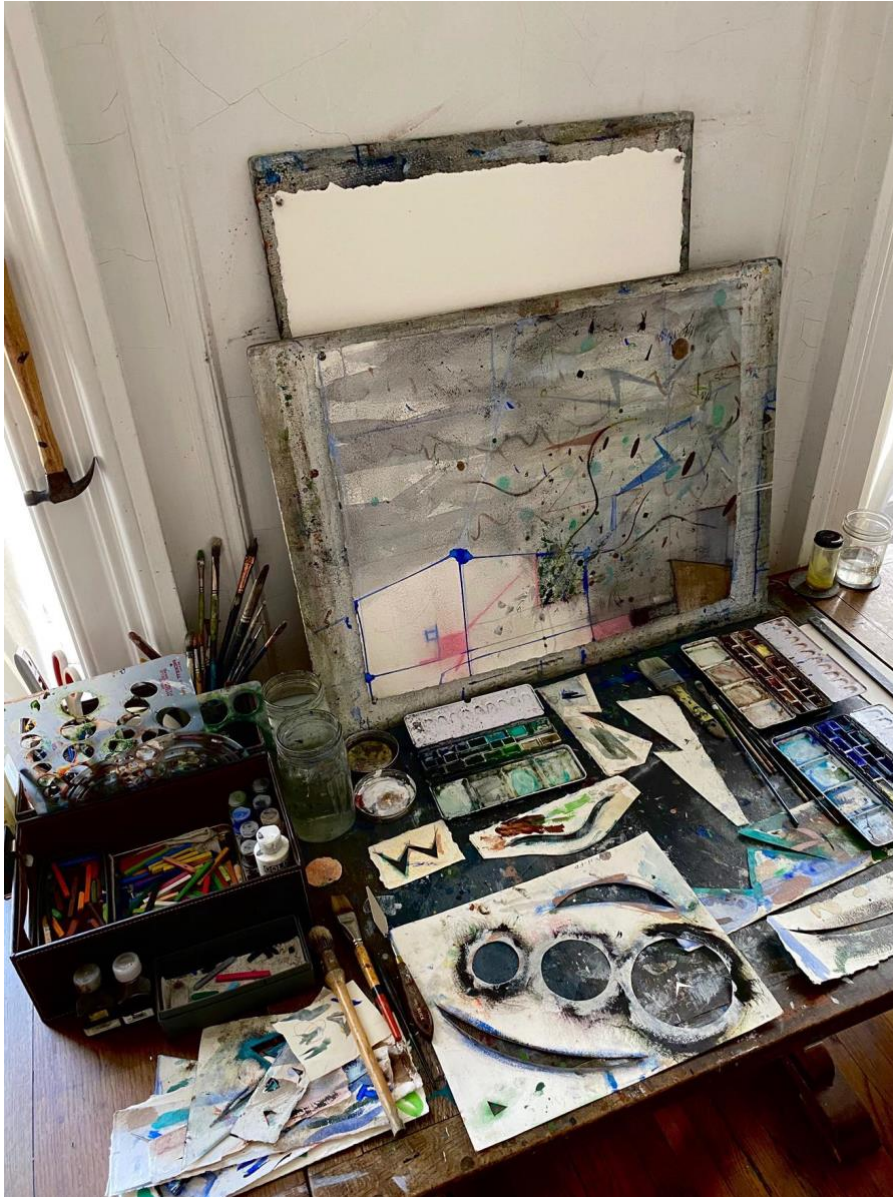
Splash page from *Machine Man* #3 (1978)  
Art and story by Jack Kirby for Marvel.

I learned to draw by tracing Marvel comic books when I was young, using carbon paper and a dried-up ballpoint pen on unlined paper.

Inside the comic book cover was usually a full-page drawing with minimal text called the Splash Page, a condensed movie poster for the story to follow, usually full of angular geometry and violent action, lurid, blunt, and bold.

I prefer a textured working support, the heaviest watercolor paper, and a tight, rough weave linen for oils. I drag, scrape, and brush very stiff, buttery oil paint across the primed linen. I like a really dry, honest surface.

I often use homemade paper stencils to add crispness and structure to the image. I'm not careful with them, so they move and smear. I embrace incidents and accidents. I like to paint dots and dashes, sparks, sputters, wiggles, and waves.



Mark Valenti's drafting table.

I have many paintings and works on paper wandering the woods trying to find their way. Here are four that made it out.



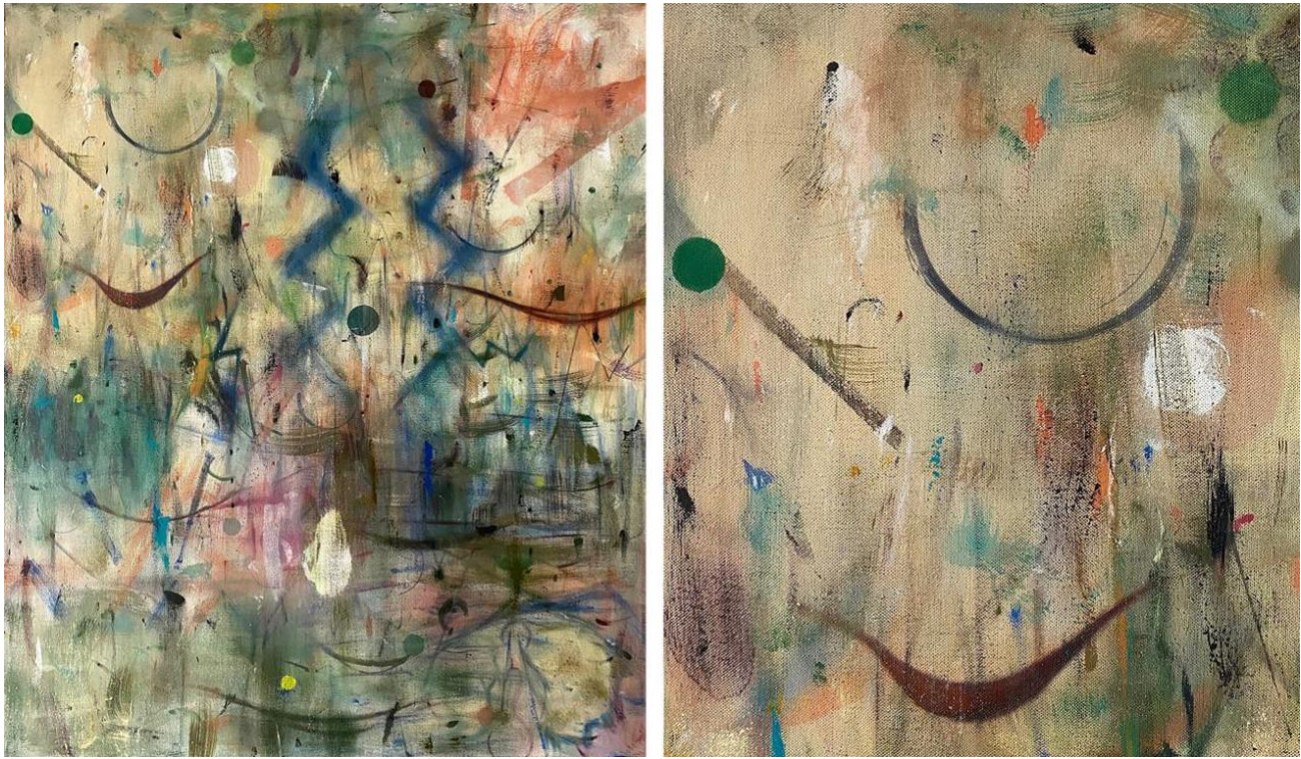
*Tinkertoy*, 2017-2020. Oil on linen, 24 x 18 inches.

*Tinkertoy* is based on the memory of one of my favorite childhood toys, a wooden rod and wheel construction toy. I would assemble the pieces into an elaborate web that gave the effect of a kinetic burst. The painting is about the size of what I could build with the Tinkertoy set before it started to collapse under its own weight. Being homebound, I think we've all rediscovered some appreciation for simple pleasures like board games, wordplay, or daydreaming.



*The Sneeze*, 2020. Watercolor, conté crayon, and acrylic on paper, 21 x 26 inches.

This memory was only a few days old when I made *The Sneeze* in mid-March. It's about the first time you hear a sneeze, and it's more than just a regular sneeze - it's a warning, and potentially dangerous. I considered the painting a kind of Public Service Announcement. Like, some people just *really* need to see this threat made visible, in a commonsense way, not the alien-looking picture from a microscope.



Left: *Three Mile Island*, 2019. Oil on linen, 54 x 46 inches. Right: Detail of *Three Mile Island*.

*Three Mile Island* references the partial meltdown of a nuclear reactor on March 28, 1979, in central Pennsylvania, a few hours east of where I grew up. Needless to say, it was an enormous story at the time, but seems almost quaint by today's standards. This painting is all about the layers and waves of that event: the fear and generalized anxiety, the potential spread of poison radiation bit by bit, hanging on the reporter's every word, information leaking out drip by drip, that Geiger counter sound. I made it using mostly drybrush, homemade stencils, and palette knife on very rough, toothy linen.



*Free Radicals*, 2020. Watercolor, conté crayon, and acrylic on paper, 22 x 30 inches.

*Free Radicals* is a combination of 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, and COVID-19. Having been in New York, for me there is a stream of feeling that runs through all three disasters. Seeing some of these horrors fixed and frozen on the page has been a great relief for me. And, I think, has even helped me sleep through the night. Feelings safely fixed in memory are often good companions.

I don't always find pleasure in painting, but there is a sense of purpose, something I can actually point to, and touch! Something all consuming, at least for those few hours, so that is a big plus. My satisfaction level is higher when I don't rush them. I like to take my time and enjoy every stage of the process. Occasionally, I finish a painting in a few days, but mostly I work on them for months or years until they reveal their subject to me. Then I complete them quickly, in a flash of inspiration and confidence.



Mark Valenti in studio.





*Latchkey Kid* (work in progress), 2020. Oil on linen, 18 x 15 inches.

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