



Marla Beth Enowitz of Marla Beth Designs: The Power of Flexibility; How I Was Able To Pivot To A New Exciting Opportunity Because Of The Pandemic



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Bend, don't break. This year taught us all that things happen outside of our control. Whether it's logistical challenges or a tight deadline, we need to be able to find solutions and try not to get weighed down by challenges.

The COVID19 pandemic has disrupted all of our lives. But sometimes disruptions can be times of opportunity. Many people's livelihoods have been hurt by the pandemic. But some saw this as an opportune time to take their lives in a new direction.

As a part of this series called "How I Was Able To Pivot To A New Exciting Opportunity Because Of The Pandemic," I had the pleasure of interviewing Marla Beth Enowitz.

Taking a break from home schooling madness, Marla Beth Enowitz decided to turn her love of painting from hobby to business once the pandemic hit, founding Marla Beth Designs. Through her glittery works, this mom turned entrepreneur sought to find the rainbow lining of quarantine by bringing a little sparkle into homes and businesses throughout the New York metropolitan area. Based in Westchester County, New York, Marla is committed to making art accessible to all, offering everything from mini original works to large-scale custom pieces, and spreading optimism and positivity with her colorful paintings.

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we start, our readers would love to "get to know you" a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your childhood backstory?

I grew up in the suburbs outside of New York City in Westchester County, New York. My childhood was filled with culture and a love of the arts, which definitely influenced my creative side. My parents would often take me to museums and Broadway shows, fostering my appreciation for the arts at a very young age. It was as a child I discovered that my art could have such a positive impact on people, often being told my "happy art" made people smile.

Can you please give us your favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

Bob Ross once said, “If it makes you happy, then put it in your world.” I grew up watching him on television and have tried to mimic his happy little landscaped world. Bob’s world was his canvas, but everyone has a metaphorical “canvas” — their life. Ask yourself what makes you happy... and go for it!

Is there a particular book, podcast, or film that made a significant impact on you? Can you share a story or explain why it resonated with you so much?

I have always been in awe of the highly-celebrated (but often misunderstood) Jackson Pollock. Known as the world’s most influential abstract expressionist painter, the movie “Pollock” really spoke to me. Ed Harris’ portrayal of an artist’s angst in being true to one’s self and true to one’s art was so spot on. Artists often deal with significant self-doubt as their feelings and personality is put right into their work and on display for the public to ultimately judge. The movie highlighted the dark side of one’s creativity and was an interesting contrast to the glitz and glamour often associated with being a celebrity artist.

Let’s now shift to the main part of our discussion. Can you tell our readers about your career experience before the Pandemic began?

I’m a stay-at-home mom and my hobby turned into a business once the pandemic hit. I went back to my painting with a renewed need to feel at peace and productive again. (I discovered very quickly I’m a terrible at-home teacher and that my kids were better off asking ‘Alexa’ for homework help.)

When I began posting my paintings on social media, I was met with such an overwhelmingly positive response. That led me to start working on commissions for family and friends bringing bright, sparkly artwork in their home. It made them smile and made the four walls they were suddenly stuck in feel less gloomy.

What did you do to pivot as a result of the Pandemic?

I took what many of us consider to be one of the most difficult times we're going through and sought to find the silver (or rainbow, as I like to think of it) lining of being quarantined. I reinvented myself and refocused on my art. I wanted to be something positive for my family. It was important for me to show them something real and tangible, constructive and encouraging, that would help reassure them that everything will be okay.

Can you tell us about the specific “Aha moment” that gave you the idea to start this new path?

My “Aha” moment arrived during a virtual class my son was taking early on in the pandemic. We were having all kinds of Internet issues and he was essentially missing the only 45 minutes of education that was offered to him that day. Outwardly I was calm, but silently in my head I was losing it. How could this be happening? How would my son learn? We were at the mercy of our Internet provider. It was in that moment, still in my pajamas on a Tuesday afternoon, I knew this wasn't good. Not for my family or for me. Right then and there, is where the idea for Marla Beth Designs began.

How are things going with this new initiative?

Things are going really well...beyond my expectations. I like to think that the concept of “Happy Art” is catching on. The feedback from my clients — both from homes to businesses — has been incredible. Marla Beth Designs was recently featured at Greenwich Bank and debuted its first pop-up shop at The Westchester, an upscale mall in Westchester County.

Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

My art is very much inspired by the imaginative minds of children. And my 11-year old son and his ability to pivot, adapt, and demonstrate absolute resilience has been a huge part of helping me get to where I am today. Like so many children, he faced all these life changes when the pandemic hit, from learning from home, to keeping up with his friends through technology, and he did it so seamlessly. He really inspired me and showed me that I was capable of doing the same. I wanted him to see that I can be as brave as him.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you started in this new direction?

The summer of 2020 called for parents to get creative in how we kept our children occupied and productive. With camps and extracurricular activities cancelled, I decided to start a COVID-friendly art class for some of my neighbors' children. Typically, I'd wear a plastic face shield and we'd all keep our six feet of distance (the plastic face shield also proved to be the ideal covering for our 'splatter paint' parties).

On one occasion, rather than wearing the face shield, I was in my rainbow-colored cotton mask. One of my “mini artists” (as I call them) said to me, “Next time, can you please wear the shield so we can see your smile?” At first, I just took it as a very sweet compliment, but then realized the deeper meaning. The pandemic has taken away so much of the nurturing that teachers, therapists, and friends give our children. There are no longer hugs and high fives or reassuring taps on the back. It dawned on me how much my smile meant to these kids and they didn’t want that taken away also. It’s something that I will never forget.

What are your “5 things I wish someone told me before I started leading my organization” and why. Please share a story or example for each.

I consider myself very lucky because what I do isn’t a job, it’s my passion. So when I set out to turn my hobby into a business, I made a promise to myself to never lose sight of my love of art and creating. I have held onto that principle — through the ups and downs of being a mompreneur. Without a doubt, this has been an incredible ride so far, but there are a few lessons I have learned along the way:

- You can’t be an island. As a mom with competing priorities, I quickly realized that I needed help. It takes a village. For me to bring my business to the next level, I started tapping into my networks and looking for support from outside my immediate industry.
- Bend, don’t break. This year taught us all that things happen outside of our control. Whether it’s logistical challenges or a tight deadline, we need to be able to find solutions and try not to get weighed down by challenges.

- Starting a business is stressful. Stay true to yourself, your mission, and find a mentor. Having someone who has been in the same place as you — acting as your confidante and sounding board — will help minimize stress.
- Build a small, knowledgeable group of trusted advisors. Take a step back, evaluate who you know, and assess who has the skills you need for where you are in your current businesses journey. That circle of trusted advisors may evolve as your business grows. Remember, teamwork makes the dream work!
- There are no days off. It's hard work, incredibly hard work realizing your dream. You're always on, thinking, planning for how you can be better, improve, and meet client deadlines. But as Mark Twain said, "Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life."

So many of us have become anxious from the dramatic jolts of the news cycle. Can you share the strategies that you have used to optimize your mental wellness during this stressful period?

Color therapy! Bringing bright, whimsical, and colorful paintings to life uplifted my mood and it's exactly what I wanted to do for those around me as well. When things shut down in March, I felt very helpless, especially as a parent. All of us were figuring out how to cope on the fly and I realized my mechanism was to sort out my feelings through painting. It was a chance for me to refocus my mind to something positive and it just so happened that I got the added bonus of bringing other people happiness too.

You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be?

#HappyArt. Let's spread happiness and positivity, not COVID.

Is there a person in the world whom you would love to have lunch with, and why? Maybe we can tag them and see what happens!

Damien Hirst. If you're not familiar with his work, start with "Cherry Blossoms." He inspired my "Dot" paintings, including a recent mural I created for The Westchester.

How can our readers follow you online?

Readers can see my work at www.marlabethdesigns.com and follow me on Instagram (@[marlabeth_designs](https://www.instagram.com/marlabeth_designs)) for the latest news and updates. My Instagram feed is like a daily log for everything I have going on as an artist. If you'd like to get to know me and my work, that's the place!

Thank you so much for sharing these important insights. We wish you continued success and good health!

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A *bout The Interviewer: Karina Michel Feld is the Owner and Executive Producer of Tallulah Films. Karina has 20+ years of experience in TV, film, and print and is a respected member of The Producers Guild of America. The mission of Tallulah Films is to bring together directors, entrepreneurs, film investors, and screenwriters to produce award-winning TV and film projects. Tallulah Films continues to be drawn towards films that are meaningful, influential, and uplifting. Karina is also Co-Owner and CFO of Fresh Patch LLC (as seen on ABC's "Shark Tank").*