

IN HER SHOES

## ***Flying Colors***

Inspired by a childhood spent in Bogotá, Colombia, and her current hometown of Roanoke, Virginia, artist Maria Osorio Driscoll fills her paintings and collages with a rainbow of hues

BY BETSY CRIBB



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### **Studio Pup**

Maria and her German short-haired pointer, Bo

HAIR, MAKEUP, AND WARDROBE STYLING: CANDACE COREY/ZEN OHIA



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**ARIA OSORIO DRISCOLL** was supposed to spend just one summer in Roanoke, Virginia, helping her aunt with her newborn baby. “The first week, I met a boy and found my future husband,” says the Bogotá, Colombia, native with a laugh. She transferred to Hollins University to finish her fine art degree and has called Roanoke home ever since. “One summer turned into 22 years,” she says.

For the better part of over two decades, Maria has been sharing her vibrant Colombian style with the South through her artwork (@mariaosori-driscoll). “My aunt and all her friends were having babies, and they knew I painted, so they started hiring me to do their nurseries,” she says. “I pretty

### WHERE I FIND INSPIRATION

“Colombia—the natural beauty is incredible and colorful. There’s a lot of value in craftsmanship; I grew up going to places with different ethnic communities because I loved seeing and collecting their textiles. My dad grows orchids, so I did a collection last fall for Well + Wonder [an online art gallery] inspired by them. He is like Mr. Miyagi from *The Karate Kid*: He retired from being a dentist and now plays with his orchids all day. He hangs them under plantain trees, and it’s fun. My mom has always had art and flowers in our house, too, so I was raised around a lot of color and blooms.”

### WHY I LOVE TAKING COMMISSIONS

“I know a lot of artists don’t do commissions, but I actually enjoy working on them because there’s always a story behind them...I get emails from husbands who want to do something special for their wives, like [paintings of their] wedding bouquets or places where they met or got engaged. A lady with breast cancer bought a big painting to celebrate a milestone of finishing treatment. I love hearing those stories; those relationships are really important to me.”

### HOW TO START COLLECTING ART

“I think if you love it, get it. When I first began my collection, I could only afford a 6-inch by 6-inch piece...Now, I have a lot of little paintings all over my house. I move them around, and they make me so happy. I feel like a lot of artists are very flexible. For me, if you have something in mind that you want



**Pattern Play**  
Maria with her cheery artwork and fabrics

to work toward or are saving for, we can make it happen. With social media, it’s so nice that you can connect with artists directly and get to know more about them.”

### LOCAL SPOTS FOR SPRING ADVENTURES

“The Roanoke River Greenway is a walking path along the water that’s really beautiful. My favorite place to hike is McAfee Knob on the Appalachian Trail. We’ve done it at sunrise a couple times, and it’s truly spectacular to get up there in the dark and then see everything [once the sun comes up]! I like exploring anywhere around the James River or Carvins Cove Reservoir too; there’s a ton of hiking trails and beautiful places to see. Our family also has a farm in Fincastle, Virginia, and that’s one of the places I enjoy going most.”

### A TRADITION COLOMBIA AND THE SOUTH SHARE

“Gathering around the table is important—so are the recipes that you pass along to people you love. In my house, there’s always room for someone else at the table. We’ll have big meals