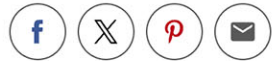


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Grandmother Spends 2 Weeks Painting Portrait of Her Granddaughter. Then Her 'Act of Love' Goes Viral (Exclusive)

"When I'm gone she'll always know the way I saw her"

By **Abigail Adams** | Published on October 25, 2024 04:15AM EDT



2 COMMENTS



Alice Williams at her home in France, where she and her granddaughter create videos for TikTok. PHOTO: FOSTER MANN

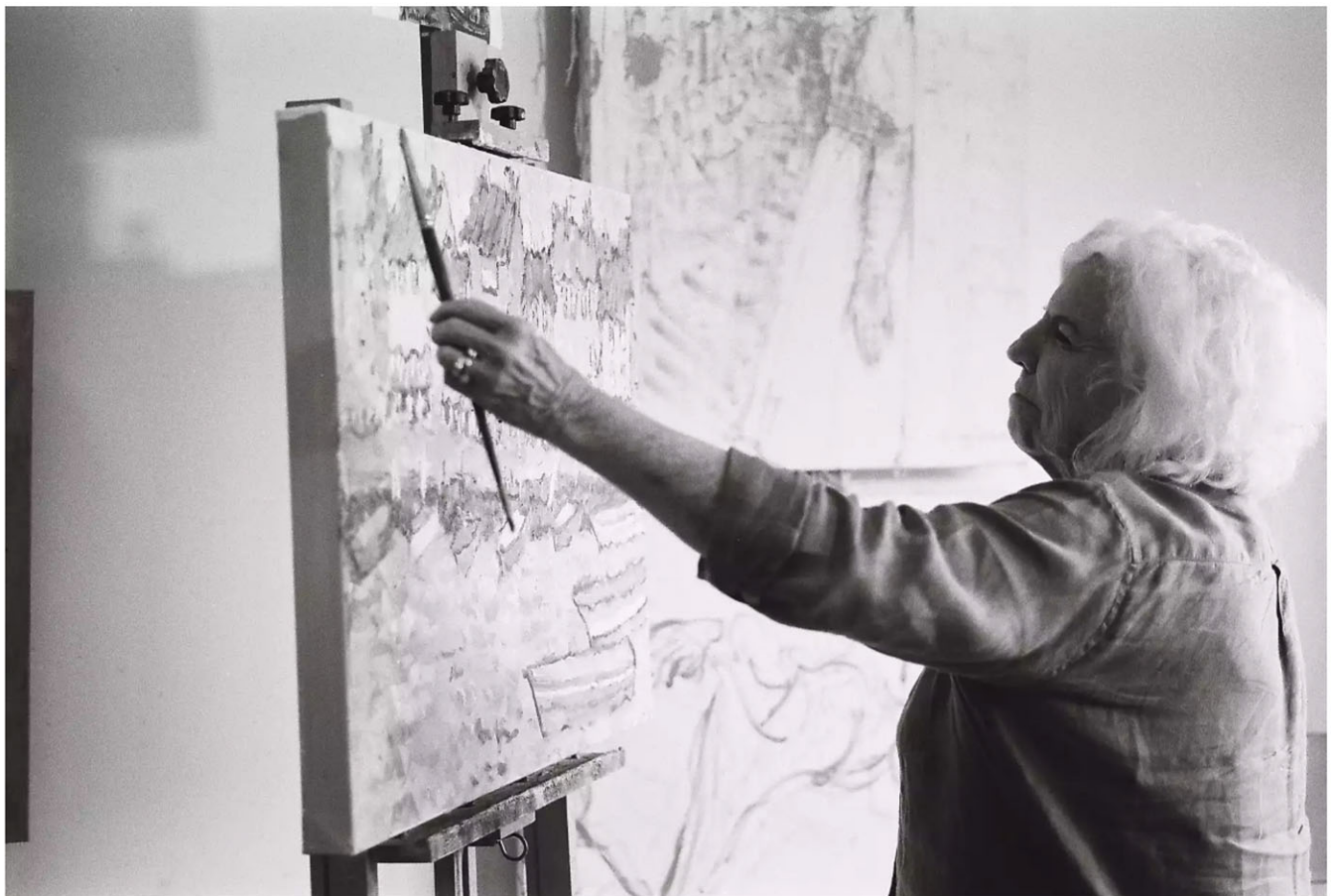
In the spring, Josephine "Foster" Mann approached her grandmother Alice Williams with a special request: Would Williams, a noted post-impressionist painter, make a portrait of her, too?

Mann had already purchased a \$200 dress for it (a navy blue outfit with "big" polka-dots, Williams says) and wanted three special pieces featured: her mother's elephant sculpture, her great-grandmother's watch and Williams' art book.

"I knew I wanted symbols of the women who came before me and who built me," Mann tells PEOPLE. The 23-year-old also thought it would be interesting to have her grandmother "capture" her at such a pivotal age.

Of course Williams, 80, said yes and documented part of the process on her popular TikTok, writing [in one viral video in August](#) that she wanted to paint her granddaughter "so that when I'm gone she'll always know the way I saw her."

(And, Williams added in a caption, "she can tell her grandkids about me.")



Alice Williams, an artist for more than 60 years, works on a painting at her home in the south of France.
PHOTO: FOSTER MANN

Williams says that she wanted to do something special for her granddaughter, despite how difficult portraits can be. She spent two weeks working on the portrait, painting in three-hour intervals.

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She has long had a special relationship with Mann, a self-described "digital nomad" who is building her own social media and Marketing Services Platform. In fact, Williams is Mann's first client.



Alice Williams mixes colors as she paints at her home in the south of France. PHOTOGRAPH BY FOSTER MANN

Starting early this year, Mann has helped Williams build an even larger audience through TikTok. As [alicewilliams.artist](https://www.tiktok.com/@alicewilliams.artist) Williams has more than 106,000 followers as she shares wholesome slices of her life and painting career from the cozy little village of Ansouis in the South of France, where she and her husband, Don, settled 12 years ago.

Williams tells PEOPLE she was initially skeptical of TikTok, but as she and her granddaughter have harnessed the platform, “It makes me appreciate my life more,” she says.

Williams grew up surrounded by art. Her mother, Josephine, was a pianist, and she quickly became fond “of all things impressionistic” — a more subjective style of art that often renders daily life in vivid colors and less literal textures: how things feel and not how they look.

Born in Boston, Williams was raised in the South, where she learned to be a portrait painter — a career that now stretches 60 years.

But the craft proved to be difficult. Williams spent 12 years as a professional portrait painter, which she said brought in a “fabulous” income, but eventually decided she was not truly happy.

“I was painting for other people ... and not for myself,” she says.

No more: Williams, who is also a master gardener, sells her work online and through a network of galleries.



Alice Williams paints a portrait of her granddaughter Josephine "Foster" Mann at her home in the south of France. PHOTO: FOSTER MANN

She and Mann are excited to see what they can accomplish together on TikTok, too. Mann is even planning to move to France in January.

"It's just a fun job with family," says Mann, who wants to be "close to" her grandparents. "So yeah, why not? We're trying it."

She is eager to share her grandmother's legacy with the world. Creating content with Williams, she adds, has been a "fun" way for the two to bond.



Alice Williams laughs with her husband while she paints at their home in the south of France. PHOTO: FOSTER MANN

Meanwhile, Williams tells PEOPLE she simply hopes her videos help pass on her passion for art. Her ultimate goal is to make her followers happy while enjoying having fun with her granddaughter.

"I don't think of my life as unique or special, but evidently to other people it is," she says. "And I am just so thankful that we chose this path."