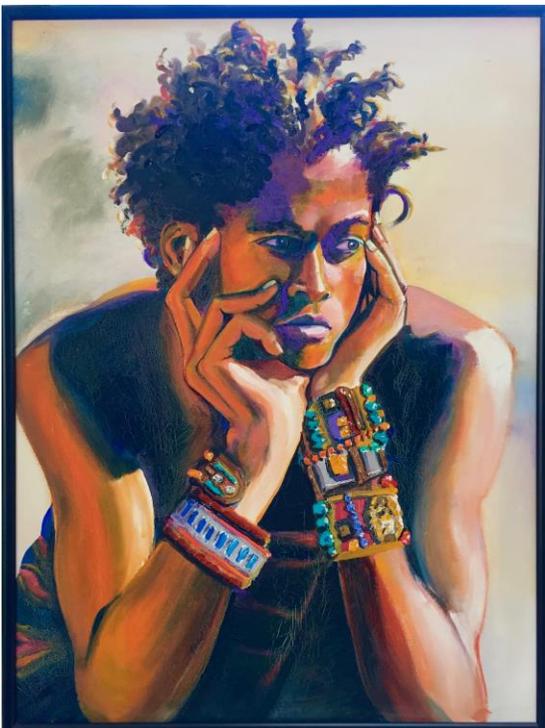


For me, the act of making art is a collaboration of many parts of my “being”. While I may begin with a concept, an idea that I want to develop, the process of creation takes on almost a “life of its own”. It calls on senses and intelligence beyond just my brain. Even after I add the final touches on my piece of art, the work continues to expand to fit the creativity and sensitivities of the viewer of this piece of art. It has potential, dynamism, a range of comprehension well beyond me, the artist.

Awhile back I took my first art class. Our teacher told us to pick a picture we would like do a painting of. The next class we were to copy the picture as a water color sketch in preparation of our future oil painting. This is the watercolor sketch of a white woman in a wicker chair:



My teacher approved the sketch with minor suggestions and told me to come to our next class with a canvass, oil paints, brushes, etc. and we would learn to work in oil paints. He alerted all 4 of us that oil painting is a more challenging, very different experience than watercolor and therefore, might take longer. The next class we began the “magic” of applying oil to canvas using many techniques- strokes, brushes, layers, mixes, etc. all at the same time, over time. I immediately got “LOST” in another place and have no idea, to this day, what happened. But my teacher tapped me on the shoulder 2 hours into the class and asked, “Rachel, What happened?”. I gazed at the canvas and saw something different from a white woman in a wicker chair sketch. I simply said, “I have no idea.” This is an image of my piece framed:



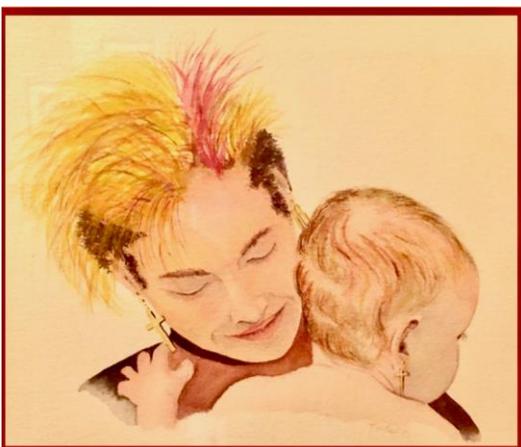
I didn't think to have it framed for 3 years. I was going through one of the most difficult times of my life, and I was way over my head in monumental life changing decisions and needed to abandon my art and focus on building a whole new life. I had the painting framed when I was moved into my office, as the mental health therapist in an Alternative High School for challenged kids in Sussex County. I worked in Individual Counseling with those with a mental health diagnosis and with all students in Group Counseling every week. My students were very diverse in every way you can imagine. BUT.... when each person walked into my office to see me- child, parent, teacher, probation officer, etc.- they first looked at my painting and felt they were safe with me. There are no words to explain the feelings behind why and how each person was impacted by my painting but we all felt the shift to common ground, acceptance, empathy and for me.... courage. My painting was "a Bridge" that "transcended the weather and became the sky."

This is my last oil painting from the same period of time.... see any similarities and/or differences?



Art can be transformational- an escape, an adventure, and a discovery, an education, a fascinating experience or something hanging on the wall that you never take the time to even look upon.

Here's a watercolor of Jesus, before things got all crazy



Madonna and Child painted in watercolor

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