

Artist celebrates women of valor

Lauren Mikalov

For most of her life, Natasha Rabin had been a jet-setting, media marketing person for the film industry, connected with such hits as *Dirty Dancing*, *The Natural*, *Glory*, and many more.

After her mother passed away, Rabin, who had not taken off two weeks in ten consecutive years, went to Japan to study, to recuperate and as a way to “absorb everything that had happened”. When she stumbled upon a watercolor shop in Kyoto, she started painting for the first time in many years, to make a thoughtful gift for her teachers. She never dreamed that the first painting would change her life and allow her find her true calling.

Today, one could say she has been making up for lost time.

“I have been painting for seven years and I do not want to stop what I am doing,” said Rabin, who’s degree is in psychology but has since studied art in Italy and in New York City. “I am feeling very much that this is my life’s purpose.

“My passion for art was always there but I hadn’t allowed it to come out,” said Rabin, who also served as CEO of an educational program for children to help save endangered species and the planet. “In college, I studied art for one year and it felt self-indulgent at the time. I said, ‘with all of the things that are going on in this world, why am I playing with colors?’”

Rabin’s soulful, sensitive works range from flowers to portraits. Her latest series is *Celebrating Women*, an array of 50 portraits ranging from such international greats as Anne Frank and Golda Meir, to personal greats such as her own grandmother. The show will run in the New City Library from Marcy 5-April 5, during regular library hours, in honor of International Women’s Month.

“I felt it was very important for me to take women who’s accomplishments I really admired, and family members who really touched me, and share them with other women.”

One of the most important paintings in the show is the one of Golda Meir as a young girl, she said. Rabin knew she wanted to paint Meir for the series, but became frustrated since initially she could not find the right photographic image of her. She combed the libraries throughout Rockland County to find the right photo of the great prime minister of Israel, but every book had photos of her with crowds of people, or looking off camera. “She was in many ways, very humble,” Rabin noted.

After weeks of no success, even combing government agencies and Google images, Rabin finally found the photo she had been seeking when she decided to check the library once again on a rainy Friday afternoon “on the way home from yoga class.” It was perfect. The black and white photograph, showed a solemn, large-eyed child holding a flower in a flowerpot. Rabin’s mixed media painting changed the flower to a Sabra, the official fruit of Israel, in her hands.



Natasha Rabin



Artist Natasha Rabin's rendering of Golda Meir as a child will be on exhibit at the New City Public Library.

“Even though she is a child in the photo, I could see the strength of who she became,” she said. Rabin said she had the opportunity to meet Meir when she was in her 20’s, but because of a work commitment she had to miss it.

Rabin grew up in Queens, and spent most of her life in Manhattan. She started coming up to Rockland County when she took lessons from an artist in Old Tappan.

Now settled in Nyack, Rabin is working on getting her name out there. And besides painting, Rabin also teaches art to children and adults, doing her best to inspire. “I so much want to give back to young people,” she said. “When (adults) say ‘I can’t draw a straight line’ I ask if they drew and painted as a child. It’s ‘yes’ and I say, ‘It’s still there.’”

Once, she said, a child had asked Rabin to draw a waterfall, so she could learn how. “I said, ‘close your eyes. Can you see the waterfall? Now draw it.’ Her painting was so amazingly beautiful and very fresh. I think it made her feel so much better than if I had showed her.”

Rabin is one of those rare individuals who are able to practice painting full-time, without earning wages as a waitress or another exhausting day job.

“I’m very blessed,” she said. “The studio is in my house and while living is still expensive in Rockland County, I was very lucky since for 25 years I worked very hard and was able to accumulate money.”

It wasn’t until her mother fought an 11-month battle with a brain tumor that Rabin started to slow down and really take heed of what was important in life.

“The minute I heard what was wrong, my body started shivering,” she said. “My inner voice told me that the most important thing in the world at the time was to be with my mother every day.”

Her mother’s illness also opened her up to the world of hospice, and she has since become involved with United Hospice of Rockland. Rabin’s most recent accomplishment was organizing a butterfly art show and auction, which helped raise funds for the non-profit organization.

“We had hospice on the last three days, for my mother. I was astounded and touched by the work hospice did. And when she died, the hospice people said that they had never seen a cancer patient die with a smile on her face. They said, ‘she must have been very loved.’”

Today, Rabin said, besides volunteering for UHR, “I am committed to showing good art and encouraging others in the county. I really want young people to love art and be encouraged.”