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COURTESY - MADELINE SABO



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8PM
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BOYS**

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MADIELINE SABO'S ART WITHOUT SIGHT

Nogal resident lives by Acceptance, Patience, Stubbornness

Acrylic painting by Madeline Sabo. Sabo depends on the contrast of the white canvas, large brushes and a scanner that magnifies her paint tubes to help guide her when painting.

COURTESY PHOTOS



By Kelly Brooks

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Throughout her life, Madeline Sabo has been in love with art and expressed herself through her creative artistic skills. In 2001, after 11 years of teaching medical tattooing, camouflage and permanent cosmetic application she retired, welcoming the opportunity to pursue painting and exploring other artistic mediums freely. One Sunday in 2008, Sabo began feeling ill. By Thursday of that same week, Sabo was in a full-blown coma. Somehow she had contracted MRSA, a type of bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics, resulting in a blood-born staph infection that had taken over her body.

"I was lucky to be alive but life changed drastically," Sabo said. "I went into the hospital with sight and came out unable to see."

The ravaging infection left Sabo with detached retinas in both eyes. After many surgeries and drug therapy, Sabo has only slight blurry black-and-white-vision with some color perception in the periphery of her left eye.

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Madeline Sabo works on salsa bowls in her ceramics studio, affectionately referred to as "The Clay Pit," at her home in Nogal.



need help.

"One in three women will experience domestic violence," Coleen said. "Think about that. One in three Ladies, line up with two of your friends. Either you or one of your friends will experience domestic violence. Appalling!"

As I ponder those statistics, I remember another friend whose husband had a restraining order served on her. It happened on her birthday. She and her special-needs daughter volunteered on that day each week at a local charity thrift store. He knew where she was. He knew where she would be. After the re-

With the age-

and family, she left that psychologically abusive man and divorced him. The minister at her church told her it was her duty to stay with her husband. "Thank goodness she disregarded those instructions and has gone on to lead an independent, productive life.

"You're worthless," he told her over and over. "Nobody else would ever want you. You can't live without me."

"Those identical words were told to another young friend in her miserable marriage to a mean man. She was a beautiful, intelligent young woman who could

After years and years,

women who have been abused, whether physically battered or psychologically battered, begin to believe they deserve the abuse. I was glad to learn that The Nest provides shelter for women and their children and also provides counseling for their clients. Spiritual guidance and support are available at the shelter for those who wish to attend non-denominational religious services.

When my marriage ended after many years, I experienced how difficult it is to start a new life independently. I had support

no longer allows me to work

with glue. I've made a mess with that. I glued the lathe and part of the equipment by accident. I've glued both of my hands together. It's been very interesting. You've got to be able to laugh about a hiccup that you have—about the bumps in the road."

the container of the white canvas and myriad of lights rigged to guide her. "I have a western hair and you always see me with one on my balding head but the light coming down and my thick-rimmed glasses, it's like trying to look through thick paper. The brim of the hat blocks the glare."

spend my summers and autumn in a little cabin in the Upper Canyon, and winter and early spring find me in a country cottage I call Happy House in rural Texas. As I write, edit, paint, take photographs, and make jewelry, I am content. My art business cards read, "Serene Spirit Creations." In 2011, I created a mixed-media painting I call "Goddess of Earthly Happiness." From a photograph of the painting, I had printed cards with verse 24 of Psalm 118 inside: "This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it."

onstrate how it's done with sight and without," said Sabo. "I have to give a lot of credit to Steve. He's stuck with me, helped me make the changes, been very patient. I couldn't ask for a better husband. You know, you go through your little pity parties but my motto is APS. A is accept your hiccup and get on with life. P is to be patient with yourself. And S is for stubborn; the attitude that says I can do this. Let me try to do it myself. The hardest thing for people to accept is the fact that it's not going to get better. But anyone who will listen who has hit a bump in the road, I like to tell them 'Come on, you can do this. Whatever it is that you want to do, you can do it.'"

Sabo's work can be seen by appointment by calling (575) 354-0201 or at any of the four shows the Sabos participate in including the Christmas Jubilee at the Rudoso Convention Center on Nov. 9 and 10.

Art

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She was left completely blind in her right eye.

"I can see some shape and contrast," she said. "If you're wearing a vibrant red outfit, I can see that."

"We sometimes take our eyesight for granted as we go through life," said Sabo's husband, Steven. "But, to those who lose this precious sense, it can be overwhelming. A loss of sight is even more devastating to an artist—a person who's life's work and world revolves around creating art and seeing it evolve."

But for Madeline Sabo, walking away from her artistic passions was not an option.

"The hardest thing is to accept it," she said. "You've got to be able to say 'Okay, this is what I have. I'm going to have to handle it. I'm not going to sit on my rear and do nothing.'"

So with a great deal of patience, support and help from her husband and a dogged determination to do

Woodturning

"Working with a wood lathe without sight presented some unique challenges," Sabo said. "It's a very dangerous piece of equipment. It spins at 1,500 rpm and you use a sharp tool to shape the artwork. There is a lot of starting and stopping and feeling the wood. Steve has put in contras everywhere for me. He built a special cart where I put my tools. He painted big black circles around the area so when I step on or off the platform to work the lathe I don't fall, and he hooked up with tons of special lighting. He keeps everything very clutter free. When you're sight impaired, it's critical to keep things organized so you know that this is where this is and that is where that is. And you don't move the furniture," she laughed.

You've got to have a good sense of humor, Sabo said. "There are things I'm no longer allowed to do. Steve

Painting

Prior to losing her sight, Sabo's first love was painting. She did several shows each year highlighting her skilled mastery of painting detailed portraits and western scenes with acrylics. Now, still using the same medium, she paints bigger, freer, more abstract, more electric and more colorful paintings.

"I am so blessed to be able to go back to painting again and to be able to see a little contrast and color," she said. "I take a big brush, I envision what I want in my mind and then I look at it and decide what to do with it."

Using a scanner that magnifies her paint tubes—making them appear six to eight times larger than they are—and wielding two- to three-inch brushes, Sabo counts on

Ceramics

the container of the white canvas and myriad of lights rigged to guide her. "I have a western hair and you always see me with one on my balding head but the light coming down and my thick-rimmed glasses, it's like trying to look through thick paper. The brim of the hat blocks the glare."

The new Mexico Federation of the Blind is providing Sabo with a new machine that will allow Sabo to speak the names of the paint colors individually into a small electronic chip that attaches to the paint tubes. A hand-held device then can be waved over each tube that will activate the recorded message, telling Sabo what color paint is in the tube.

"Everything I have talks to me—my watch, my pedometer. And everything else has sticky bumps on it so I can feel where things are, like the start and stop button on the microwave, the number buttons, the digital 'on' button for the stove. I have sticky bumps everywhere."

While painting is still her

first love, Sabo has taken on a new medium—clay.

"A friend said to me, 'Madeline, you can still feel, why not play with clay?' So I took a class up at ENMU and began making hand-built pottery."

Sabo said ceramics have provided her with a rewarding art form in which she can use her tactile skills. Her glazes are set in a certain place so she knows where they are. Steven places her work in the kiln when it's ready to be fired. Sabo creates hand-coiled vases, salsa bowls and her highly sought after signature ceramic leaf bowls.

With three separate studios incorporated into their Nogal home, one for each medium, the Sabos' stay busy creating pieces for the four shows they do each year: the High Mesa Artists Studio Tour, which the Sabos coordinate, The Art Loop, The Alko Artists Studio Tour and the Christmas Jubilee, a show the Sabos have participated in for the past nine years.

"During the shows, we educate people on the different mediums and dem-

items for yourself or for a loved one or a friend. Half of the price will go to support programs at The Nest. I will use my half to buy more beads, make paper beads, and create more jewelry, which I will infuse with love, light, and positive energy."

Sherry York is a retired school librarian, teacher, editor, writer, and artist. York recently placed her handcrafted jewelry for sale at Josie's Framery. Half the proceeds from sales of those items will go to benefit The Nest, the women's shelter in Ruidoso Downs.

Reporter Kelly Brooks can be reached at 575-257-4001 ext. 4114.