

Victoria Smalls romances the canvas...



For the past three years around Valentine's Day, the Red Piano Too Art Gallery on St. Helena Island has hosted an art show with the theme of "Love" always in mind. This year the Red Piano Too will feature the art of St. Helena Island native Victoria Smalls, in its annual "Celebration of Love." The collection will primarily showcase paintings in the artist's favorite medium - soft pastels. The artist has combined her signature series of "Contemplation Faces" in varying hues and flesh tones and images of couples embracing, walking along the seaside, reflecting and celebrating their love for one another.

"My 'Contemplation Faces', will always be a subject integrated into my work. They are who I am, a wonderful blend of Gullah, English and Irish," says Victoria. "They represent my (once upon a time in the 1960's and 70's) very unique family here on the Island." The various hues reflect her bi-racial parentage, being part of a huge-blended family of fourteen multi-ethnic siblings, and being a member of the Bahá'í Faith, whose philosophy is the oneness of humanity.

Celebrate Love

Written by Editor
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Victoria's first love, teaching, took her within the Early Childhood Education field for several years.



She enjoyed working at Lady's Island Elementary, St. Helena Elementary, with the FACES Program and with teachers who infused many of the learning experiences with art, and all forms of it. To prepare herself in the education field, Victoria furthered her education at South Carolina State University, and then later at the University of South Carolina- Beaufort.

Victoria has three children: Christopher, a freshman studying art and voice at Winthrop University; Julian, a very athletic 12 year-old; and Layla, a five-year-old who describes herself as a singer and artist, as well. She recalls a time when she wanted to display original artwork on the walls in her home to expose her children to visual art. Unaware that artwork could be found in her price range, she assumed that she could not afford to pay for original art.



The artist attributes her love and ease of painting with pastels to her mother. Victoria's mother often drew using soft pastels, and introduced this medium to her as a child. She remembers visualizing her mother drawing with pastels. She explains, "I picked up pastels again to create a

special present for a gift exchange party. I framed it beautifully and was very proud of it. Everyone (and that includes me) was trying to regain the pastel painting, as it was taken from the previous person who chose it. This game was supposed to teach us detachment from material things, but it didn't work for my fellow gift givers or me. Before going to the party, I told myself, if no one likes this piece, I love it and I will hang it at home proudly. However, that did not happen and I have not put my pastels down since then." She continues, "Soft Pastels are a very expressive medium. Working on a soft white, brown or black Stonehenge printmakers' paper, I use my hands and fingers to blend and blend." When the artist describes her technique, she says, "It's like finger painting, and I blend the pigments deep into the paper until there are no loose powder pigments remaining. Then I build and continue to build color upon color." Many of the pieces created carry the artist's signature colors that are used in most of her pastel paintings.

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