



Donna Helterbride-Baker (a.k.a. Damiana)

Pamlico Rose Institute Artist-in-Residence

I am a Gulf War Army veteran and Native American self taught mixed media artist. As a child, I loved to draw animals and people. In the fifth and sixth grade I recall being the teacher's aide in art class. I enjoyed helping the younger students learn how to draw and paint. In high school I accelerated in drawing and mixed media. In my senior year, while attending AP Art V, a slide portfolio was put together for each of the students and was sent to Princeton University Art Department to be graded. My submitted work was graded a four out of a possible five. Select pieces of my artwork were submitted in the 1985 Neptune Festival Art Show and the 1986 Virginia Beach Public Schools Student Art Show. In college, I attended several drawing courses and Art History.

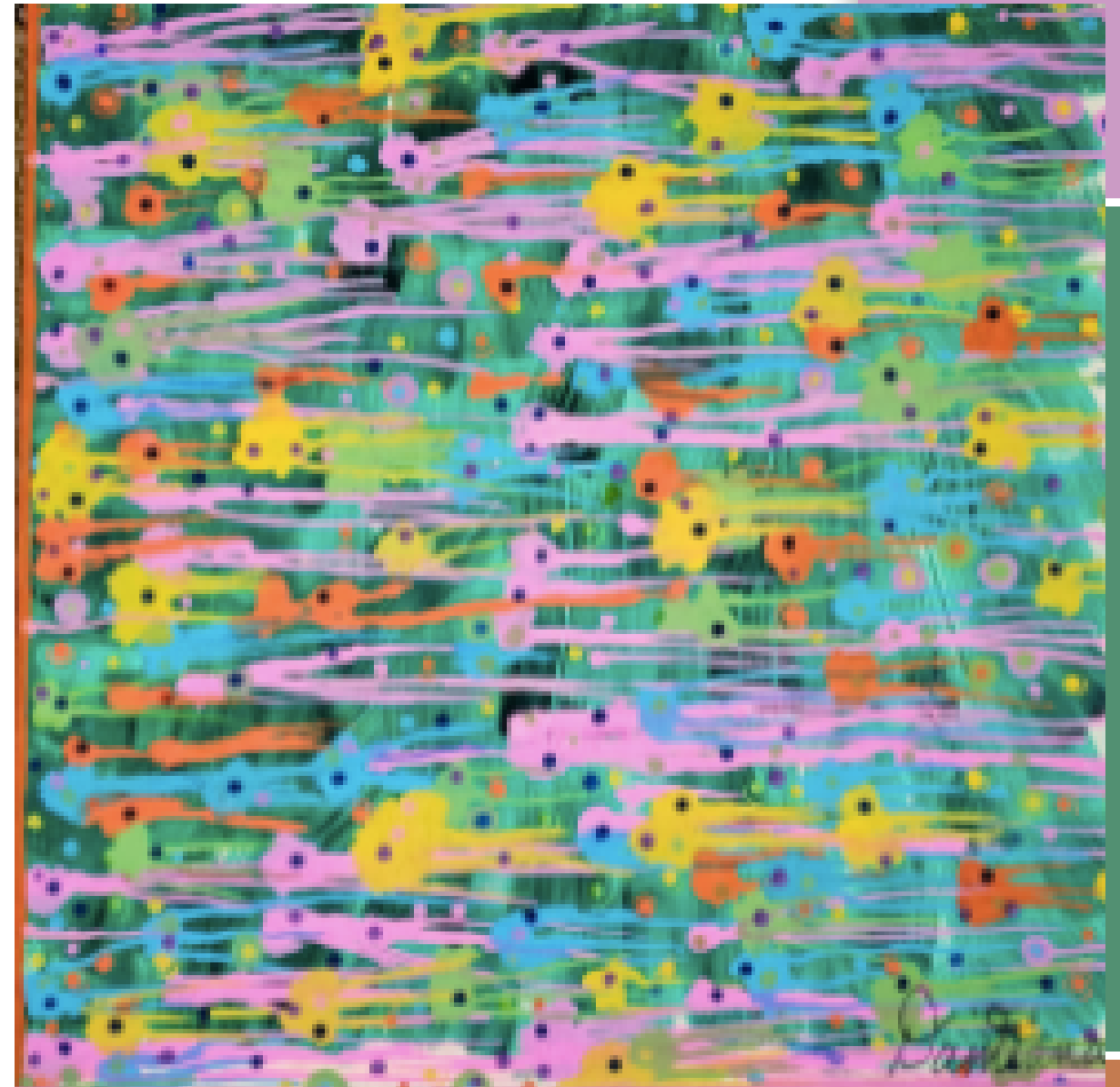
In 2011 under the employ of Dr. Barbara J Arnold, an ophthalmologist, I picked up a paintbrush and began watercolor painting. Dr. Arnold had been an influence and mentor to me. She was a seasoned watercolor artist, and had studied under the likes of Gregory Kondos and Rose Edin. I have always drawn with pencil and charcoal; color was absent but the use of shading had always been present. Dr. Arnold taught me the use of contrasting colors, the use of scale, as well as, placement of subject matter.

In April 2012 and January 2013 I was given the opportunity of assisting Dr. Arnold in teaching the visually impaired how to paint with watercolors at the Crocker Art Museum located in Sacramento, California. We were successful in completing several projects, allowing our students to take home many of their paintings to share with family and friends.

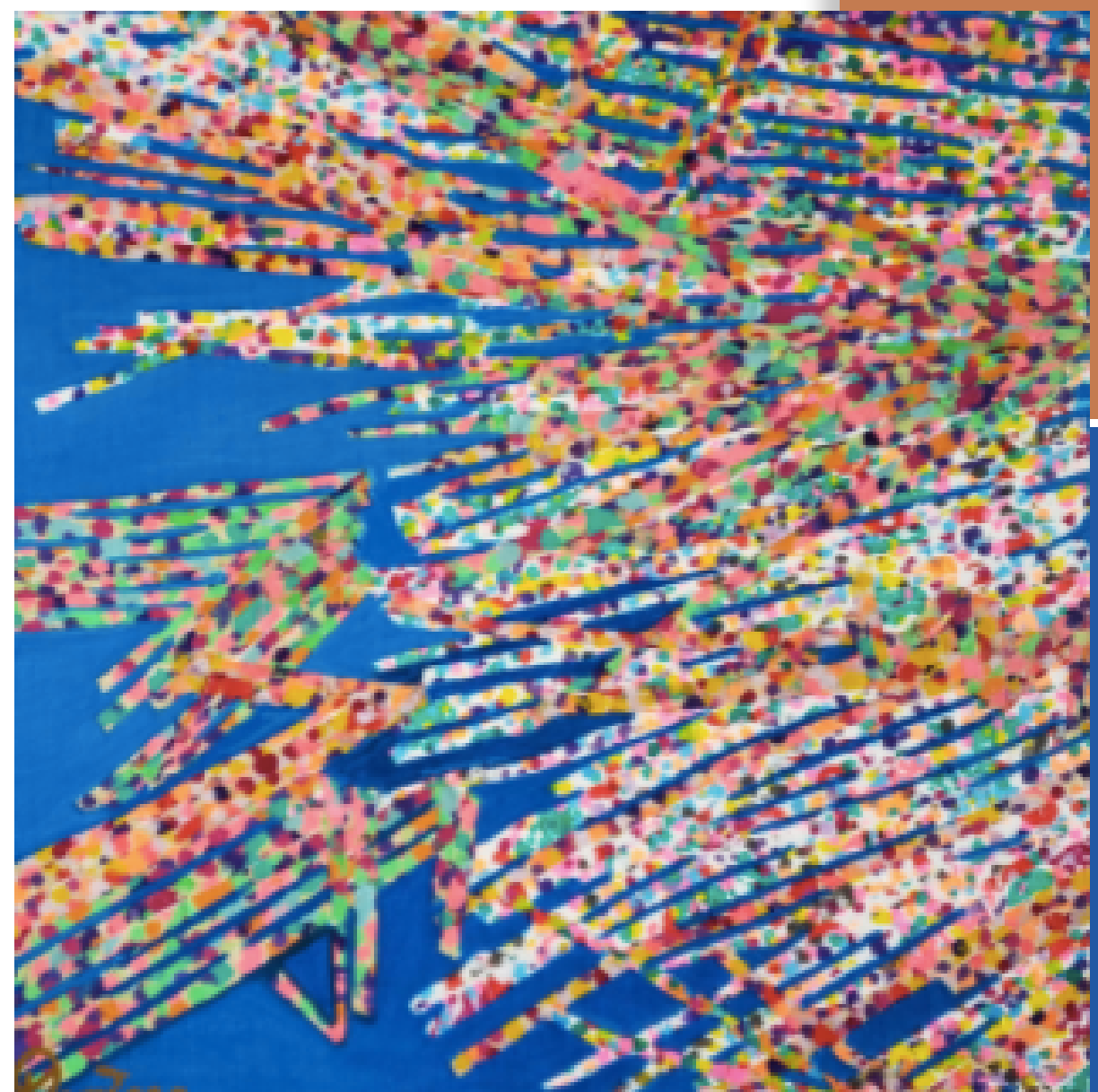
Their creations were also made into a series of cards through the local Rotary Club and sold to support a non-profit organization for blindness and diseases. All in all, it was a very rewarding and fun experience to help the visually impaired. In February of 2013, I was selected by Sacramento gallery owner, Rose Keiner to have some of my earlier watercolor pieces displayed in my very first art exhibition entitled "Birds on a Wire". The show was a success in allowing public exposure as a new artist. At the same time, I relocated my family to Seattle and settled in the King County area.



Donna w/ her dear friend & Coast Guard Veteran (served during OAF), Julia Villalobos who in 2020 took her own life due to PTSD. #22ADAY Veterans are vulnerable & precious. Donna dedicates her artwork to the memory of her sister and battle buddy, as well as all Veterans who struggle with PTSD.



My PTSD Collection Mixed Media on canvas panel
"Adrenaline I"



My PTSD Collection Mixed Media on canvas panel
"Adrenaline II"

Although I am a newcomer to the art community here in the Pacific Northwest, I feel that I have a profound enough background that merits my understanding and appreciation for the arts. I enjoy the works of Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, Os Gemeos, Georgia O'Keefe and local artists I have met over the years. I love animals and enjoy nature. Spring and winter, being my favorite seasons, boast of colors, scents, and raw forms which have been my past inspiration for my subject matter. I have enjoyed abstract "pour" and "swipe" methods of painting using acrylic on plywood and canvas, and have experimented with the use of mixed media, mostly acrylics, acrylic pens, watercolors, pen and ink, alcohol ink, stippling method, charcoals, and oil pastels to create more abstract & contrasting works. I view my surroundings and take in all of the beauty I see; it inspires me to create more diverse pieces allowing my talents as an artist to progress.

My latest passions have been using acrylic paint pens on canvas or recycled material such as paper bags or packing materials found in shipped boxes. Using patterns, shapes, and bright colors to accentuate said materials, as well as, often crumbling the paper to create texture and depth.

I have created mosaic patterns on birds resembling a more native scene like the Pacific Northwestern tribes. I am fascinated with the creative process early natives used to create art to represent their everyday lives, to create stories which like written words could be forever journaled for future generations. It is my intention to take in the knowledge and ideas I absorb from these ingenious cultured artisans to create my own fellowship of nature & learned experiences my life has gifted me. As a Native American person who was adopted outside of her culture and introduced to a completely foreign culture, the issue of not being a "true Indian" and not knowing my own ethnicity growing up gives me a feeling of being denied not only of my cultural identity but also deprived of my tribe. My future art will boast a collection of "My Identity, My Tribe". This will be a design of my own making of who I perceive myself to be utilizing my strengths, vulnerabilities, memories, discoveries, concepts, and interpretations of what being a Native American means to me. As ever, I am excited for the journey and opportunities that have been given to me.



When Donna is not "doing art" in her studio she uses her creativity in writing and speaking at Veterans Day events. She is a part of the first women's cohort of the Red Badge Project Group. Currently, she is working on a few projects to include a book of poetry and children's books dedicated to her late granddaughter, Nava. She is a volunteer for Minority Veterans of America, Team Rubicon, and The Mission Continues, as well as an advocate for the protection of children's safety against child abuse in her state & wants to become more involved with helping victims of domestic violence . She loves to travel, read, write, hike, swim, and enjoys the culinary arts and trying new foods. She resides in the Seattle area with her son, Ryan, partner, Sean, and her emotional support cat, Bella Catalini.



Acrylic Pen on canvas panel "Tree in Sunlight"



Acrylic Paint/Fluid Art on plywood "Let it Flow"

**From the Pamlico Rose Institute:
This is the first in a series of notes from Donna
Helterbride-Baker our
second artist-in-residence.**

**For more on the PRI artist-in-residence
program visit our website at
www.pamlicorose.org/hvw
Or Contact
Kaitlyn O'Donnell, Community Resource
Associate at kaitlyn@pamlicorose.org**