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## Finding ones self through art and helping others along the way

By Lou Fancher



Julee Herrmann at Reclaiming Studios. Photo Brandilyn Davidson Photography

the classes and workshops, however. "We don't ever over-pour. These people are going to drive after they leave. I don't want them intoxicated. I really care about my community."

But a few years into running the hands-on operation, Herrmann was less tuned in to her self. Raising a 15-year-old daughter, making daily business decisions, leading classes and workshops, maintaining a bricks-and-mortar location and robust online presence while training the staff to know every aspect of the business so as to empower them left her bone tired. Eventually, she hit a wall.

"It was not being able to pick myself up, make sharp decisions, deal with my child that clued me in," she says.

Taking time away to write in her journal, create art from her heart and not out of desire to please others and especially, rediscovering sisterhood while practicing yoga, Herrmann emerged from fatigue. "Being supported in that 'me too' place showed me I wanted to shift a part of the business from C&C's 'woo-hoo' party girl atmosphere to a sacred place of nourishment."

Which is why the former "woo-hoo" woman has embarked on a new adventure that will extend and compliment the original art studio. Reclaimed Studio, located in a separate location in Walnut Creek at 1444 S. Main Street, offers six-week intuitive painting workshops and one-day retreats aimed at self-discovery.

"Intuitive painting is almost the opposite (of what happens at C&C). I'm the guide, a half-step ahead of them, and we're all on the expedition together," says Herrmann. Participants converse, led by Herrmann, then journal. "At the end of that, I give them space to share anything that's an "ah-ha" for them. Then, silently, we get up and paint. We paint and draw whatever comes up." Invited to "go at it," materials range from glitter glue to metallic to acrylic paints and every imaginable brush, palette knife or bamboo stick with which to craft a masterpiece - or not - on a 6-foot-by-4-foot-wide easel mounted with thick bristol paper.

Herrman facilitates, once people get started. If someone is standing and staring, she'll suggest thinking about color, shape or image. "Off they go, following the energy," she says is the result.

It's not only energy that is output. Herrmann's ultimate ambition is to turn the business into a nonprofit that connects local people and philanthropists in projects that support marginalized kids in the community, foster

children or youth who have been in juvenile homes in the greater Bay Area, and children in need worldwide. A birthday celebration held June 22 anticipated Herrmann's turning 49 on Aug. 21 and benefited art workshops in Mozambique for the #IStandWithGirls Campaign, run by Kurandza. "My good friend, Elisabetta Colabianchi, created Kurandza to support girls who need it most."

When asked why the \$500 raised will be sent overseas when there are obvious children in need in America, Herrmann said, "I already work with kids in the Bay Area, Napa, and more. I want our reach to be broad. We're trying to build a preschool for these girls (in Mozambique). We've learned schooling breaks the cycle of girls getting married young and not being able to care for their families. One girl will educate an entire village. We create a more empowered place. Even 10 dollars from each person who donates makes a difference."

Herrmann senses the cultural climate is ripe for women empowering others to give back. "We're linking arms and without getting into the politics, we're looking around and saying it's our turn. We can't wait for other people to rescue us. It reminds me of historic days when women would cook dinner for each other, be able to say 'I'm having a hard time,' and not feel judgment."

In time, Reclaiming Studio will offer regional retreats in places like Lake Tahoe; and international retreats when the business grows large enough to include long-distance travel. Essential to any future plan is Herrmann's intention to hang on to lessons learned. Yes, she will continue to satisfy customers' inner yearnings with soft, warm, hazy or bold, vibrant, contrasting paint pigments and judgment-free fun, but meanwhile, she'll listen closely to her heart and remain open to its many colors.

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