

Moving Forward - Growth Through Adversity & Renewal

Anjila Karki

Abstract

These series of paintings celebrate the strength and indomitable spirit of my refugee family and their unwavering courage in the face of adversity. The background is my grandmother's scarf, which represents a big part of me and is meant to symbolize culture, courage, and spirit. Our culture and traditions are rooted in Hinduism. We celebrate various festivals from Deepawali to Holi which include a variety of colors and lights. The scarves that I have showcased throughout my painting are something that are very dear to my grandmother. The vibrant plants, rooted deeply in the ground, are meant to evoke the relentless tenacity and perseverance which remain the driving force behind our resilience and success. Even to this day, these scarves have played an important role and remind us of the milestones we have accomplished throughout our journey. These plants also represent the growth of how far we have come. These pieces are a tribute to my family's reliance on power and ability to triumph in the face of any challenge.



Anjila Karki, 2022, Acrylic on Ceiling Tile



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This series started as a project for my advanced painting class, but it eventually expanded beyond just three paintings. I had no idea I would be so pleased with the outcome from when I began. This series is a depiction of growth, culture, background and so much more. I started my pieces by arranging two still lifes in my home. I placed the third still life in the classroom. I had nowhere else to stage them so, I decided to stage them on my jacuzzi and set up lamps near the area as a light source. As a painter, I learned that these light sources could create a dramatic scene for my paintings. The movement of my grandmother's scarves moves the viewer's eyes from one painting to another. With every brush stroke comes every form of texture and these textures are what give the viewers more depth and emotion. For the surface, I used ceiling tiles. I came across these ceiling tiles after moving into my new home. These tiles were a bit old, so I put various layers of gesso on the surface. Gesso is applied to the surface of either canvas or in my case ceiling tiles to smoothen out the surface. It means the artist is priming the surface. The term 'Gesso' is an Italian term for white mineral gypsum. After applying the gesso and letting it dry, I then started to sketch out where I would want each part of the object to fit in. I started each piece by sketching the placement of each object. While painting, one major thing I have learned is to paint your background before you paint your foreground because it is harder to go between every detail when you are trying to paint your background. Since the majority of my background was my grandmother's scarf, it was difficult to portray the fabric as it is. The fabric consists of different textures, colors, and layers. Painting the middle ground was not difficult

because it was the structure of vases. I did not have trouble with where to place them; however, I did struggle with wanting to get the reflection of light that was on the vase. In each painting, I tried to have my palette saturated and I was able to accomplish that. One thing I would like to improve on is making the plants more lively and the vases more realistic by making improvements in shapes and reflections. I was inspired by the works of Paul Cezanne. He did an excellent job with flowing a variety of colors into his still life and outdoor landscapes.

My passion for art has been inspired by my early childhood of living in the refugee camp and all the adversity that my family and I faced. Living as a refugee, my house was made of bamboo and hay; whenever it rained, the water would seep into my house causing it to flood. During the tough times living in the refugee camp, my family and I lived through scarcity of food, lack of education, lack of access to hospitals, and more. Living through various obstacles, art has given me hope of endurance and courage. It is through art that I have been able to express my emotions, enthusiasm, and determination. Art has been rooted deeply within me and I will forever cherish that. Despite the adversity, we were able to come to America in search of a better life. Even though coming to America took care of our basic necessities, my family and I were startled by the daunting challenges we faced. These included language barriers, lack of transportation, and lack of access to finding jobs. Though my family and I faced many challenges, we never gave up and always managed to hold onto optimism. In addition, art helped me become stronger in my ability to withstand hardship. I have been able to portray my family, my struggles, and myself through my artwork.

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