

DNACA Announces Completed Artwork by Grant Awardee

October 18, 2021



Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness is pleased to announce the completion of the public art project created by local artist Julie Smiley, which was funded through the Funds for Artists' Resilience grant program. FAR helped fund artists who experienced hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic, and empowered them to produce public art to inspire the community. The grants were made possible by the Humboldt Area Foundation, through The Ink People in Humboldt county.

Smiley's FAR project incorporated facilitating art workshops with residents of Harrington House, which also partially funded the art project with grant funds from the California Arts Council and DNACA through the CARES act.

"We were immediately drawn to Julie's project idea," says DNACA Executive Director Stephanie La Torre. "The idea of art as therapy workshops for residents at Harrington House, guided by such an accomplished artist, was a wonderful idea. Incorporating the inspiration of what came from those sessions into Julie's

completed original works has created an exhibit that's not only beautiful, but if you take the time to read the descriptions next to each piece, you will find them extremely thought-provoking as well."

Smiley's mixed media exhibit entitled "We Are Worthy" features five, 22" x 30" original paintings now on display through November 18 at the Del Norte Courthouse, located at 450 H Street in Crescent City. They are displayed as part of DNACA's Art in Public Places program.

When the call for submissions to the FAR program was announced, Smiley felt a link between the program's theme of "resilience" and the opportunity for connecting people through art.

"Initially, the (COVID) lock-down reminded me of the period after leaving my abusive husband and seeking a restraining order. Because of this, we lived in a surreal, isolated, unsafe limbo for many months. During that time, I learned more about my own strength and resolve, about making the most of my resources and asking for help, and living with great swaths of unknown and unresolvable issues. To have weathered all that with a sense of joy, a renewed sense of identity and strength, signaled what "resilience" is in my mind. When I read about FAR's opportunity to be supported in a project with that theme as its focus, I naturally thought of how I could share the recovery and healing process with others who survive domestic abuse, as well as acknowledging the challenges facing our community because of COVID."

Born and raised in Crescent City, Smiley completed her master of fine art in visual arts education from Ohio State University, received her teaching credential from Humboldt State University, and has dual bachelor of art degrees in studio arts and communication arts from Gordon College. Her work is greatly influenced by her sensitivity to relationships between people and physical spaces, and ideas of social and personal control.

"I felt humbled in the face of this opportunity," Smiley says when reflecting on her experience with this project. "I have no magic pills to ease suffering and pain. So, I offered simply the personal and highly individualized experience I had: here are a few thoughts, here are a few physical tools that have helped me, I would like to share them. I trusted that if I stretched out my hand to offer these things, people who could use them would reach out to accept."

After the exhibit closes at the Del Norte Courthouse, the works may be displayed at other locations, and then return to Harrington House to be on permanent display.

Smiley reflects, "I hope people walk away (after viewing the exhibit) with a sense of beauty - that even in the midst of pain, no one is too broken they can't be enriched by seeing and making something beautiful in their lives."

To learn more about Julie Smiley and her artwork, please visit juliebsmiley.com. For more information about DNACA, please visit dnaca.net. You can learn about the Ink People at InkPeople.org, and about Humboldt Area Foundation at hafoundation.org.