



PAINTINGS OF
LIVES TRANSFORMING
BY FELICITY DON

EMPOWERING WOMEN RECOVERING LIVES



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LIVES TRANSFORMING
BY FELICITY DON**

EMPOWERING WOMEN RECOVERING LIVES

UNION GOSPEL MISSION WISHES TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TO THE WOMEN AND FAMILIES CENTRE. PLEASE ACCEPT THIS BOOK AS A TOKEN OF OUR GRATITUDE.

PRESENTED TO



ABOUT UNION GOSPEL MISSION

UNION GOSPEL MISSION HAS BEEN FEEDING HOPE AND CHANGING LIVES SINCE 1940.

Relying on a broad base of loyal staff, volunteers, and donors, Union Gospel Mission extends a faith-based continuum of care to people who are struggling with poverty, homelessness, and addiction. These transformative services include meals, shelter, alcohol and drug recovery, employment services, family services, housing, and more.

The heart of the Mission is to demonstrate God's transforming love, ease the burden of the most vulnerable, rebuild the lives of the broken, and offer dignity to those who feel cast aside. With seven locations across Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, UGM is ideally positioned to help those who need it most.





ARTIST PROFILE: FELICITY DON

FOR THIS PROJECT, SHE WOULD CONCENTRATE ON PAINTING ONLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE HELP FROM UGM.

For Felicity Don, it was a wonderful gift to have the opportunity to create a second donor book of stories and painted portraits for Union Gospel Mission. In 2010 she had created a book for those who had donated to a building for men fighting addiction. This time she was creating a book for those who generously donated to a building for housing women and children.

Felicity paints portraits of people of many ethnicities and walks of life, anyone willing who captures her eye. After completing her Fine Arts Degree in Montreal she participated in many solo and group shows of her portraits and is in private collections across Canada, including in the Bentall Center in Vancouver. She also designed and painted a huge mural for the World Trade Center in Montreal.

Felicity Don is one of Canada's most prominent courtroom artists. As such, in 2018, The National Museum of History bought a huge collection of her court work and is currently considering buying a second collection. The Museum curator has expressed interest in buying a collection of her DTES portraits as well, including a UGM donor book.

Felicity hopes her book EMPOWERING WOMEN, RECOVERING LIVES, translates feelings not only of her love for drawing people but of her love, respect and understanding for people battling seemingly insurmountable problems, those who are the broken and struggling of our society.

NO.1
COCONUT
TREE

pastel on paper,
40.5" x 39.5" wide

mum, HOW CAN YOU protect me from a bullet?

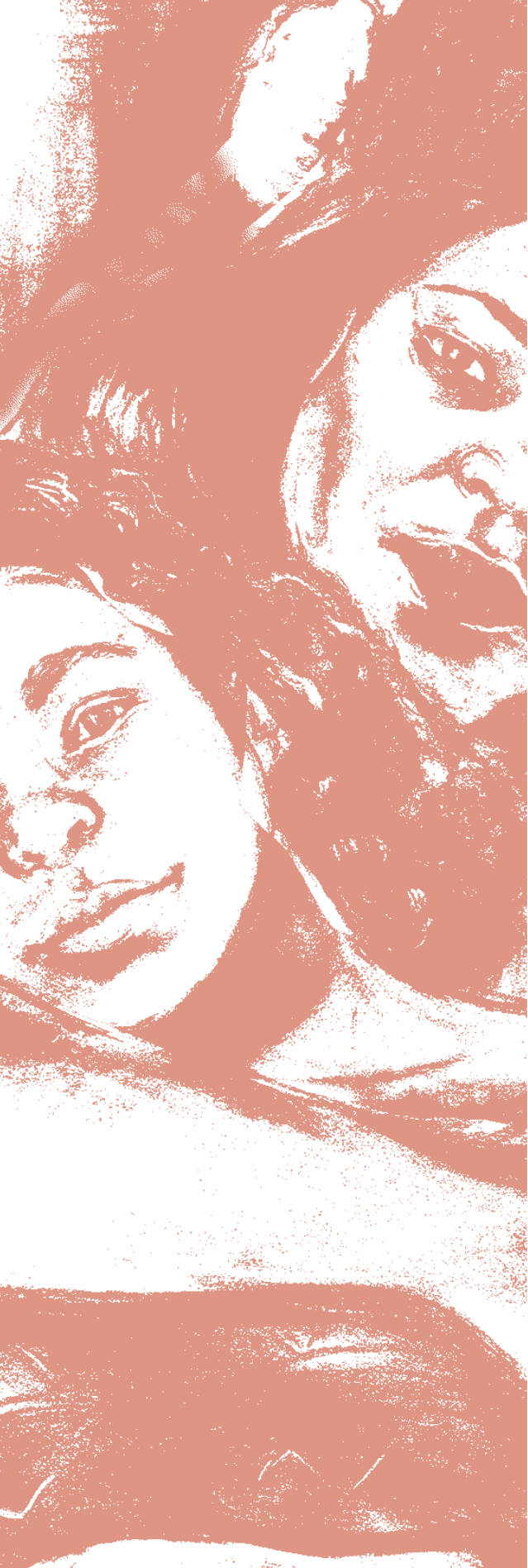


NO.1
**COCONUT
TREE**

pastel on paper,
40.5" x 39.5" wide

mum, HOW CAN **YOU** protect me from a bullet ?





NO.1

COCONUT TREE

This is a portrait of Alesha*, a single mum from the Caribbean, and her child Hope*. Alesha has a warm, playful relationship with her child, a darling 11 year old whom I would love to claim as my own, such a charming and sweet girl! While Hope is a quiet child, her mother is a large, gregarious woman with a loud and happy laugh. In the portrait, I felt I was reflecting the mum's very bountiful and protective love of her daughter, while equally her daughter's love of and trust in her mum.

While posing for me, between bouts of Hope trying to bite her mum's arm and Alesha trying to stop her, Alesha called herself a mother bear who would tear anyone to bits if she came close to hurting her daughter. Her daughter, however, replied, "But mum, how can you protect me from a bullet?" Hope is obviously aware of the dangers of living in one of the poorest postal codes in N. America!

I included the cockroach in the painting as that is sometimes the unfortunate reality of living in an apartment in the DTES. I also included a picture of a coconut tree, as Alesha had insisted, "C'mon, Felicity, put in a coconut tree. I want a coconut tree." After many design struggles, I did a drawing of a coconut tree, then pinned the drawing onto the wall! A drawing within a drawing, voilà! And they love it. It so happens I like it too, so I named the painting "Coconut Tree".

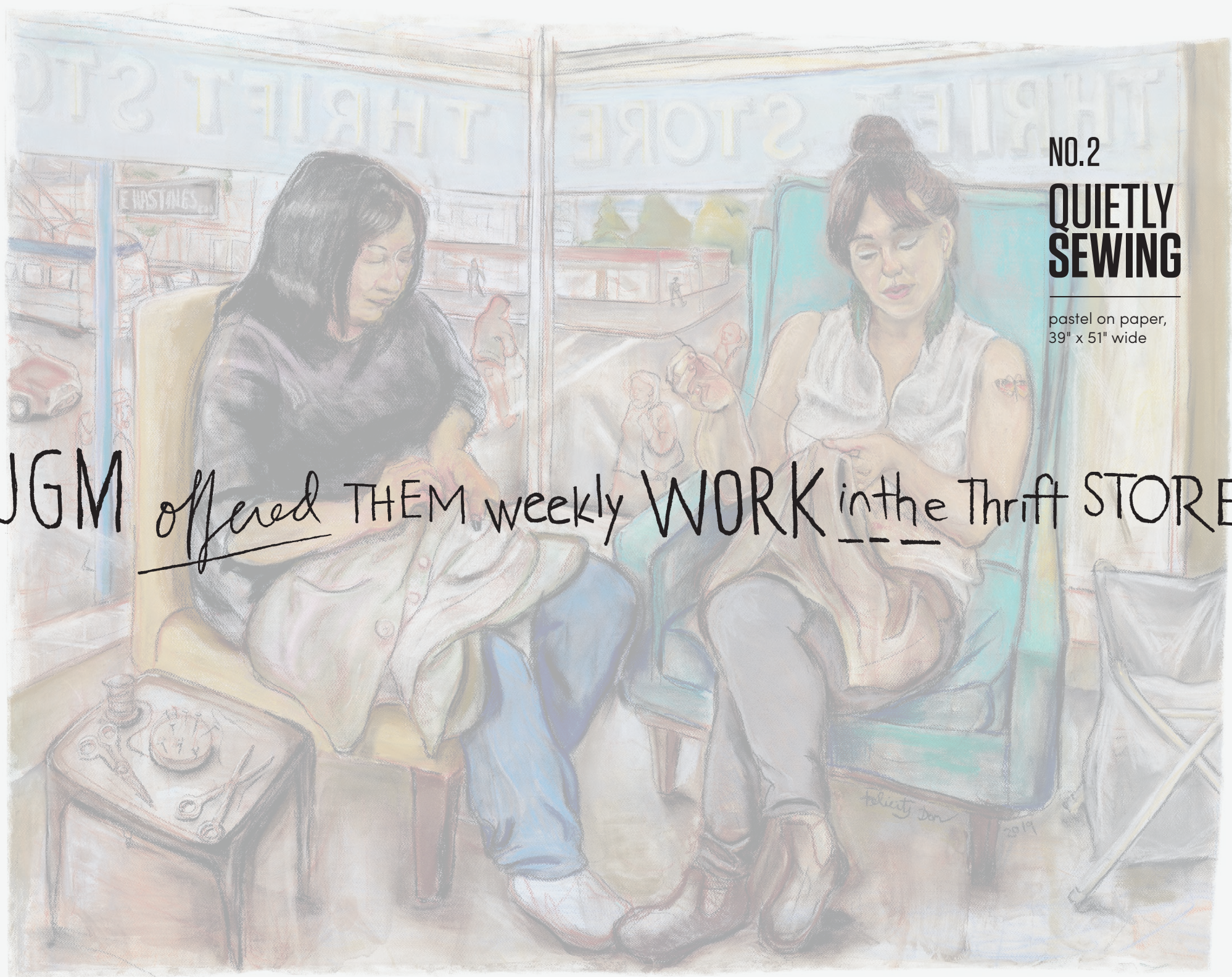
Alesha and Hope live in the Downtown Eastside and attend Union Gospel Mission's programs for women and families. These include monthly family meals and weekly kids' programs.

*Name has been changed.

NO.2
QUIETLY
SEWING

pastel on paper,
39" x 51" wide

UGM offered THEM weekly WORK in the Thrift STORE



NO.2

**QUIETLY
SEWING**

pastel on paper,
39" x 51" wide

UGM offered THEM weekly WORK in the Thrift STORE





NO.2

QUIETLY SEWING

About five women work in the Repair to Wear sewing program, repairing articles of clothing donated by large warehouses or individuals. They make sure that buttons are attached, holes are mended etc., perfect for hanging to sell in the UGM Thrift Store.

Jenny*, the woman on the right, in spite of having both parents addicted to drugs, valiantly broke the mold through completing The Sanctuary program at UGM. She found work placement as an instructor once a week in the Mission's sewing room adjacent to UGM's Thrift Store. Jenny seems genuinely happy, discovering various means of supporting herself that involve her creativity which she did not even know she had! Meanwhile, her father has expressed surprise at her ability to remain sober and says he would like to follow in her footsteps but they are only words so far.

The woman on the left also came through The Sanctuary program. Cari*, a gentle Indigenous woman, has a little 2 year old daughter of whom she is hugely proud. UGM offered her weekly work in the Thrift Store, as well as on call work in The Sanctuary.

UGM not only gives a hand - up to support those ready to fight addiction, but often introduces them back into the world with job opportunities.

*Name has been changed.

NO.3
RED HAired
FAMILY

pastel on paper,
50" x 59" wide

Dyed RED hair REPLICATED in her children



NO.3
**RED HAIR
FAMILY**

pastel on paper,
50" x 59" wide

Dyed RED hair REPLICATED *in her children*





NO.3

RED HAired FAMILY

Upon entering UGM for the first time in a decade to begin the job of painting UGM's clients for this, my second donor book, I felt somewhat hesitant as to how I was going to attack this mammoth job. Within no time, I saw a fantastic subject matter for my first portrait. An eccentric-looking family had arrived and departed from UGM's dining area like a theatre troupe of redheads. My hesitation was thrown out of the window. I was all in! Time to get to work.

First, I introduced myself to the mother, Carmine*. I was struck by Carmine's coloured lenses, creating one bright turquoise and one hot pink eye. Her dyed red hair was replicated in all her children. Among other tattoos, Carmine sported a tattoo of Frankenstein's head on her right shoulder. Three of her four boys had names beginning with the letter X. Surprisingly unique in every way!!

In this painting, I captured the oldest boy, Xray*, rolling up a ball of wet paper and creating a game of trying to catch the ball in the styrofoam cup with the 3 year old. To my eyes, all the brothers seemed like good boys, showing only helpful behaviour toward each other. The only daughter, Hope*, would visit UGM for dinner on occasion and would light up when watching the youngest boy playing and twirling around. Hope is the only child who does not live at home. She lives in a group home for differently abled young people where Hope can thrive with 24 hour care.

When I said to Carmine that she had a great bunch of boys and asked if she would be lonely when they all left, she said that she hoped they would all stay with her forever! Regardless, I felt relieved that UGM was providing a safety net for the children, supplying meals, love and guidance.

Parents accessing UGM's services have their challenges, but it takes some weight off them to have the help of the Mission. The UGM staff give good role modeling as well as offering one-on-one mentoring talks with the children. UGM staff are very dedicated people and the children seem to love and respect them.

*Name has been changed.

NO.4
**ELECTRIC
DREAMS**

pastel on paper,
44" x 42" wide

DRUG-free AND HOW can follow HER dreams



NO.4
**ELECTRIC
DREAMS**

pastel on paper,
44" x 42" wide

DRUG-free AND now can follow HER dreams





NO.4

**ELECTRIC
DREAMS**

May* was introduced to me as a graduate of the Sanctuary program. I was attracted to paint her due to her very full, sculptural face with strong, rounded, smooth planes.

May very much relies on the counsel of three of her Indigenous Elders, one of whom gave her an eagle feather. She was absolutely proud and delighted to own this feather, so I asked her to bring it with her for the upcoming portrait session.

During the session, May told me that in her 20's, she discovered she had been picked up in the 60's Scoop before being adopted out. She joined a class action suit and won a good settlement. With some of this money, she plans to go on a trip for her birthday. May is an environmentalist and was delighted to discover a partly electric Norwegian cruise ship heading from Vancouver to Alaska. It is extremely costly, so she plans to go one way, returning home by train. I was excited for her and therefore inspired to float her boat, so to speak, by reflecting her wonderful dream in her painted portrait, backed by a golden sunrise.

May has previously struggled with addiction and was extremely grateful to complete The Sanctuary stabilization program at UGM. May sometimes picks up extra money through UGM's Repair to Wear sewing program. She currently lives drug-free and now can follow her dreams!!

NO.5

**SINGING HYMNS
OF PRAISE**

pastel on paper,
47" x 34" wide

Huìshēng started SINGING ^{only} _{after} ARRIVING IN CANADA



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OF PRAISE**

pastel on paper,
47" x 34" wide

Huìshēng started SINGING ^{only after} ARRIVING in CANADA





NO.5

SINGING HYMNS OF PRAISE

Huǐshēng* was immediately very enthusiastic about being painted. She did not speak a word of English, however she valiantly posed for her portrait, sitting up straight and opening her mouth in order to imitate singing, as instructed by me through hand signals. She would do this for many minutes at a time, until I started to feel guilty! When I tried to get her to write words in Chinese script on the portrait of herself, she understood and carefully added words on the left wall. When I asked her to make musical notations on the painting, however, she would break into song, thinking I was motioning for her to sing! I tried a few times and she kept singing. I finally gave up. Fortunately, she had a lovely voice.

After finishing the painting in all its glory of bright colours, I questioned my sanity. Was I just plain silly? Coincidentally, later the same day, I heard CBC Radio relating a study done on child prodigy musicians. The research found that their brains translated music through colour. Maybe I was not so crazy after all!

Regarding the Chinese script, the words speak of the beauty of music. I wanted a backdrop that bespoke enchantment with music, as I felt music was tremendously enriching for her, as it is for me. Huǐshēng started singing only after arriving in Canada, singing hymns with other members at the Mothers Club. She then became interested in reading music and playing electric keyboard. She often practices piano at her church near Oppenheimer Park. She never had the time or inclination to appreciate music back in China.

Huǐshēng was invited to join the Mothers Club, which was started in 1944 by UGM to serve struggling mothers. The Mothers Club is one of the oldest ministries at Union Gospel Mission. Over the years the mothers have aged to grandmothers, but still gather weekly to sing hymns, listen to Bible readings in Cantonese and Mandarin, and to be served food and drinks. Huǐshēng finds the social, religious and cultural aspects of the Mothers Club to be hugely rewarding.

*Name has been changed.

NO.6
OLIVIA

pastel on paper,
55" x 34" wide

Relaxed, COOL, IN charge, TIGHT!

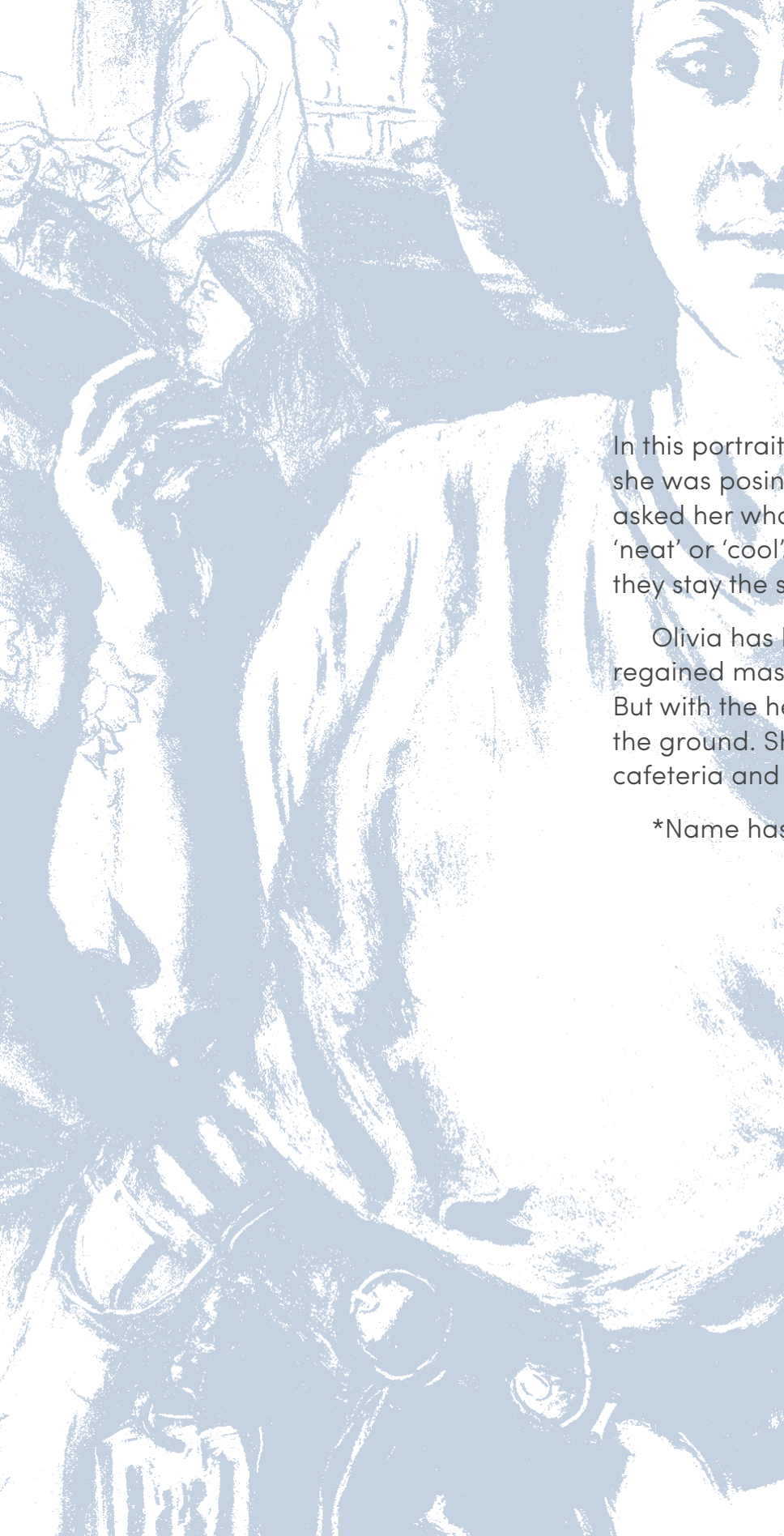


NO.6
OLIVIA

pastel on paper,
55" x 34" wide

Relaxed, COOL, IN charge, TIGHT!





NO.6
OLIVIA

In this portrait, I was trying to capture the ‘relaxed, cool, in charge’ look that Olivia* carries. While she was posing for her portrait, whenever I told her a story, she would remark, “Tight”. When I asked her what she meant by that (being from a different generation!), she explained it meant ‘neat’ or ‘cool’. My generation’s equivalent word was ‘far out’. The more things change, the more they stay the same!

Olivia has been very much out of control in a portion of her life, but I would say she has now regained mastery. She developed a cocaine addiction while working in the restaurant business. But with the help of caring UGM staff, while living at The Sanctuary, she wrestled addiction to the ground. She now goes forward supporting herself by working part-time at UGM in both the cafeteria and in Outreach. Right on Olivia! Tight!

*Name has been changed.

NO.7
JADE IN
SOFT PASTEL

pastel on paper,
31" x 35" wide

FEW GOOD role models in her LIFE



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SOFT PASTEL**

pastel on paper,
31" x 35" wide

FEW GOOD role models in her LIFE

Felicity Don 2020





NO.7

JADE IN SOFT PASTEL

The second I arrived at the Sanctuary and saw Jade* and her baby, I knew I had to paint her. The combination of Jade's rather fragile look, sweet face and beautiful eyes, with her tiny prematurely born baby balanced like a small wax doll on her arms, made it essential for me to capture them.

Jade is a gentle, humorous little person with a laugh like a bubbling brook and a charming, childlike way of speaking, but there is another side to her. Her addiction to crystal meth for years led to wild times, no sleep for days, terrible relationships, smashing windows and so on. When she first set eyes on her tiny seven month old baby, she then and there decided to give up drugs for his sake. She took no prescription to help her through withdrawal. That takes an iron will. The woman has enormous courage!

Because she rejects any street or pharmaceutical drugs, she can breast feed her baby. In the few weeks since I have painted him, the little guy has been guzzling nonstop and has grown like a weed.

Like so many of the women at The Sanctuary, Jade has very few good adult role models in her life. Jade was brought up partly by her grannie, but grannie died when Jade was the tender age of thirteen. Jade then started drinking, eventually moving onto crystal meth. Her mother, father and boyfriend all struggle with addiction. Jade loves the father of her child. He is fifteen years older than her and claims he will try to stop taking drugs for the sake of her and the baby. It is often the boyfriends and husbands who bring the women back down - I hope this is not one of those cases.

When I first met Jade, she said she wanted to leave The Sanctuary to be a family with her baby and his father. But weeks later, she told me she would like to stay the full allowable year at The Sanctuary and wishes she could stay longer. Smart woman. The charming young mum is very much loved and supported by everyone the at Sanctuary.

UGM's new Building for Women and Families will not be built in time for Jade, unfortunately. When built, this amazing facility will be there for others who are in need of extended care.

*Name has been changed.

NO.8

THE ADORATION
OF MS. MOUSE

pastel on paper,
20" x 31" wide

the MOUSE seems to LOOK UP lovingly at the BABY



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OF MS. MOUSE**

pastel on paper,
20" x 31" wide

the MOUSE seems to LOOKUP lovingly at the BABY





NO.8

THE ADORATION OF MS. MOUSE

Another brave soul!! A wonderful woman whose baby I adore! Ava* has had serious health issues, coming close to death in hospital due to a most minor infection that went out of control, becoming sepsis and resulting in a heart attack. She got into drugs, from what I can gather, due to difficulties with her husband. Her battle now is to survive drug-free, bringing up her beloved child as well as he deserves. She is beginning that journey in the warm embrace of the amazing, nurturing, but necessarily tough staff of UGM's Sanctuary.

The little fellow is totally adorable. Ava croons, "Isn't he cute? I can't stop looking at him. He is so sweet it hurts." He is, indeed, the cutest little guy, always smiling while making all kinds of expressions with his little hairless eyebrows!

Ava is contemplating taking her child out East to bring him up with the support of her mum and grannie. She Skypes her mother, who lives on the other side of Canada, daily, so that her baby and his grannie can see each other. I am confident, hopefully not naively, that her devotion to her darling child, as well as the love of her mum and gran, will see her through.

I was taken by the drama of Ava's appearance, the somewhat Amy Winehouse look, so for the portrait I had her pose with her head turned away to accent the dramatic profile. I painted the red around her and her baby to signify love, and painted her looking into the yellow colour suggesting a bright future.

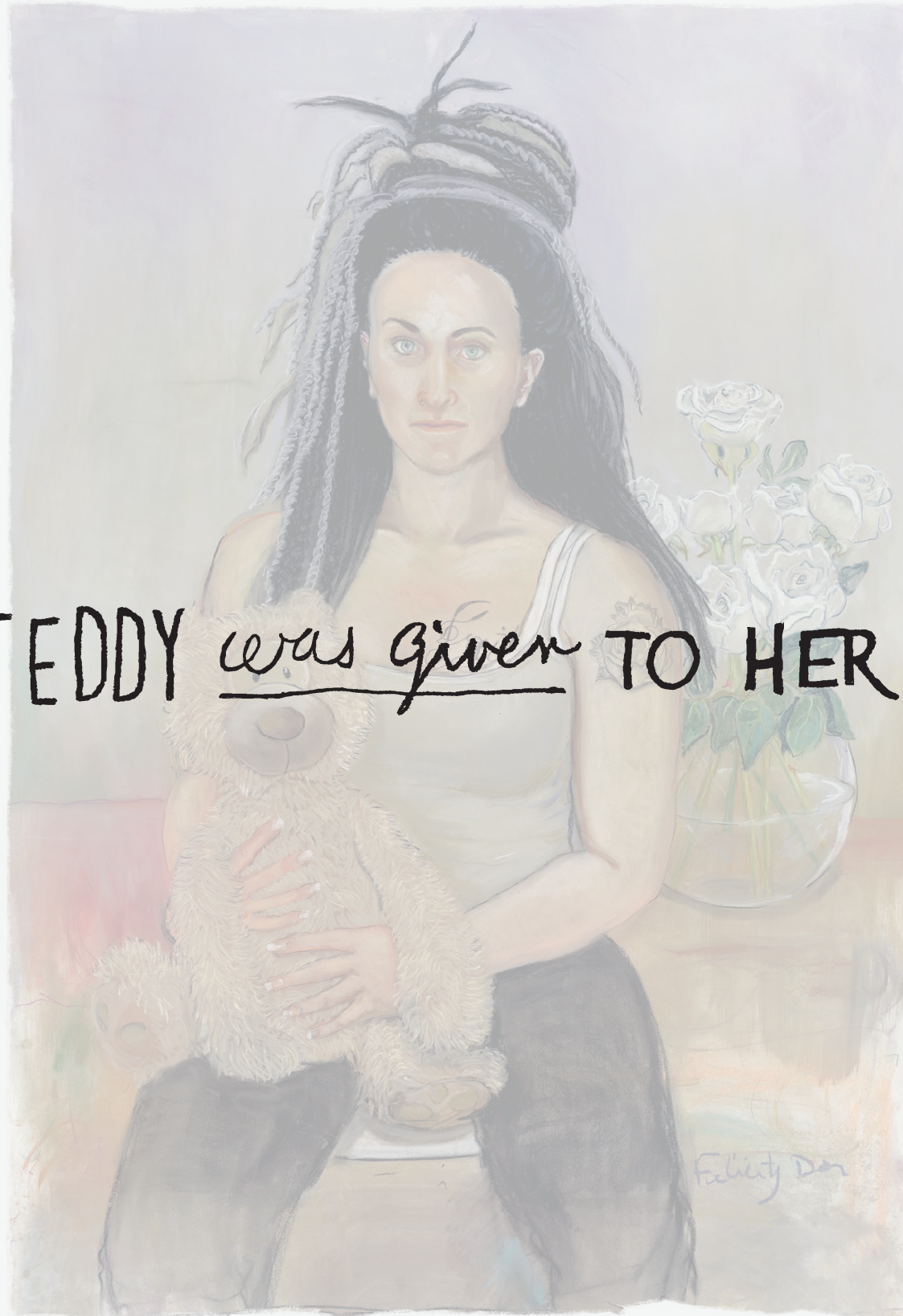
The cartoon mouse on the baby blanket mesmerized me and funny thing is, it turns out that Ava had a thing for the mouse too. We both liked the way the mouse seems to look up lovingly at the baby. Hence the title: 'THE ADORATION OF MS. MOUSE'.

*Name has been changed.

NO.9
WARRIOR
QUEEN

pastel on paper,
44" x 30" wide

GUND TEDDY was given TO HER by UGM



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pastel on paper,
44" x 30" wide

GUND TEDDY was given TO HER by UGM



NO.9
**WARRIOR
QUEEN**

This impressive looking woman, Kelly*, was staying at UGM's Sanctuary, in a determined battle to stay out of the vicious cycle of addiction. Kelly has had a lot of tough times in her past. Her very long-term and close boyfriend was cut in the back by a machete in a bar fight and subsequently became addicted to painkillers. Kelly was sexually attacked by a 'photographer' when she was working to become a model and later was sexually abused again by a workmate when working in a group home. Left traumatized and stressed, she turned to vodka as a salve. The added challenge for her is that she suffers from fibromyalgia, which wears away at her, causing pain to her very marrow. And as if that is not enough, she also has alopecia, hence her interest in adding an abundance of hair pieces to her head. She feels that both alopecia and fibromyalgia are a result of extreme distress.

The soft Gund teddy was given to her by UGM, waiting for her on her bed when she first moved into The Sanctuary. Kelly became very attached to it, cuddling it at night and while in the lounge watching TV. The teddy signifies for me a result of trauma, that is, arrested development. The white roses represent for me the direction she will go in as she pulls herself together, a place of peace.

I see Kelly as a statuesque warrior, and hope I captured that. I am grateful that various social nets are there for her, including UGM.

*Name has been changed.

NO.10

**XMAS
HAMPER**

pastel on paper,
33" x 42" wide

THE smallest IDEAS CAN BE *of* THE greatest help



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pastel on paper,
33" x 42" wide

THE smallest IDEAS CAN BE of THE greatest help





NO.10
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HAMPER**

UGM has an exciting yearly program at Xmas time of handing out approximately 180 shoeboxes or carts to Seniors and 230 hampers along with toys and necessities to families.

I met Sokanon* as she is a recipient of this program. Sokanon posed for me with her twinkling eyes and smile, a very sweet woman but emotionally struggling. While I was drawing her, she talked of family stories that were difficult, involving a seriously cruel mother, a terrible school she attended run by nuns, her children who are unfriendly towards her while suffering drug addiction and prison time. On the bright side, her stories did involve one daughter and one grandchild who are kind and love her. Because of the long, sad stories, I couldn't quite put the full twinkle in her eyes.

For Xmas, Sokanon received a hamper from UGM, which is nice, as she spent Xmas alone. UGM has been involved with her for 10 years. Naturally, she relies on UGM and is full of appreciation.

The blond woman on the right is Maria Green, Chaplain for UGM's Women and Families Outreach. She provides counseling with spiritual support to UGM guests and supervises the Women's Outreach team.

In the Hamper program, Maria supports the Hamper staff to review applications to determine qualification. The hampers are a super practical aid to those struggling with various challenges relating to poverty in the DTES. The smallest ideas can be of the greatest help.

*Name has been changed.

NO.11
**THE LAST
CHILD**

pastel on paper,
36" x 27.5" wide

the FAMILY would be **ADRIFT** without help



NO.11
**THE LAST
CHILD**

pastel on paper,
36" x 27.5" wide

The FAMILY would be **ADRIFT** without help

Felivity Don





NO.11

THE LAST CHILD

Through the Kid's Outreach Program, I met Diana*, a single mum, originally from the Caribbean, an imposing figure who wore a large lacquered wig.

Diana has 3 rambunctious boys, aged 1, 5 and 11. Each child has a different father. Diana is utterly exhausted from running after the kids, claims to have no rest at all and finds life wearing. The oldest boy attends a school in Kitsilano for kids needing one on one support. I found him to be a smart boy, very sensitive and wise. He mentioned not wanting his mum to have any more children, that three were too many already. He knows that, for a poor and single mum, having an abundance of children is too difficult financially. He also mentioned to his mum that he did not like her current boyfriend. After hearing Diana describe him, I understood his concerns completely.

The family lives in a building across from the infamous Oppenheimer Park. Diana is on a waiting list to move out of the area, sacrificing her current 3 bedroom for a 2 bedroom, as she wants to get the kids into a less dangerous neighbourhood. The oldest boy is anxious to move, is fully aware of the bad environment of the DTES.

I can only feel relief that the family has support from UGM through monthly family meals and kids' programs, which have very caring attention for the children from UGM staff. They would be adrift without help.

*Name has been changed.

NO.12

**HOMELESS WITH
DOGGIE & RATTY**

pastel on paper,
59" x 46.5" wide

she SLEPT with HER TOY DOG for comfort



NO.12

**HOMELESS WITH
DOGGIE & RATTY**

pastel on paper,
59" x 46.5" wide

she SLEPT with HER TOY DOG for comfort

IN VOID
WE
TRUST

Felicity corn



IN VOID
WE
TRUST

Felicity corn



NO.12

HOMELESS WITH DOGGIE & RATTY

When I met Brianna*, a short Cree woman from the Prairies, she was wearing exotic eye makeup and had a friendly attitude. She had with her a soft, curious little rat whom she treasures and so stays at a shelter that allows animals. She occasionally comes to UGM to eat lunch or supper.

Brianna had been living outside on the streets, choosing to sleep near 2 couples she knew, for protection. She slept with her toy dog, which was given to her by her granny and also loved by her son. I grew attached to the idea of including the dog in her portrait, trouble being, it was in storage.

After a series of failed attempts to see the dog, I finally offered to go with her to retrieve it at her previous shelter. Off we went with 2 empty suitcases, hoping to stuff the dog in one, a few clothes in the other. We were informed that she had to take all her 5 bags of belongings or nothing. Dilemma! We found a shopping cart. Down the street we trundled, Brianna pushing the shopping cart piled high with garbage bags, me pulling the 2 empty suitcases, into which none of the overstuffed bags would fit. Back at her current shelter, we unloaded the bags - no dog!

Undaunted, I decided I would imagine and paint a really sweet one. She described her toy, its size, colour and cuteness factor, how she would put it between her knees or near her chest for comfort. I worked from that.

Brianna has a lot of spunk and a surprisingly positive attitude. She is a kind person (except if she is upset, then she might beat you up) and well-liked by friends she bumped into in the streets. Brianna is no longer on street drugs, instead is on methadone. She told me, after a few hours of our hanging out together, that she turns tricks to make extra cash to support herself. She is on pain medication for her scoliosis and, to blunt her feelings, takes extra meds on the nights she goes out with men.

I would love to see her directed toward attaining real life skills and a sense of self-worth from the Sanctuary Stabilization Program at UGM. I intend to bring the application forms for her when she is ready.

*Name has been changed.

CONTRIBUTORS

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For interest in her work see Felicitydon.com

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