

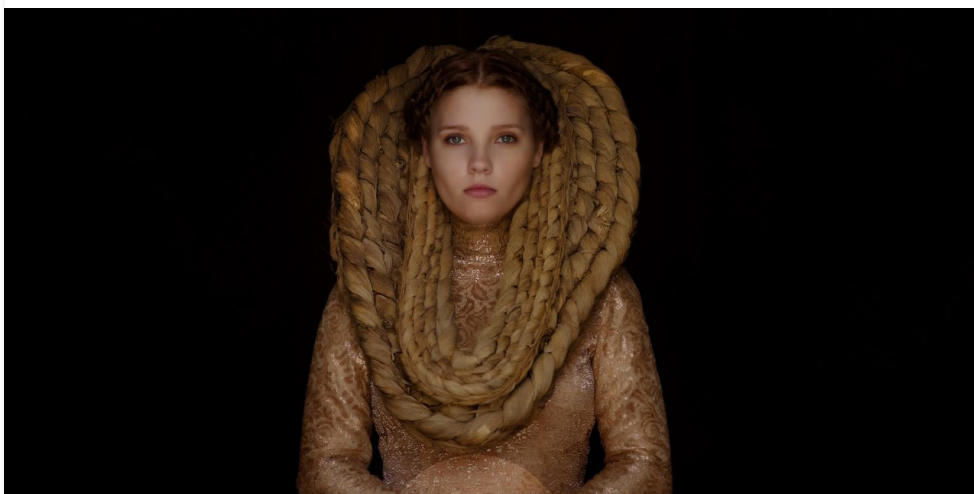
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# A Shreveport Ann Marye George

Posted by Lydia Earhart



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Alot of Ann George’s life is based on instinct. This pattern of acting on natural impulses has led George to become a world-renowned, award-winning fine arts photographer. But, she is also somewhat of an anomaly.

The pursuit of two careers guided George to two different types of success—finding one passion while another was coming to an end. Her work today has not always been her life. “There’s a whole progression of [my life] that is kind of surprising,” she said.

In Shreveport, George may be known to many as a businesswoman or a nurse. North Louisiana has been her home since she was in her early 20s. Growing up in Alexandria, she moved to pursue a career in nursing. Her degree led her to work in the intensive care unit at Louisiana State University Medical Center. After 10 years of working in the ICU, her career picked up with holding management positions in the health care industry, leading her to eventually owning (with a group of local investors and partners) and opening over 20 hospitals under the brand, LifeCare. At the time, George’s career was moving fast. The business she created was growing rapidly and her family kept growing too. But, with multiple sclerosis, George was forced to face something she wasn’t ready to hear.

It was time to slow down.

As she started to pull back from the business, another passion pushed forward. A business trip to New Orleans led her walking through the French Quarter where she stumbled on A Gallery for Fine Photography. She was

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intrigued by the building, but ended up finding a piece of art which led her to gravitate toward photography.

“All of a sudden, I saw this image on the wall. I felt like someone had squirted a syringe full of warm gooey liquid in my chest,” George said. “In that immediate instance, I realized what art was about. I can remember right where that image was in the gallery. It was by a woman named Josephine Sacabo.”

The image was titled “Susana San Juan” by Sacabo. As a photographer with over 30 years of experience, Sacabo has been featured in more than 40 galleries nationwide, has won numerous awards and is in many permanent collections. Sacabo spends half her time in Mexico and the other in New Orleans, which gave George the opportunity to meet her.

“I said in my heart, one day, I would like to create an image to make someone feel the way this one just made me feel,” she said. Taking that inspiration and enlightenment with her and after stepping away from day operations at LifeCare, George got serious about photography. She started taking workshops, classes and reading any article or book about photography. What launched her photography career was her mentor, who turned out to be Sacabo, after taking a workshop lead by her in New Orleans.

Seeing the potential in George, Sacabo encouraged her to enter an art competition. “She taught me to be fearless, because I was so scared to put my work out there. [Sacabo] called it, ‘kicking me out of the nest.’ [It was]

unceremoniously falling—flat out on my butt—and then I got up [from being pushed out of the nest] and flew away.”

This was her opportunity for criticism as the competition had thousands of other entries. George came in second place next to Tom Chambers, a noteworthy photographer. “It felt almost like it was a ‘thank you’ gift from LifeCare,” she said. “I still grieve, I had to look at it like a season and God had me there for a reason. And then he moved me out to do something different.”

After nearly winning the competition, George continued to work with Sacabo, fine-tuning the photogravure technique she learned in the first workshop she took with her mentor and now friend. Photogravure is an inked process which can alter the state of an image.

“There’s a lot of crossover in my work. I paint on my work. I glaze and I watercolor and color pencil on top of my photography. When I used to print my artwork in the darkroom, those images seem to have more depth. When I moved to digital, I lost that aesthetic. I felt like I had to put something else on it to give it some texture or weight or depth, which is why I like to do the photogravure technique.

“There’s a certain ceremonial aspect to printing an image and when you just hit ‘print,’ you don’t have the emotional connection, I believe, to the image. I want to take it after [it is printed] and put my hands on it.”

As she photographs, George has a keen understanding of what she is looking for in an image. Her work represents her life for the most part, and her images aren't made specifically to just sell. She may go through hundreds of images featuring the same story, but it is the ones that speak to her that she considers finished.

"I may not have an idea of what I am going to do, but then [my assistant and I] work and we end up with something that shows a part of my life or just a metaphor for just something that happens. I fall into it," she said. "I just let myself go. I may have a plan. I may have a shot list and that gets me [out of being] nervous when I start, because that gives me pressure to create."

With every photograph, George is telling a story. As a storyteller, her personal journey through life centers around the stories told. Her artwork may not give the audience the answer to all her metaphors or give direct insight to what she went through, but her work pieces together life.

"One project I did was about a fear. I found my way out of most of the trappings of fear. It's the story of three chapters of enlightenment. I use the wolf to symbolize fear. And in the consecutive images, the protagonist is always intertwined somehow with the wolf. In the end, the wolf is always there, but is contained and controlled," she said. "I would like people to get something from [my work], but it is also my goal to tell the story for me."

In addition to meaning, there is a feeling George tries to invoke. "Pleasure," she said, "and to enjoy the artwork. It

doesn't have to be much deeper than that. There is a certain language I know now that art communicates and it's not with words. But there is a rhythm, a diction and symbols that represent feelings and emotions."

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