

Deborah Glen Story



Marilyn Kellar

The Moment When My Artistic Soul Was Fully Ignited!

In college, I earned two Fine Arts degrees prior to receiving my Standard Secondary Teaching Credential. My most treasured post was teaching Art and Home Economics at a private school in Beverly Hills.

Then I returned home - to Ventura - to marry the boy next door. When I got back to Ventura, for the sake of additional fulfillment, I returned to Ventura College to take classes that I was interested in, but didn't have time for, when pursuing my AA and BA degrees.

One of those classes that I really wanted to take was "American Art History," with my all-time favorite art history teacher, Bill McEnroe.

After I was enrolled in this wonderful American Art History class, we were given advance notice of making the choice between two major assignments.

- 1) Do research and write a paper, or
- 2) Create a work of art that related to the class

As the weeks passed by, one day the class was shown the movie, “The Art of the Conservator,” about how works of art are restored to be kept looking as they did when they were created.

One of the paintings featured in that film was..

Portrait of Deborah Glen

Oil on canvas

ca. 1737

by Peter Vanderlyn

57 ½" x 35 ¾"

which is in the collection of Abby
Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center

Williamsburg, Virginia



The moment I saw that painting, it awakened and diffused to the very fiber of my, heretofore, untapped artistic identity!

I could not go to sleep that night before imagining re-creating my own interpretation of that painting - in the form of fabric collage - putting REAL clothes on Deborah Glen! I knew that was going to be my art project for the class!

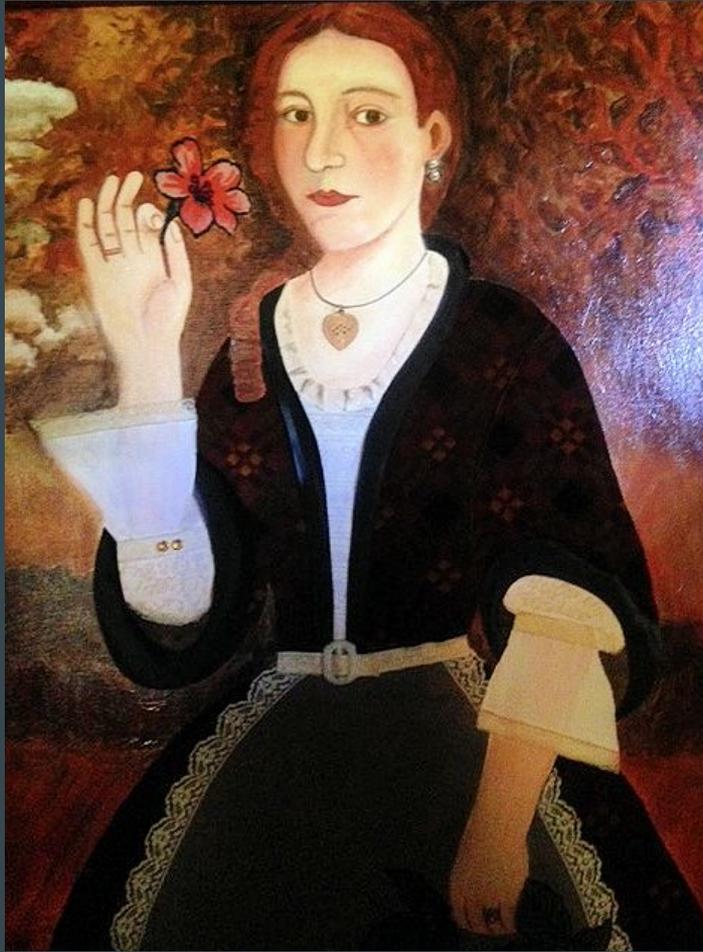
My dear father, who was very handy with tools, replicated for me the duplicate size of the original painting, and even made and stained my frame to match the redwood paneling around my fireplace where my Deborah would find her permanent home.

In growing up, my sweet, devoted mother had made all my clothes. I'd had so many happy memories of going with her to the fabric stores, picking out patterns, and choosing materials for my clothing. I loved imbibing all the sights and smells of all the accoutrements that were available to adorn creative sewing projects.

So it was a full-on adventure for me to go to the fabric store to choose what my Deborah would be wearing, and also to locate other collage items such as the real necklace she is wearing, hand-sewn-on buttons, a belt buckle, and even a real earring!

When I brought my Deborah in to Mr. McEnroe's class for presentation, I'll always remember his exuberant praise, "Oh WOW! You get an A!"





When my Deborah was hung in her place of honor over the fireplace in our living room, there was an unforeseen reward that I discovered that was, to me, even more lively than the original! My Deborah's eyes follow you around the room where, in the original, her eyes are looking ever so slightly to the left.

When I discovered that, she became even more personal to me. Almost like when Michelangelo carved his statue of Moses and it had become so real-life to him that when he stood back and gazed at it, he yelled, "Speak!"

After this long love affair with the subject that I recreated in the mid-70's, it was HUGE on my bucket list to make a solo 9,000-mile Jeep trek in 2016 to see the original "Portrait of Deborah Glen" in person.

While on this long trip, I also visited the Glen family homestead in Scotia, New York, where Deborah's original Dutch shoes are on display as well as other important family historical memorabilia.





In 2017, when I was forced to evacuate because of the threat of The Thomas Fire, my Deborah Glen collage was one of the treasures I took with me.

In June of 2018, my Deborah was paraded down the runway in a fashion show in the aftermath of The Thomas Fire held at The Museum of Ventura County entitled, “Wearing Our Stories: Rising from the Ashes of The Thomas Fire.”

I'll conclude with the statement that the awakening in me of the love of folk art, because of the "Portrait of Deborah Glen," has diffused every fiber of my artistic sense. It has influenced the art that I've collected throughout my home.

Original Artwork



Inspired Artwork

