

Artist Kimberly Forness Wilson Turned A Personal Tragedy Into A Gift

By Renee Phillips

Kimberly Forness
Wilson holds
up one of her
imaginative
watercolor
paintings in one
of her workshops

RIGHT
A participant in
one of Wilson's
workshops
enjoys the
creative process
of spreading
watercolors onto
canvas



Kimberly Forness Wilson is a multi-talented artist, singer, and inventor from Maui, Hawaii and Grand Forks, North Dakota. In addition to having an accomplished art career she presents a variety of creativity workshops to help people in recovery, individuals with mental challenges, children with special needs, and at-risk youth.

The artist derives enormous satisfaction in teaching others, "how to tap into the creative force which is within all of us."

For five years Wilson has been presenting "Mental Health Art Tribe", a workshop designed for artists dealing with mental health issues. She takes pride in the fact that her students have received several awards including the Mayor's Choice Award and her group has received the keys to the city of Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Prior to becoming a full-time artist Wilson enjoyed many years in the theater and choir, until 2003 when her life as a singer took a sudden turn.

She explains, "I turned my head and had a freak accident and fractured my skull. This resulted in the loss of my singing voice and required surgery and years of therapeutic recovery. To distract me from the pain my mother encouraged me to begin painting. The act of being creative set my mind on a clear path to healing."

Wilson has adopted a positive attitude about having to give up a career in the theater and states philosophically, "The lesson is clear for me. A tragedy has become a gift that I am privileged to share."

While many individuals might view her experience as a fatality, Wilson views it as being given an opportunity to grow. The artist has written, "Accepting the challenge of the chaos of pain and turning it into a meaningful, creative experience... this is the basic assignment of life on earth."

Wilson's musical talent as a singer and songwriter is reflected in her ebullient semi-abstract paintings in watercolors and acrylic that radiate a symphony of color, movement and fluidity. As the artist states, "There is frequently an inner musical accompaniment so I move between art, lyric and song.

It is an ecstatic experience and I hope it translates to the viewer."

She explains, "I let myself fall into a color or a shape or a line and follow its natural evolution. I try not to have a preconceived notion but act as observer to the natural course of the color and shape of the piece. I believe it is important to be open to discovery as this is the door through which inspiration slips in."

Her unique artistic expression is a balance between sophisticated lyricism and childlike spontaneity. With unfiltered imagination she creates fanciful compositions that are adorned with animal and sea creatures that seem to emerge from folklore and fairy tales.

Inspiration for Wilson's art originates from nature, music and dreams in addition to her cultural influences that include Scandinavian, Native American, Hawaiian and Asian.

Her whimsical paintings offer a respite and escape from the confines of reality, pain and suffering.

Wilson's art is in many private and public collections throughout the world — from Saudi Arabia to the Hawaiian Islands, including Rochester's Ronald McDonald House.

She is the recipient of numerous awards including the NoVac's "Artist of the Year" Award. She also received the Dawn Bonner Professional Award from Consumer Family Network for her healing art work with adults in mental health recovery.

Her artwork has been exhibited in many galleries primarily in Minnesota and North Dakota. It has been featured in many publications and was on the cover of Woman's Day Eating Light magazine.

Wilson is also a Featured Artist in the Manhattan Arts International curated Art Program, based in New York, NY.

One of Wilson's most popular workshops is titled "Healthy Living Through Art", designed to assist participants -- from children to adults -- in exploring their health and wellness through weekly art projects. She also presents "Joy of Art" for individuals and groups



Kimberly Forness Wilson, Miss Tako's Extraordinary Day, watercolor and mixed media, 20" x 24"



Kimberly Forness Wilson, Animagination, watercolor and gouache on paper, 24" x 20"

several times each year and co-creates healing works of art with other artists.

She emphasizes, "There is a rich part of our artist community that remains unseen due to the challenges one must deal with that accompany mental illness. All these people need are materials and opportunity and the rich treasures of this group are readily and at last seen."

Wilson reminds us that sometimes a devastating loss or illness might also serve as a monumental turning point in one's life. Fueled by compassion she is on a mission to share her creativity and make a difference in the lives of many individuals who are struggling with physical and mental challenges.

Visit Kimberly Forness Wilson's website at www.kimberlyfornesswilson.com