

# Check Out Linda Harrison, aka Red's Story

April 2021

Today we'd like to introduce you to Linda Harrison, aka Red.

**Hi Linda, so excited to have you with us today. What can you tell us about your story?**

I grew up in the small, sugarcane farming community of White Castle, LA, the fourth of seven kids. Whether preparing meals, organizing the household chores and generally looking after my younger siblings while my parents worked, I always possessed fierce self-discipline. Art and creatively have always been part of my life. My parents and parental grandmother were avid amateur artists. They painted landscapes and still life in oils, charcoals or watercolors as well as creating ceramics and other assorted crafts. I, of course, participated in many of these activities and much more, such as knitting, crocheting, mosaics, designing my own clothes, making home decorations and yes, painting. However, the realism of painting landscapes, flowers or fruit did not appeal to me.

Being an artist was not part of my original plan in life. Nor did I give it any thought, for I was focused on the business world. I received an academic scholarship to the University of Central Florida in Orlando, earning a bachelor's degree in Marketing, and, in short order, obtaining an MBA at Florida Institute of Technology, graduating Summa Cum Laude in both academic programs. My next 25+ years were marked developing solutions in healthcare, logistics, information technology and, finally, forming my own consulting company in Denver, Colorado. However, the pull of creative expression, art and nature were ever-present. It wasn't till living in Colorado in 2001 that I began creating my abstracts as a hobby. On a cool spring day, in the foothills outside of Denver, I felt compelled to express the beauty around me; the creative side began to assert itself. I had a desire to paint, but not just any painting. I wanted to paint an abstract, something I had never done before. I rushed around my home and grabbed an old decorative painting from the wall, collected every available house paint, spray paint, magic marker, brush, sponge and tool. What emerged changed me. For I found the one outlet that gave me unlimited joy and freedom – painting abstracts.

**Alright, so let's dig a little deeper into the story – has it been an easy path overall and if not, what were the challenges you've had to overcome?**

I think any small business owner will discover many bumps and potholes along the way. I believe this is especially the case for marketing yourself in a new world. One where you need to learn the business from inside and out. Like starting over from the beginning. When I discovered that folks wanted to purchase my abstracts, I was thrilled. But how do I get my work out there? How do I still run my full-time management consultant small business and start a brand-new art business at the same time? I limped along for several years before I recently decided to take the plunge to devote full-time to my Strokes by Red art business.

In January 2020, I retired my management consultant business and turned my full attention to Strokes by Red. Oh, just in time for COVID-19. I had four different shows lined up for early spring 2020; and I am sure you can figure out what happens to them. Yes, all were cancelled due to COVID. But my determination didn't stop. I look at obstacles as events to overcome so I needed to find other ways to reach art collectors with my artwork. Being a full-time

artist is not about painting all the time. In fact, I spend most weekdays investigating various avenues for my artwork, researching marketing opportunities to include online outlets, galleries, property managers, and interior designers. I also needed to learn about SEO, image optimization, goggle analytics, Facebook and Instagram platforms and so much more. I had to do research to determine what improvements to make to my website for audience appeal. In addition, I had to figure out how to add a cart to my website for online shopping but still keep the costs within a budget. As a small business owner, one who is determined to succeed, I faced each obstacle with tenacity and the will to succeed. I don't believe in failure. The road won't be smooth but I am thrilled to devote my time to creating my business around my passion – contemporary abstracts.



Linda

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**As you know, we're big fans of you and your work. For our readers who might not be as familiar what can you tell them about what you do?**

Creating abstract art allows me to freely express my creative spirit with imagination not bound by reality. Through the use of color, movement, textures, and shapes, my abstracts come to life. I create with brushes, palette knives and often just my fingers using oils and acrylics. I paint on small to very large canvases (72" x 72"). I love the free-flowing movement of abstracts. It is my inner voice. Art is an extraordinary world with unlimited boundaries, opening doors to imagination, creativity and spirit. This is my world. I always feel free, alive and in touch with my inner spirit when I have a brush in hand and direct the paint to fly across the canvas. My creativity is fired by Red. "Red" is my art signature (not just the color of my hair). The process itself is simple. Once I select a few colors, the influence of Red (strength, passion and spirit) takes over. Strength to express myself freely and allow my inspiration to dance across the canvas, - Passion to live life to its fullest, - Spirit to reflect on something greater and more meaningful than myself. The actual composition of the work usually evolves to music: blues, rock n roll, alternative or anything soulful and energetic. Music has always been a huge part of my life and painting to the rhythms, especially the blues, helps quiet my mind and release the creative spirit. I paint intuitively which means I don't choose the content, it chooses me. I can definitely say my best creations are when I let my hands do the talking. The result is a complex layering, a blending of colors expressed in dynamic and fluid brush strokes that convey my art. My style is simple: no rules. Painting with acrylics and oils allows me the freedom to spontaneously express my creativity through colorful abstracts and unique spirit. My art is an adventure, at times daring, whimsical, passionate, and challenging; but always expressive. I channel my unconscious energy into contemporary abstracts with vibrant colors, textures and movements using acrylics and oils. I create abstract art to engage the emotion of the viewer, free of the distractions that painting immediately recognizable objects presents. This is my venue in which I communicate my inner voice and being. I can express myself without rules. I want all my paintings to be a positive experience, something the viewers will enjoy gazing into. Also, my paintings do not live alone. I create art, but I am a little bit of a writer. For each painting, I write a story to better connect you with my paintings. These stories may have some history, uplifting quotes, discussion about music, it all depends on the piece itself. Since music is so integral to me and my art, you will often find my stories discussing a particular song or artist that I am fond of. I even title many of my paintings from a portion of a lyric or a song title that has especially moved me. I thoroughly enjoy writing the stories. It seems to add a deeper dimension to my artwork and provides the viewer additional insight to my work. There will never be enough time to experience all the depths, excitement and splendor of creating art. I cherish each day I paint to explore and reveal the nature of Red. I hope my creations touch each viewer in their own unique way. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perceptive, my feelings and my world of art with you. Dare to Feel, Red

**Before we let you go, we've got to ask if you have any advice for those who are just starting out?**

As artists, we receive a plethora of feedback from a diverse and vast audience, many who we believe are quite knowledgeable in the arts. We even stop and reflect on this feedback trying to absorb it into our being. We try to please others with our creativity by mistakenly thinking we need to listen and abide by the many voices of direction. "The hardest battle you're ever going to fight is the battle to be just you". Leo Buscaglia I found myself doing just this to the point that I lost myself and stifled the essence of me. I was not being true to me since I was too busy trying to convey someone else's thoughts. I am an artist that needs to create from deep within my conscious without preconceived directions and outcomes. My best work is a result of me not thinking but doing, by letting my hands guide my strokes without my brain giving commands. Yes, we can learn and grow from others; but I find my best achievements come from the inspiration that is waiting to be released by my inner self. So, my strongest advice is to remain true to yourself - be bold to be you. Don't copy what is popular art, don't be a follower, be a creator. Create what pleases you and makes you happy. Create the essence of you, not what someone thinks you should be. "Be original; don't be scared of being bold." Ed Sheeran "Be bold, be brave enough to be your true self." Queen Latifah As Aristotle said, "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom". So I believe to reach your greatest potential you cannot copy others but be an original without fear to create and yes, perhaps have some do overs. But in the end, Finding Your Way by remaining true to your creative soul. "You were born an original. Don't die a copy." - John Mason. I think as an artist, you need not hesitate or be fearful to create. Just let your hands or your mind represent your courageous and daring artistic abilities. You might just find your dreams will come true with a little boldness. One more important recommendation for artists. Just creating your art is not going to make you successful. It is realizing that this is a business, and you must invest your time and do your due diligence as a business owner in order to succeed. Creating artwork alone, will not make you successful - you must figure out the avenues to get your artwork to art collectors and be a professional business owner. Other words, Determination, confidence, not giving up, believing in oneself when others don't and practicing your craft by creating. Being yourself, when others want you to change. So, I close with my motto - Dream. Believe. Create. Succeed.

