

Heart. ♥ & ART



Therapy through art workshops for refugee, asylum seeker and immigrant women



My vision as a painter, and a social entrepreneur is to use different forms of art and visualization to ignite creativity, create community connections and bonds between displaced women and women victims of gender-based violence. In our times all women we share a common element: a very vivid need of connection in an increasingly disconnecting world. Single or married, pregnant or postpartum, we all strive in different levels. In our daily routine, there is little time left for intimate expression so vital to our inner psychology and self-worth, while we allocate time mostly caring for others; elders, husband or children and money making activities.

Heart & Art program is an invitation of creating a new space of interaction and exploration where women from different paths of life meet, create and exchange, by using different art expressions and visualization. My intention is to demonstrate the power of art in terms of inclusivity and its limitless reach. The same workshops have already been performed, in Canada, Bolivia and in Greece with local and refugee women; this Art program is designed in such a way honoring cultural and social diversity.



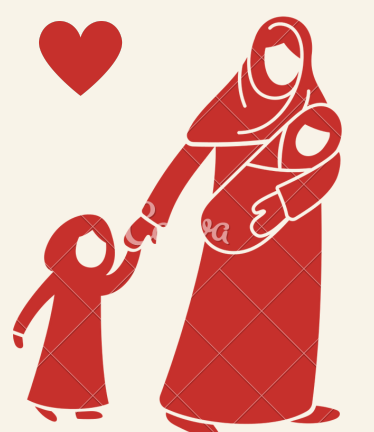
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There are nine workshops in Heart & Art program with a big spectrum of artistic approaches, but always with a focus on community, self-expression and personal growth. These workshops bring the women in the center of attention as life creators, protectors and empowered global citizens with choices. Motherhood is treated as a new enhanced state that adds to womanhood, rather than a social burden of daily obligations as usually modern mothers experience their new role.

Some of the workshops are designed based on information from my art book of birthing stories “Birth as you please” where mothers from different parts of the world shared how they birthed their children, their feelings and thoughts around their pregnancy and birth giving experience. I delved deep into these testimonies and identified the common topics that arise, despite of their geographical, social and cultural differences. These common themes seem to have influence and value on how women walk into motherhood and it is an empowering practice to open even more discussions with more and more women.

Heart & Art program is about all persons that consider themselves as women with a big emphasis to enhance womanhood and possibilities of expression, and living a life with their rights easily and fully enjoyed, as for example their right to mother a child or not. Specifically displaces women leave their torn countries often times with their numerous children or as single mothers. Their role as a mother has a great significance on how they and the world perceive themselves.



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Through Heart & Art workshops, the women will find themselves answering simple and difficult questions, such as “What is home?”, “What are my deepest unshaken values?”, “how did life change since I became a mother?” “What means the word “refugee”? “What are the local cultural customs that are similar or different to my culture” “What are my roles at home, past & present?” “How did my female ancestors birth their children compared to modern medicalized births? What is the value and role of the father during pregnancy, birth giving and postpartum?”, “What is my inner gift that no one can take away from me?” and others. The answers to those questions that they will discover through art will be their clues and guides to a more empowered understanding of their role as a woman and/or a mother.



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- Mothers within mothers
 - Honoring ancestry
- Inner Child
 - Care
- Masks & Mirrors
 - Accepting Oneself
- Home & Dreams
 - Feeling safe
- Labyrinth
 - Redefine
- Painting – Blindfolded
 - Trust
- Heart & Art
 - Love
- Group Painting & Story telling
 - Connect
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- Mothers within mothers
Honoring ancestry



In this workshop women, mothers or mothers to be, go deep in life process by the use of art and visualisation. The idea behind the workshop mothers within mothers, is that of guiding the women back to their ancestor's womb that created them and to their own womb where themselves created or will create life. The intention is to honor and heal the intergenerational linkage of mothers within their mothers and with their children, in a community safe space. This workshop is designed for women from different cultures and socioeconomic status.



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- Inner Child
Care

In this workshop the women have the chance to reestablish a relationship with their inner child, with its joy, dreams fulfilled or not, and encounter with a spectrum of emotions. It is a very significant and empowering process to acknowledge its existence and to symbolically recall their younger selves, visualize them, paint them and gain insight that is useful in their life decisions as adults. It is a way of going back to unresolved traumas and by expressing them creatively they get the chance to be healed.



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- *Masks & Mirrors*

- Accepting Oneself*

*In this workshop the women get in touch with their role as a woman, a mother, a refugee, a world citizen, and deeper with their true identity and desires. The idea behind the workshop **Masks & Mirrors** is that of challenging the notion of who we are, how we see ourselves and how others see us. Masks and mirrors will be used as guides to shift and empower our self perception. We do not see our faces, only through the help of a mirror or through the facial expression of the gaze of someone else looking at us. And when we see our reflection through a mirror, how do we see ourselves? Is our gaze strict and demanding or soft and tender?*



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- Home & Dreams

Feeling safe

The idea behind the workshop Home & Dreams is that of acknowledging what has been lost by leaving one's country, what has been gained through the journey and what is to come. Refugee women have left their physical home, where it entailed all the memories of who they are and who they were dreaming to become. In their journey the safety of home has been taken away at a violent way. They connect in the present to their past home for strength and to their future home for hope.



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- Labyrinth
Redefine

In this workshop, the women are creating their own labyrinth, as a metaphor of how life paths and possibilities sometimes close or open. First, we are using dramatherapy techniques to actually walk into the labyrinth, and discover the inner compass of redefining ones life when it feels there is no exit or way out of a difficult situation. Labyrinths in ancient times were built to protect something precious, or to have in control a verocious creature such as the minotaur. Then the women while painting their own labyrinths, they identify their inner “minotaurs”, fears, traumas and they walk out to life, with wisdom and courage.



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- Painting – Blindfolded

Trust

In "Painting - Blindfolded " workshop the aim is to gain trust of our creative abilities while painting on a canvas with eyes closed. This experience can be transferred on real life when there is uncertainty and the women need to find strength from their inner selves on how to lead their lives. This art therapy technique is about connecting to the women's unconscious and gaining insight for their strengths or blockages, desires and dreams.



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- Heart & Art

Love

Heart & Art Workshop brings together all these elements that women feel good about themselves that they want to protect and enjoy. Heart is a crosscultural symbol of love. Through colors, symbols arise that are important to them on how to practice self love and through creativity this feeling of self love can be reached and women can come back to it in their daily lives.



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- Group Painting & Story telling

Connect

In this workshop the aim is that women come together to create in a single canvas. They collaborate for a common cause. The gathering of women in many cultures has great psychological significance for coping with life. In the case of many displaced women the support of a community is what keeps them strong and persevering during their journey. In Group Painting & Story telling women will share their stories and paint in community.



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- Mandala & I

What cannot be taken away – inner truth

The idea behind the workshop Mandala & I is that of going deeper to discover each woman's anchors and gifts in life. Mandala painting helps to reach the unconscious and its messages that are not reachable with the logic mind. In the case of refugee women it is often that their self identity has been enriched but also suffered during their journey. Some women can sing, others bake, others make crafts, others love to write. Each one as a unique human being have their one skills and aptitudes. In Mandala & I we are exploring the question "What do I love doing?" "What makes me happy? What is of my personal story that I value most?"

