

Mary's Doorway Philosophy..... by deborah fagan carpenter



“Let’s stay together and be as rusty as that ole tin.” This is one example of the straightforward wisdom flowing from the heart and hands of folk artist Mary Proctor- an uncomplicated, optimistic outlook for relationships,

friendships and marriage. Her down-to-earth insight and uplifting spirit is brought to life on hundreds of old doors, windows, and other found objects in the form of words and captivating primitive paintings. The vibrant, imaginative work fills every square inch of the space she leases in the Tallahassee Mall, but has also found its way into such prestigious spots as the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

“I been writin’ and writin’ ever since the Lord told me to get a door and write on it.” In 1994, Mary Proctor’s Grandmother, Aunt and Uncle all perished in a house fire, and Mary fell into a bottomless depression. Deeply spiritual, she prayed for guidance, and was led to put her feelings and the lessons she’d learned from her best friend and Grandmother onto old doors. Working at the time at a flea market where the doors were an easy acquisition, she began emptying her devastated soul onto the doors with the words and paintings that would





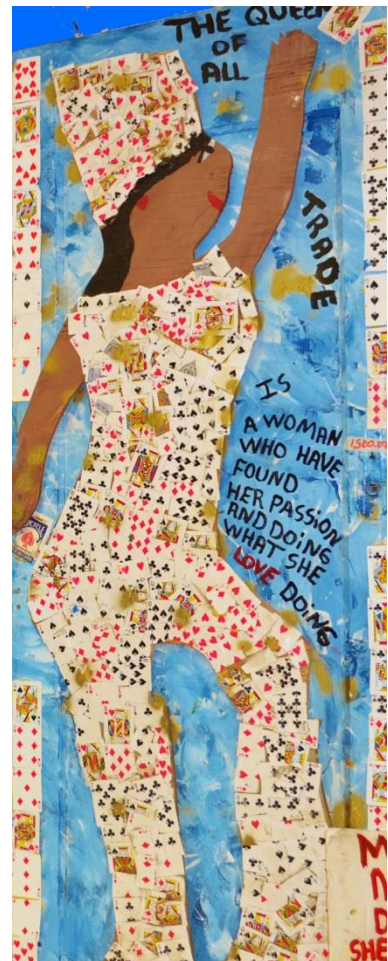
eventually heal her heart and give her an awareness that her Grandmother would always be with her in spirit.

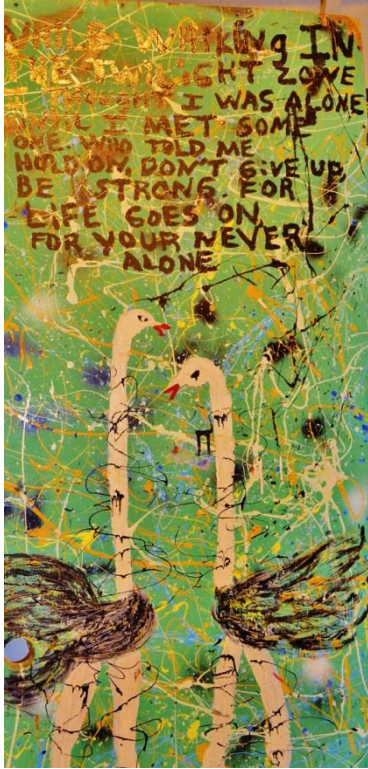


“Before I knew it, I had a yard full of stuff I had written and painted on!” The butterflies, blue willows and peonies of her childhood, accompanied by her Grandmother’s practical spirituality, commenced to appear on countless doors and found objects. “Remember Grandma” was her constant focus, and the more she created, the better she felt, having no idea that what she was doing was making art. What she did know was that she had found a way to relieve the pain she had endured from a broken heart.

A car screeching to a halt in front of her house changed life as Mary Proctor knew it. Tricia Collins, owner of the *Grand Salon Gallery* in the SoHo district of New York City immediately recognized the work as a world-class example of folk art and was beyond ecstatic at her chance discovery. Mary however, was skeptical about Collins’ enthusiasm and declaration that the work was the best example of folk art she’d seen in a long time, having no idea that it was art at all, folk or otherwise. To her complete astonishment, the woman offered her five thousand dollars for the purchase of ten of her doors, and reappeared the next day with a truck to transport them to Manhattan.

“Lord, I ain’t made a hundred dollars in a month in this place! What’s wrong with this woman?” Mary hurriedly helped Collins load the truck, fearful that she would come to her senses and change her mind. Not only was Mary incredulous, but her husband thought she’d robbed a bank, having himself dismissed the work as child’s play! Mary





explained to him that God had directed her to paint the doors, and this was the result! The purchase was only the beginning of the life changing course for Mary, as Collins made a subsequent trip and purchased seventy five pieces to be used in a one-woman show for her at the SoHo gallery. So it was that in 1996, Mary went to New York City to see her work beautifully displayed on crisp white gallery walls, and to witness purchase after purchase by people willing to pay up to seven thousand dollars each for her treasured doors.

“When people heard about my show, they started coming around buying the work, afraid I was going to sell out before they could get some of it!” Mary developed a following, and has since participated in countless shows across Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana, and has work in numerous collections. The work can now be purchased at her leased space in the Tallahassee Mall, or on her official website, [www.missionarymary.com](http://www.missionarymary.com).

“Art will never tell you nothin’ but the truth.” Led to her creative path through a series of tragic events, Mary Proctor has found her mission in life and her way to communicate with her God and the world. Her belief that there is truth in art and her certainty that people continue to seek it because they know that, solidifies her vigilance to spread her message through the painted and written word. “This is my communication line to God. This is my expression. The Church of Art.”

