

'Dynamic, multi-ethnic art'

Textile artist Madona Cole-Lacy, 60-something, North Bellmore

A bit of background: Cole-Lacy grew up in Sierra Leone. As a young girl, she said her parents served others through adult literacy, education and various community service initiatives, a commitment that also inspired her. "My artistic journey began back in the days when, as a young child, I would go home from school and do sketches of family members, paintings of my garden, sew dolls and make clothes for them. I was so obsessed with art that my high school art teacher, Mrs. Celestine Blake, advocated for me to be the school's first science student to be granted permission to study art. The absence of distinction between culture and art in the African setting was quite fascinating to me. . . . One did not have to make trips to the museum to appreciate art."

How is it you came to be an artist?

"I do not recall any conscious effort to be an artist. It is rather that I came to recognize and appreciate the artist within me earlier on in my life and consequently chose an academic path that would afford me the opportunity to maximize the potential for me to operate in that capacity."

What do you want your artwork to reflect?

"I want my artwork to reflect the common thread that binds all mankind, through the projection of my appreciation for, and the celebration of multi-ethnic art and culture as dynamic, and a major contributor to functional and aesthetic art around the world. . . . Through my brand of visual expressions, I am able to create African-inspired wearable art, dignity headwear for hair loss and wardrobe enhancement for women. I feel a sense of accomplishment when I provide a wearable art solution for someone who may not be able to readily find what they want in the commercial



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Above, Madona Cole-Lacy hand screens at her North Bellmore home. Left, a piece of her wearable art, and below, a silk work called "Fitting In."



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marketplace. When I conduct and facilitate multi-ethnic art-related cultural enrichment workshops, I break down barriers between people and make the world a smaller place."

What advice do you have for artists in any stage of their career?

1. Be true to yourself and always stand up for what you believe in. 2. Surround yourself with other artists and art

professionals who embrace the concept of giving back and paying it forward — people who are willing to point you in the right direction and help you succeed. 3. Do not sell yourself short over the prom-

ise of being an overnight sensation. 4. Do not allow anyone to downplay your importance as an artist. Artists are just as capable of being as analytical as they are of being creative."

What attracted you to the Art League exhibit, or did they approach you?

"I have been a member of the Art League of Long Island for many years now, and was honored to have been asked to participate in the planning committee for this exhibition. . . . This is refreshing to me, as one who has been on the receiving end of the restrictions and rejections levied by calls for art submissions that were expected to be presented 'framed,' with much disregard for the artist who might want to drape his or her art or even present it in the form of a wearable piece."

Parting words: "It is the way that you position yourself as an artist that will determine your worth to those you serve."