

## Painted Portraits

Talented local portrait artists run the spectrum from traditional to contemporary

By Sharon Jaffe Dan

*"If the man who paints only the tree, or flower, or other surface he sees before him were an artist, the king of artists would be the photographer. It is for the artist to do something beyond this: in portrait painting to put on canvas something more than the face the model wears for that one day; to paint the man, in short, as well as his features."*

—James McNeill Whistler,  
*Propositions*, 1890

The tradition of portrait painting is alive and well in the Washington area. Often commissioned as a gift or to mark a special occasion, a portrait is a lasting image that can become an heirloom as a family passes it from generation to generation.

A number of artists in the region specialize in portraiture. From traditional oils to more modern interpretations, their styles suit any type of home.

Following is a selection of some of the area's most notable portrait artists.



### Debra Halprin: A Family Legacy

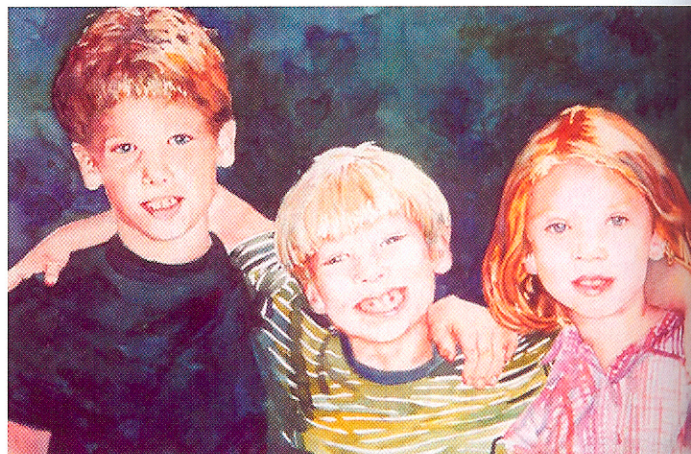
In a way, Debra Halprin started studying art at the age of five, when she was living with her grandparents in New Jersey. Her grandmother, Ceil Grayer, was a watercolor artist and teacher who studied with Edgar Whitney. Halprin recalls sitting through some of Grayer's classes. "I would doodle and play and that was my childhood experience with art," she says.

Halprin didn't pick it up again until she began taking private art classes with Maryland artist Firouzeh Sadeghi in 1997. "She brought me

from doing stick figures to what I'm doing now," which is painting watercolors. "Maybe it's just in the genes," Halprin says.

Though she paints landscapes, still lifes and even estate and pet portraits, the bulk of Halprin's work is human portraiture. While about half of her work is centered around traditional watercolor, the other half is a contemporary style that she's developed in the vein of Andy Warhol's photographs. In this three-color process, Halprin first draws the composition in pencil, then paints in yellows, reds and finally uses many colors in tandem to create blacks. "It gives the painting a modern effect," she explains.

Her traditional watercolors are also more impressionistic in comparison to typical oil paintings, simply because of the ephemeral quality of the water-based medium. "Watercolor lets you leave enough to the imagination to make a painting more interesting to look at," she says. To Halprin, creating interest in the "negative space" is just as important as capturing an accurate likeness of her subjects. "You want the whole painting to look interesting," she explains.



Debra Halprin (left) paints traditional portraits in watercolor (top), as well as in a more contemporary style (above).

Many of Halprin's commissions are gifts from one family member to another. "It's something people really cherish as an original piece of art," she says.

For more information, contact Debra Halprin in her Sandy Spring, Maryland, studio at (301) 260-9701 or visit [www.halprinart.com](http://www.halprinart.com).

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