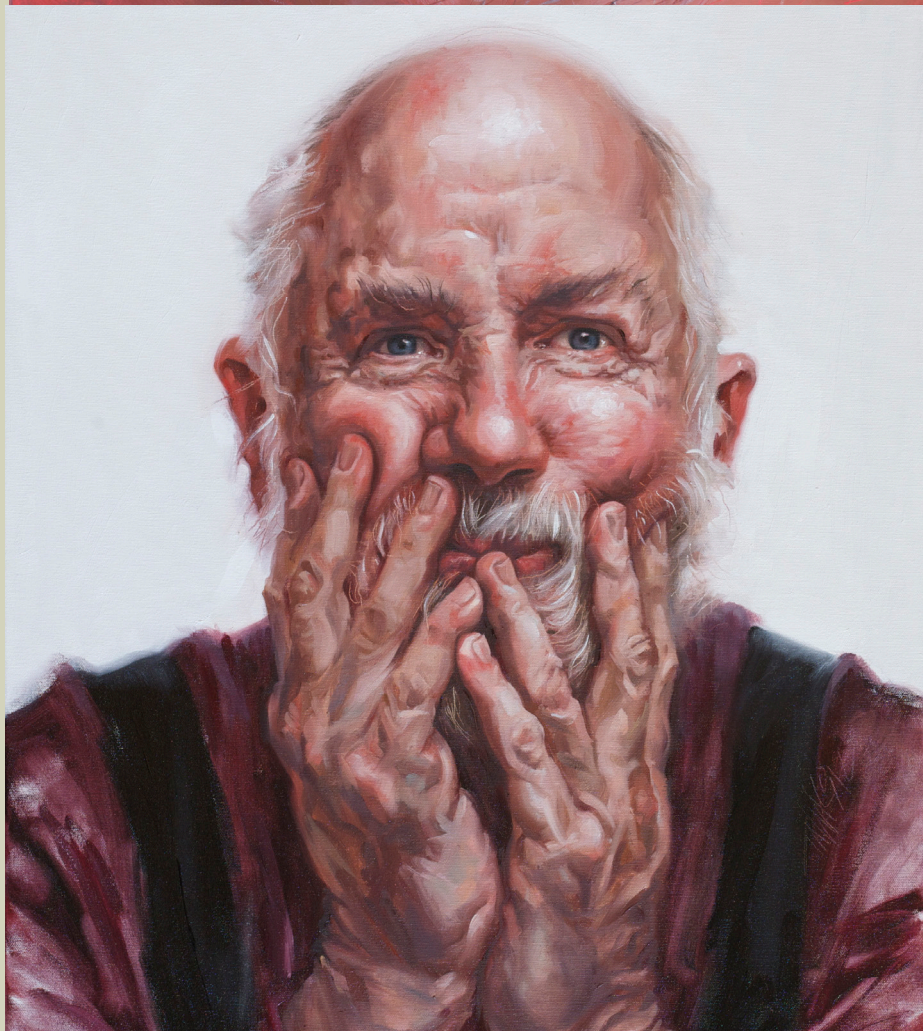
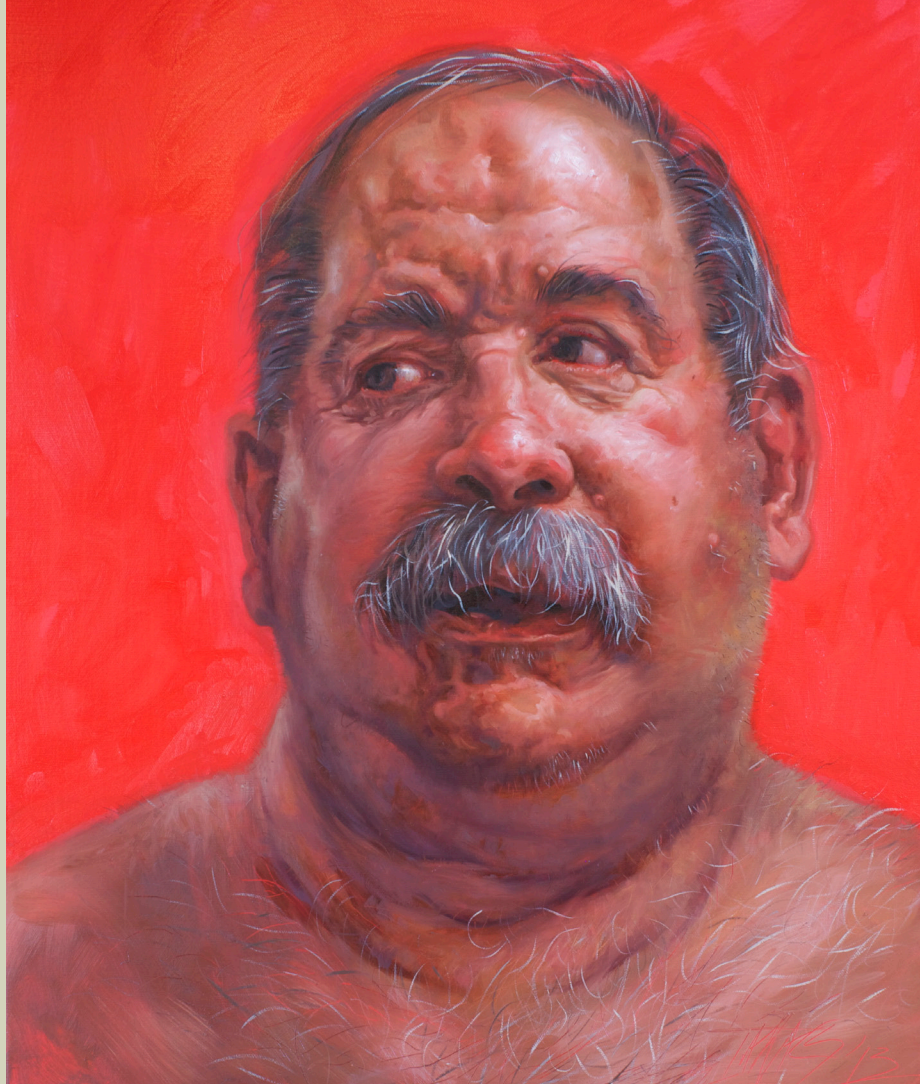


Fascinating Wisdom
The Solon Senior Art Project

Portraits by Judy Takacs











About “The Solon Senior Project”

Judy Takács

If the delicious signs of aging were considered fascinating and revered in our culture, how would they be honored in art? What if every pucker and fold were celebrated and every fine line that appeared along the path to old age welcomed with the glee of having leaped the next hurdle?

What if we as a culture saw the physical markings of old age as a badge of courage awarded to one who has gained the precious wisdom that comes from a life thoroughly lived?

“If wrinkles were a good thing, how would I paint them?”

I see them that way and try to paint a wrinkle as if it was a very good thing indeed.

I luxuriate in them. I celebrate every purse of flesh and caress the twists and turns. I massage the subtle color and texture changes and paint them with hedonistic pleasure. These portraits are not flattering by the narrow standards of beauty society has defined, but artists have for centuries been shaping ideals of beauty, so, true to that pioneer creative spirit, I fight the good fight and celebrate the fascinating wisdom of beautiful seniors and hope my joy becomes contagious.

The paintings shown here are from a collection of larger than life size portraits of beautiful old souls that I created during my yearlong public painting project painting seniors in the busy lobby of her local Senior Center. It was a lively demonstration of painting skills and provided me with an ample supply of faces with stories and wisdom.

This project was surprisingly easy to

orchestrate. My local senior center was eager for this “enrichment activity” for their seniors, and because I paid my senior models \$20 an hour to pose, they were more than eager to sign up. My signup sheets filled up quickly within the first week or so. Then, when the project started, each Thursday, I came to the senior center with my paints, seated easel, fold-up tables and of course a giant drop cloth to protect the carpeting in the lobby. My senior of the week was, without exception, there early and ready to work; all of them carried a strong work ethic with them into retirement, and enjoyed having an important job to do.

Once my model was seated, with the lighting adjusted, I explained to them about holding still to pose; finding one spot to focus on, and, even if they talked a bit, to keep focusing on that spot. Because as a painter of peoples faces, a minute shift in the angle of an eye can mean major changes in a portrait.

I also explained to them that I’d be taking photos as I painted. Their two-hour posing session was only the beginning of this 30 or more hour painting I would be creating. I needed to finish the painting using the photos as reference. Sometimes, if I felt the model was up to it, I’d ask them to pose for different expressions, so I could compose a psychological drama if I chose to, later in the privacy of my studio.

As I became more comfortable painting and talking in this public setting, so did my models. Later sitters would often spend the entire two hours telling me about their lives. I heard about amazing grandkids and about how some of the younger seniors were caring for their older senior parents or spouses...while dealing with their own illnesses and losses. I was honored that one gentleman used the posing date to mark the one month anniversary of surviving being hit by a car on his bicycle. And I also heard about the good stuff; many had joined choirs, acting

troups, art classes and volunteered their time to charity.

The paintings from this project made their public debut in a solo show at the Solon Center for the Arts, November 2012 and the book is available on blurb.com. (search: The Solon Senior Project: Judy Takács Paints Fascinating Wisdom) I invited the seniors to the opening reception as honored guests, and gave them each an inscribed copy of the book. It was fun for the younger guests to recognize the older faces from the paintings, and the older folks were proud to be part of the art. Many have continued to follow my art by coming to my art events since that show. As much as I feel I have enriched their lives by inviting them to participate in the creative process, they have given me so much more in sharing their lives and beautiful faces with me.

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Anna has Heart*

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*Chuck Shrugged
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*Judget, Jury and Executioner
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87 and Sunny

LINKS

For more of Judy's work:

judytakacspaintspeople.com

For more information on these and other portraits from the Solon Senior Project Series:

[www.judytakacspaintspeople.com/
judytakacspaintspeople.com/The_Solon_Senior_Project/The_Solon_Senior_Project.html](http://www.judytakacspaintspeople.com/judytakacspaintspeople.com/The_Solon_Senior_Project/The_Solon_Senior_Project.html)

Follow the blog about her current project, painting unsung female heroes;

chickswithballsjudytakacs.blogspot.com



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