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In memory of a Red Lady

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In memory of a Red Lady

“In memory of a Red Lady” is a painting that came to me in the middle of my senior winter the day my grandmother passed. Being hundreds on hundreds of miles away from my family during a time of mourning was more than difficult. It physically rocked me and the emotions I felt overwhelmed me. Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do to get home. Having little funds in my pocket, I decided to help pay for her funeral instead of going home. While I was glad I could be of help to my family, I was stuck with feelings of unease when everyone and everything around me seemed to be business as usual.

So instead of listening to the voices in my head telling me to give up, to hole up in my room, and isolate myself from my friends, I painted. Painting this piece allowed me to focus on my feelings, focus on her death being a reality I was living through when my usual process of grief was dissociation via “I’m fine” and “I’ve been through worse” until total breakdown or the next issue in my life takes my attention. That being said, this piece has become somewhat of a milestone in my work. With its creation came this newfound ability to process thoughts and heavy emotions that I never knew were possible. It has become a lesson well learned in what art and painting really mean for me.

I, very deliberately, chose the color red because it meant so much for my grandmother. During her time with us, she would always have her hair, mouth, and nails painted red. However, the color red also symbolized the health complications she struggled with in the last few years of her life as well as captured the emotions of frustration, anger, and anxiety that came to me when processing her passing. From mixing my paint to creating different hues, to the scraping and laying of color up and down, side to side, diagonally across the canvas—I used the entire process of painting to say goodbye from hundreds of miles away and created something beautiful for my grandmother in the process.

Rest in Peace Abuela