

## Interview with Feature Artist Helyn Davenport

For those of you who have been following Helyn's feature, this is the third, and I regret to say, the last part of her Interview. Because of Helyn's extensive portfolio, her feature was divided up into a three-part series. In order to get a fuller picture, readers are encouraged to read the other interviews in the series: [Issue III](#) and [Issue IV](#). What started out as a passionate admiration of Helyn's stunning work turned into a warm friendship as I learned more and more about the woman behind the camera. Once again, I am thrilled and proud to present Tryst's feature artist, photographer, and president of Pixiport, Helyn Davenport.

**Mia:** Inspiration is one thing. Talent is overrated, but drive - that energy needed to produce prolifically, keeping in mind that an individual's drive is not always based upon the need to succeed in terms of fame, money, material gains and all those politically incorrect things we're not supposed to strive for, where do you think your drive comes from?

**Helyn:** I think it is genetic partly. My family's history, many generations, go back to Scotland where some were Kings and Queens. I have this drive and curiosity about all around me. I need to be challenged always, and need new things to learn. No matter what task I do I give it my all--from cleaning a horse's stall to learning Ornithology from Cornell, my whole heart goes into it. I have always been determined. I do not seek the greenback, I seek knowledge and expression.

**Mia:** I want to venture to say that you've experienced some personal tragedies, (more so than the "average" person) in your life. I think of you as someone who rises above her setbacks and just goes on. Your grandmother was a huge influence in your life. I believe her name was "Gigi"? Tell me more about Gigi. I only inquire because much of your work has a soft, sensuous quality, almost ethereal. In many ways it is filled with tremendous hope and I can't help but wonder if Gigi is the inspiration behind many of your pieces.

**Helyn:** Well all of us have crosses to bear. My sister Autumn died in a house fire when she was 14 and I was 16. I had to drop out of school to support my Mother and little brother Eric who was 4. I married at 17, and was a widow at 22 with two children. I went back to school, then to college while holding down 2 jobs and maintaining a 3.8 average. I bought our home. In 1981 my Grandmother died of Alzheimer's which I photographed the last few years of her life...she was my rock my angel in life. I expressed the grief thru manipulations in the darkroom. In 1995 my son died. After my son's death, a part of my heart was taken and the highs I once felt can never be again...just the way it is. From a very young age I always remembered this from Gibran, "I cried because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet."

GiGi gave me love, kindness, was always there for me. She was a wonderful human being and I love her dearly. I have wonderful memories of my GIGI (Helyn) There is always hope....if we did not have it then how could we face anything?

**Mia:** In an interview at [Art Gallery Online](#) where you were the featured artist, you wrote (paraphrased):

*I was always the "shutterbug" for my family and events in our lives; but it was not until my Grandmother started the dying process that I took to it a different way. I needed to express all the inner emotional pain I was dealing with watching her slowly waste away from Alzheimer's. So I went into the darkroom and worked on her images spending weeks, months, years expressing myself through manipulations with light, chemicals and composites. The pain was coming thru my photographs. The tears in the dark, darkroom flowed.*

Granted you always had an eye for photography, would you say then it wasn't until the personal experiences of losing a loved one that you became inspired to express yourself on a deeper level?

**Helyn:** Well that is hard to say. I had lost my sister in a fire many years before and my husband had died 5 years after that. Perhaps I had just reached a place where it was time to release. But it took years of watching my grandmother deteriorate. It is a hideous way to die.

I was a child who would lie awake and cry for the animals that were being abused around the world...always sensitive and never understood the dark side of humans. As a child I wrote poems, I painted; I guess the artist was always within me.

**Mia:** Would you mind sharing some of your most exciting, happy moments in your life; besides getting your driver's license, or a good grade. (Smiling)

**Helyn:** The birth of my children. My beloved Jackie, (my horse who was stolen). I remarried in 1999 and moved to my dream home in Deland.

**Mia:** Do you feel that your photography has become more of a self search and less a desire to express your inner creative drive, or the other way around? What fulfillment have you found through photography as a means of expression?

**Helyn:** I do not ever feel that I am searching for myself. I know who I am. Rather I want to show? Perhaps how I see, how I feel, how I express. I enjoy the creative process, sometimes I cannot create. I can go thru a "dry" spell and it is frustrating. Then something clicks, works and my journey continues. I guess it is about being creative, the need to create, to reveal.

I have faced my fears, shown them and moved forward in life. The letters I get from others that my art has opened doors for them, to express and to ask themselves questions. I have received so many emails and letters from around the world and am so grateful for the internet that has open the doors of communication to the whole world.

**Mia:** Where else would like to take photography? Is it a career, or a passion?

**Helyn:** I do not make long term plans. I just enjoy the journey not really knowing where it will take me. My art is a passion, but I have other passions as well. The things I know are I will not go back to commercial photography, and I will never be a 9 to 5 person. :- ) My ever curious nature takes me in many different directions.

**Mia:** I think of you as a pioneer. A strong woman who will make a positive impact on digital & art photography in as much as Dorothea Lange, Imogene Cunningham, Mann Ray and others. I believe you will take art to a new level just through your

incredible drive, talent, vision and making wise business decisions through it all. Of course, I've often been accused of being overly optimistic but that's a fault of theirs not mine. I just don't believe the sky's the limit anymore; not when there's a whole universe still left to be explored. Truly, I'm interested in how you really perceive yourself and where do you want to end up say in ten years from now?

**Helyn:** Thank you Mia...you are such a kind person but I do not think I am on their level! In ten years. I hope I am on the back of a Quarter Horse riding down a country road with birds singing, sun shining and all is safe in the world. That humans have learned we are ALL in this together with all life forms. Peace and War do not go together. AND that all Pixiporters are making a living thru their art.

I have once again enjoyed talking with you and agree there is a whole universe just waiting for us. I thank you for your questions, insightful and I have thoroughly enjoyed this interview. Thank you Mia.

**Mia:** And Helyn, I must thank you, your loved ones, your creator...whomever is responsible for safely guiding, influencing your life and helping you get where you needed to be. You will always be welcomed here at Tryst and likewise, I will frequent Pixiport often. You have given me a chance to view the world through your eyes and learn all that art and life can offer to one who is willing to "see."