

Marian Feast Day Artist's Notes by Sarah Paulsen-Fuller

Sarah Walker commissioned me to make an artwork for the December 8th Marian Feast day. Part of her idea was that I capture the Annunciation story of Mary and portray a sense of hope. When I was given this opportunity, I started to think about making a Black Madonna.

The Mary I tried to create is strong. She may be experiencing great fear of the unknown, at becoming a new mother, and yet she has her faith and spirituality and close loved ones to help her. When you look at her face you may notice a slight smile, sort of Mona Lisa like.

Going with the tradition of portraits of Mary, I included her symbols: Two angels praying for her.

The Assumption lilies on either side of her body represent her purity. The dove above her head represents the holy spirit.

A few other easter eggs- she is wearing a crown similar to one Beyonce wore at a Grammy Performance. She is in blue – a color traditionally worn by Mary. The patterns of her clothing are African prints that mean mother and royalty.

Jesus is present in the radiating heart in her belly.

You may notice she has her hands on her chest in an act of self compassion and love, which for me is about bringing that quality to ourselves right now as we move through this experience of covid.

When I did research on the Black Madonna, a tradition in Catholic imagery, I learned that they are some of the most moving representations of Mary because of their authenticity – it is most likely that Mary had dark skin. I stumbled across another artist, Mickey McGrath who described how the Black Madonna felt to her. She says *“the blackness of black Madonnas is symbolically linked to creativity and newness, to welcoming the darkness while seeking the light, to embracing mystery. Mary’s blackness reminds us of the rich, fertile soil in which we scatter the seeds of new dreams and possibilities. Hers is the cosmic blackness of the night sky and the ever-expanding universe.”*

Finally I hope when you see this image you are reminded of the sacredness of yourself.

[Read more](#) about Sarah.

