

# Hanour: Her art ‘starts with words for me ... thoughts and words’

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on the left, she’s turned aside because of shame.”

But, more importantly, she said, “Sister” speaks of the connection between women.

“Even when she’s turned aside, her sister is holding her hand and the cord of brightness is still going over to her,” she said. “She’s not alone. I think we all go through times where we feel alone or we feel like we’ve turned aside to something that brings shame or doubt. I wanted to just kind of share that with women.”

## Starts with words

Though her art has no letters, that’s typically where her creative process begins.

“I guess it starts with words for me ... thoughts and words,” she said. Eventually, the words evolve to mental images, but before she puts them on a canvas, she recreates them in real life by turning to women in the community.

Before each painting, Hanour sets up photo shoots in the ballroom at the Odd Fellows Building. There, she takes hundreds of photographs of her female friends and creative partners, most of them clothed in dresses Hanour has helped make to re-create those initial words in her mind.

One of the models is Jessamyn West, who co-owns the building and serves on the City Council.

“She lives and breathes her art,” West said of Hanour. A few weeks after the photo shoot, Hanour invited West to see the completed painting.

“For me, it’s timeless to be able to stand in front of her work,” West said. “When I’m looking at her paintings, I can’t feel or think of anything else but their stories. What those women are talking about — it’s timeless and it’s iconic and it’s inspiring and heartbreaking and all of these different things.”

Hanour, born in South-

ern California, was a stay-at-home mom who painted on the side while her children grew. During that time, she would complete one painting a year, if that. She thought returning to work would be the end of her artistic career.

“I remember thinking that I could never be a mom and paint and have a job,” she said.

Two years ago, she moved to Astoria, where she now works full time as a server at

Carruthers Restaurant, and continues to carve out time for her art.

“There’s no way I can let this go,” she said. “This feeds me, it fuels me to do the other things. If I let it go, it would wilt away a lot of who I am.”

Her schedule, now perpetually overbooked, is powered by multivitamins, BarleyMax, krill oil and the right kind of shoes. It’s also steeped in her relationship with God, which she relies

on heavily throughout her creative process.

“It gets really intense when you’re alone and you’re pouring this out. You have to be poured back into,” she said. “I pray a lot and I sing a lot through my painting. For me, it’s a lot of prayer and worship time. It’s extremely raw and vulnerable.”

## Finding inspiration

Even in this busy time, Hanour is adding another

project to her plate. She has teamed up with seamstresses and is planning the launch of her handmade clothing line, Ruth. The inspiration for the clothes comes from her desire for simple, elegant wearability. The inspiration behind the name, however, is a bit more personal.

Ruth is a character in the Bible who faced heavy losses.

“It’s the story of an outsider who was brought in

to favor and kindness and regained something that was lost. It’s a story of redemption,” Hanour said. She found herself identifying with Ruth’s story so much, she painted the character this year.

“To me it’s really inspiring,” she said of the biblical tale. “When I came to Astoria I lost a lot, and coming here I found a lot of kindness in the community. It’s close to my heart.”



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