

“It’s all about love,” says artist Ellen Rice about painting portraits

Well known Delaware artist Ellen Rice will share what moves her to paint portraits, her techniques and her thoughts about bringing children, adults and pets alive on canvas during a meet-with-the-artist event this coming Saturday, Feb. 13, from 1 to 5 p.m. at The Ellen Rice Gallery, ocean block in Bethany Beach.

“It’s all about love,” says Rice, who, though best known for her landscapes, seascapes and inspirational paintings, has been quietly painting portraits for more than 40 years. “People come to me because of their love for their child or pet or other loved one, and I feel their love and an obligation to not only paint a face or fluffy fur coat but to capture the soul of my subject.

The subjects of her portraits can’t always pose, in fact most don’t, says Rice. “Sometimes the portrait is of someone who has passed on, like a Millsboro area man who died way too young several years ago, so you never meet the person you’re painting,” says Rice. “His parents came to me and asked me to make snapshot into a painting that looks like ‘he’s saying, Hi Mom.’ That was painful but joyous. We were all crying when they saw it for the first time.

In other instances her subjects are moving subjects, high-spirited or playful dogs or horses. Other times, they’re equally energetic toddlers or bored teens or a combination of all of the above, she says. “None are going to sit still for long, so I rely on photographs heavily.”

“I prefer to work from my own photographs, but even when working from less than optimal photos, as I study the eyes, the slight nuances of facial structure, and start to paint, some sort of connection occurs and I begin to feel like I know the subject, fall in love with the beauty of their spirit a little, and that apparently comes through in my paintings. I always know when I’ve captured them.”

Rice has been painting the shore area, its people, wildlife, historic sites and inspirational paintings for more 40 years. Her work is collected internationally and on the Delaware scene she’s won numerous honors, including being named *2015 “Best Artist”* in the Coastal Style *“Best of”* competition, being named *PNC Bank 2014 Artist of the Year*, and being voted one of the top ten most collectible shore artists by *Delaware Beach Life Magazine*. Her gallery is a national NICHE Top Retailer Award finalist for its continued commitment to represent only American artisans.

On the easel in her gallery’s studio area is her latest painting-in-progress for her ongoing *Children by the Sea Series*. The painting, of two children walking hand in hand on the beach, will join other completed paintings to become part of a greeting card series illustrating the joy of viewing life through a more childlike perspective.

"I haven't completed enough paintings for the series yet and am still accepting photo submissions for consideration. At this point, I'm happy with the series. They're joyous, contemplative and fun.

"I still need to do at least six more before I can begin to print the cards. We had a lot of interruptions last year, including moving the gallery and a severe injury, but I'm back on track and loving every moment I work on these paintings.

Rice will for the first time show prints of all the completed paintings in the series on Saturday and says anyone interested in having the children in their lives painted are welcome to bring photos to show her.

"All my paintings are about love, really, no matter their subject -- but these especially so and I'm looking forward to the day when I can share them with everyone as greeting cards that uplift."

The Ellen Rice Gallery is at 98 Garfield Parkway, Suite 109, Bethany Beach, DE 19930, in the Blue Surf building, a half block from the ocean, a few steps up and a couple of doors from Grotto Pizza.

For more information, call the gallery at 302-539-3405 during regular winter hours: Friday through Monday 10 to 5 and Sundays 10 to 4. You may also visit www.ellenrice.com.