

# Out of the darkness blind artist works in style

Artist works in style she created while still legally blind

By Rick Coca  
Valley News Writer

**A**rtist Alisa Gabrielle is one of those people who seem to live more lives than are humanly possible.

Creating art for many years while battling Keratoconus, a debilitating eye condition that left her legally blind for decades, Gabrielle is the featured artist at the NoHo Gallery LA's "Woman" exhibit currently running at the North Hollywood gallery.

The Woodland Hills resident began her artistic journey late in life after giving up a career as a successful psychotherapist and selling her counseling center. Initially, she wanted nothing more than to pursue the happiness she encouraged her former patients to seek. Gabrielle said because of her eye condition, which rendered her sight blurry with the naked eye and not much better with contact lenses, she had a ready-made excuse for bad art.

"I could do it and if I wasn't any good, I could blame it on the blindness," Gabrielle said.

Turns out she didn't need excuses.

Gabrielle's art has been well-received. She sculpts and paints, and even with recently



**Artist Alisa Gabrielle celebrates the female form in much of her art.**



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**Artist Alisa Gabrielle uses bold colors and voluptuous forms of her inner-vision technique, a style she created while legally blind.**

improved vision, uses many of the techniques that helped her create art when she was legally blind.

Gabrielle paints in bold colors. The large, voluptuous forms of the women in her paintings and sculptures reflect Gabrielle's desire to celebrate women in all their shapes and sizes, as well as a technique she used early on that allowed her to better see and feel her pieces.

This marriage of style and necessity has proved to be successful for Gabrielle. She described her sculpting technique.

"The eyes can't always see some of the imperfections," Gabrielle said. "By rubbing my hands along the forms, I could tell that the shapes were distorted. People want to come and touch my pieces because the undulating forms are so inviting."

In 2001, after leaving her psychotherapy career behind, which was preceded by a career as a Spanish-language teacher and linguist, Gabrielle went to Pietrasanta, Italy, and studied sculpting, despite her rapidly failing eyesight. At the

time, with the recent death of her parents and grandparents, the rescheduling of her Sept. 11 flight to Italy and the subsequent terrorists attacks, Gabrielle said she felt like a change was coming in her life.

She reveled in the Tuscan mountain lifestyle, where she spent morning hours sculpting, afternoons in the *piazza* sipping wine with other artists, and evenings at dinner with artists such as renowned Colombian artist Fernando Botero.

"My whole day was art," Gabrielle said.

While in Italy, Gabrielle decided to have the cornea-transplant surgery that helped correct her vision.

"I felt like I was a caterpillar who had gone into a cocoon and in Italy came out a butterfly," Gabrielle said. "I felt like I was emerging."

There will be a free artist reception tonight at the NoHo Gallery LA from 6 to 10 p.m. The gallery is at 5108 Lankershim Blvd. The "Woman" exhibit runs through April 1. For information, call (818) 761-7784 or log onto [www.nohogalleryla.com](http://www.nohogalleryla.com).