

## ROBIN MONIQUE RIOS

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### bio.

#### TRUE STORY

I was born and raised in Chicago. As a child I found art as a means of escape from my daily chaotic world. I grew up with dyslexia so school was a complete nightmare and the only thing that seemed to make sense to me was art and my rich imagination. I couldn't have known, then, that art would become such an integral part of my life. I started my career after high school working in the hotel industry where eventually I worked my way up the ladder. But after many years in the business I just felt like something was missing. For about ten years I wandered from one corporate job after the other, trying to find the "one" that would be rewarding and fulfilling, but to no avail.

For many years I struggled with depression as I felt that my life had no real meaning. I had nothing to grab a hold of. I felt as if I were trapped in this dark place where no one could find me, not even myself. Then one day I came home from work, switched on the TV and at that very moment a commercial came on, it was the Illinois Institute of Art - Chicago. I stopped in my tracks; it was as if time stood still for that moment. I called the school the very next day and that same week, signed on the dotted line. When I gave my employer my 2 week notice I felt overwhelmed by an array of emotions. I was scared, excited, and every other emotion that suddenly reared its head after years of being dormant.

I was going to College!! Of course I was nervous about passing my classes, but that wasn't going to stop me I was going to give it try and I am so glad that I did. College was the best thing I could have ever done for myself. I absorbed everything like a sponge and what excited me most of all was being able to learn the process of many different mediums. In my 2<sup>nd</sup> year I delved into web & graphic design, thinking this would be something I could begin a new career from. Then I was reintroduced to Photography – I had forgotten how it felt to hold a camera in my hands. As a child this was one of my greatest pleasures. I always had a camera growing up and didn't realize then how it would someday affect my life. This was my passion in art and with the combination of my computer skills I was able to create something that seemed to only exist in my imagination, then to see it in print was magical. For the first time in a long time I looked forward to everyday. I loved everything about college and I was proud of myself, which was something I had never felt before.

I graduated in June 2003 with a BFA in Visual Communications with a 3.6 GPA. In September 2003 I opened my art gallery, 4Art Inc., Now celebrating my eighth year in being in business. How fortunate I am to be surrounded by diverse and talented artists' everyday. We Inspire to be INSPIRED!!