

Ascension

Life is never a simple and straight path and mine has been no exception. In 2015 my personal journey led me to a foreboding, and yet familiar, wall. It was nothing new, I had been trying in vain to veer away from it, to close my eyes and imagine it had vanished. But there it stood, large, unforgiving, solid, and unending in both directions, and under the weight of this realization I finally collapsed against the cold weight of the stones in front of me, and despair rolled in like a dark and oily plume.

See, for the last eight years, I'd been mostly at home raising young children, sacrificing financial freedom and placing my career aside, but now that the children were ready for school it was time for me to fight to regain some of the ground we'd lost and get back to work. But the workforce was a different place, and I'd not kept up. Nobody wanted to give me a second look... I really needed that second look.

Defeated, I found myself longing for, I'll be honest, a savior, someone or something to break down the wall and invite me through to freedom. Oh, I would have grovelled in my gratitude to them. I stopped smiling, stopped looking, stopped eating, and still nothing came. Embracing powerlessness, powerlessness had become my truth.

But us humans are capable of so more than we usually remember, and even amid despair, hope peaks out and invites us onward. I found my eyes opening to look for a better way. Later in 2015, choosing to rise and follow hope, I enrolled for the second time at KPU.

The first program had been in Design Studies more than a decade before, and had been an incredible experience, offering me the foundation I rely on almost daily in my art practice. The teachers inspired me with their passion, and I learned more than just skills, but also how to accept and value myself as a creative person.

That was 2001. By now I was a mother with two children, and a wall to overcome. These problems must eventually be faced if life is to continue. So, joining the other brave students, I showed up to class to study, struggle, question, and wonder. In the process, despair slowly dropped away and was replaced by a sense of empowerment. Each little victory reminded me who I was, what I was capable of, and showed me the strength and purpose that had been buried deep within.

This painting, titled *Ascension*, expresses the process of transformation that arises from the experience of education. University doesn't just fill heads with ideas, it offers opportunities for growth, change, and a new level of freedom, often when you need it the most.

In the end, education wasn't my savior, she was my guide. She showed me what was buried deep inside, she pointed my eyes upward, and then she released me, like birds released to flight.