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Nicola sings a response

Carla van Laar

MIECAT

Nicola Lester sings the lyrics of her composition, *Be*, surrounded by the scattered evidence of motherhood, the presence of her two pianos and my artwork on the wall.

“When you ask the questions, there’ll be thunder to come and you can’t be standing freely til you see what has been done...”

Nicola composed her album *Colours* in her studio, accompanied by my painting of a woman with arms outstretched on top of a cliff. She first encountered the image at my exhibition at MIECAT, *Seeing Her Story*. The exhibition was an early activity in my arts-based research project exploring ‘What can happen when a woman’s stories are seen?’

Some examples of the interactions that occurred were:

- Me painting an image from my memory and imagination,
- Nicola being ‘moved’ by the image at my exhibition,
- Nicola responding to the image through her musical compositions,
- Me witnessing Nicola sing her response,
- Sharing conversation with other research participants at a focus group dinner party,
- All this becoming part of the story of my research as I investigate “What can happen when a woman’s stories are seen?”

Some of what can happen includes:

- Sharing our experiences,
- Relationships growing and deepening,
- Feeling connected and supported,
- Co-creating meanings.

Nicola’s musical and storied responses reveal her experience of the image as a dynamic mirror of her changing inner world.

This image shares my story of Nicola as she sings to me.

“You are a goddess to me in this moment,” I tell her.

