



Do You Truly See Me?

Art by Francine Story written by [Ken Jones](#)

The Alaska Sea Life Center in Seward is a symphony of creatures and sea life. Agog at the mass of shapes and colors and motion, I giggled and wowed my way among the exhibits. Bright red crabs vied with luminescent jelly fish for my camera's attention. My spare batteries and memory cards were running low.

On the lower floor, diagonally across the covered courtyard from the seals, is another huge glass-enclosed tank. Inside the tank swam dozens of interesting, colorful fish. And there was *this* fish.

It was big and homely and it wouldn't move. Photographing anything else in the tank proved impossible. Wherever I positioned myself *this* fish hung motionless in front of my view finder.

This large, unsightly, aquatically camouflaged fish demanded my attention. "Well, alright then, here," and I snapped its picture.

The fish didn't move. "He'll get annoyed by the flash and move," I thought. Zap. Zap. Zap. The fish still didn't move. Finally, I began to look at this non-descript, blend-into-the-bottom-creature. We looked at each other for a long time, and I listened.

At home on my computer screen the photos of this fish were as I first encountered him, drab and obstinate. As

I began to work with this image I recalled our conversation. His shape remained, but the colors morphed from what the camera lens captured to what my artist heart saw.

When I stopped looking and began to *see* I realized that I was in the presence of a spirit *Elder*. One who spoke on behalf of all life, even the most homely and most nondescript among us. The questions asked by *Elders* are always simple, as was his – “Do you truly see me?”

What Are Alaska Digital Batiks by Francine?

Batik is an art form, traditionally done on fabric using hot wax and dye, which gives the image a crackled look.

This series of photographs synthesizes my love of silk painting, digital art, and photography with my experience as an artist new to the majesty of Alaska

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