

# IJPS Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies

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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

*Sacred Passages - Balance*

Acrylic on board, 2002

Vara Kamin, RN, former public health nurse, artist, author, speaker

### Abstract

Artist's Statement for the cover art of *IJPS* volume 6, issue 3: *Sacred Passages - Balance*, acrylic on board

Key words: Cover art, Art and Healing, hope builders, art installations

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## ART THAT ENCOURAGES THE BODY'S INNATE, INTUITIVE HEALING CAPACITY

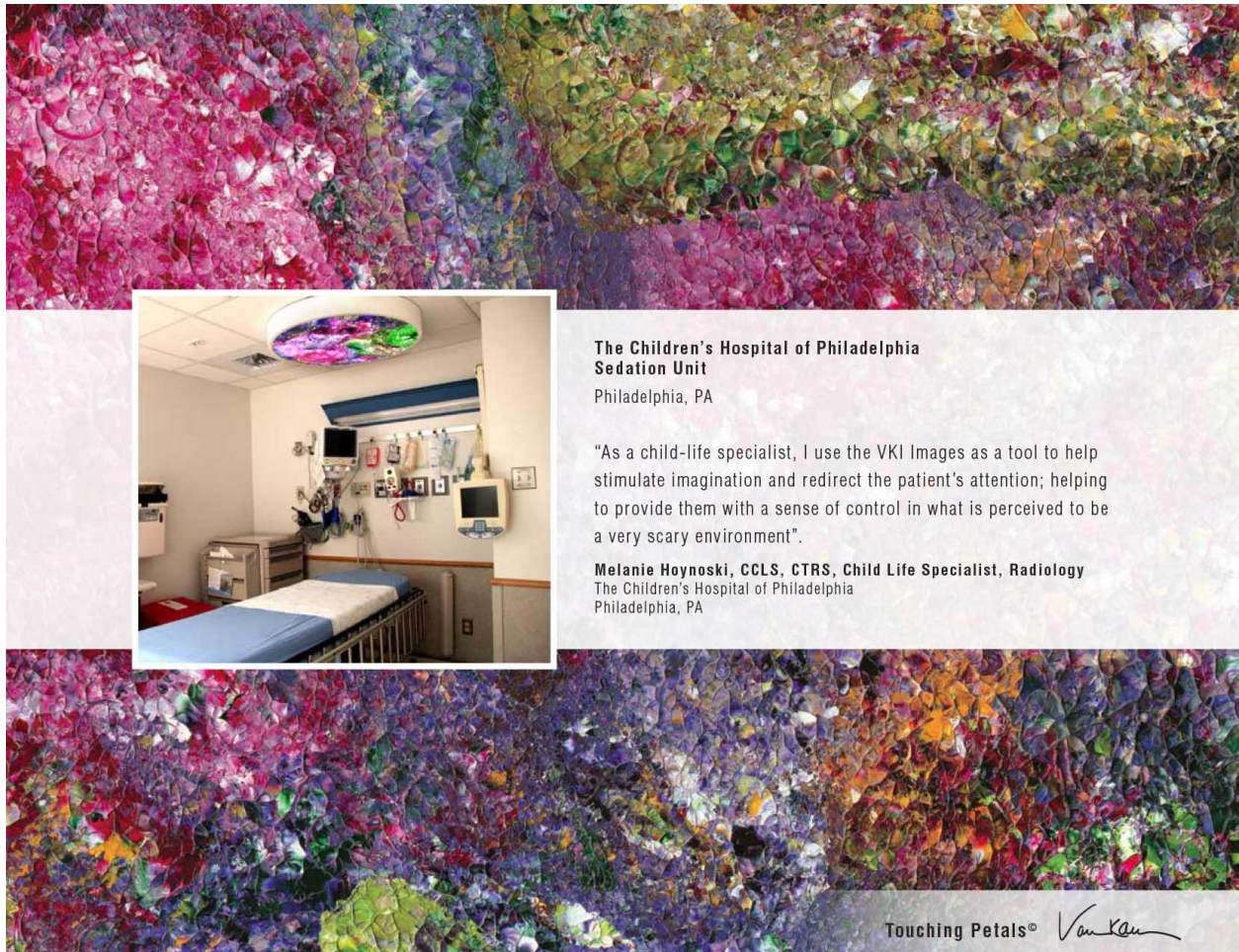


I specialize in creating works of art that unlock the body's natural healing, soothing, and self-nurturing capabilities. The paintings are rich in color, movement, and texture,

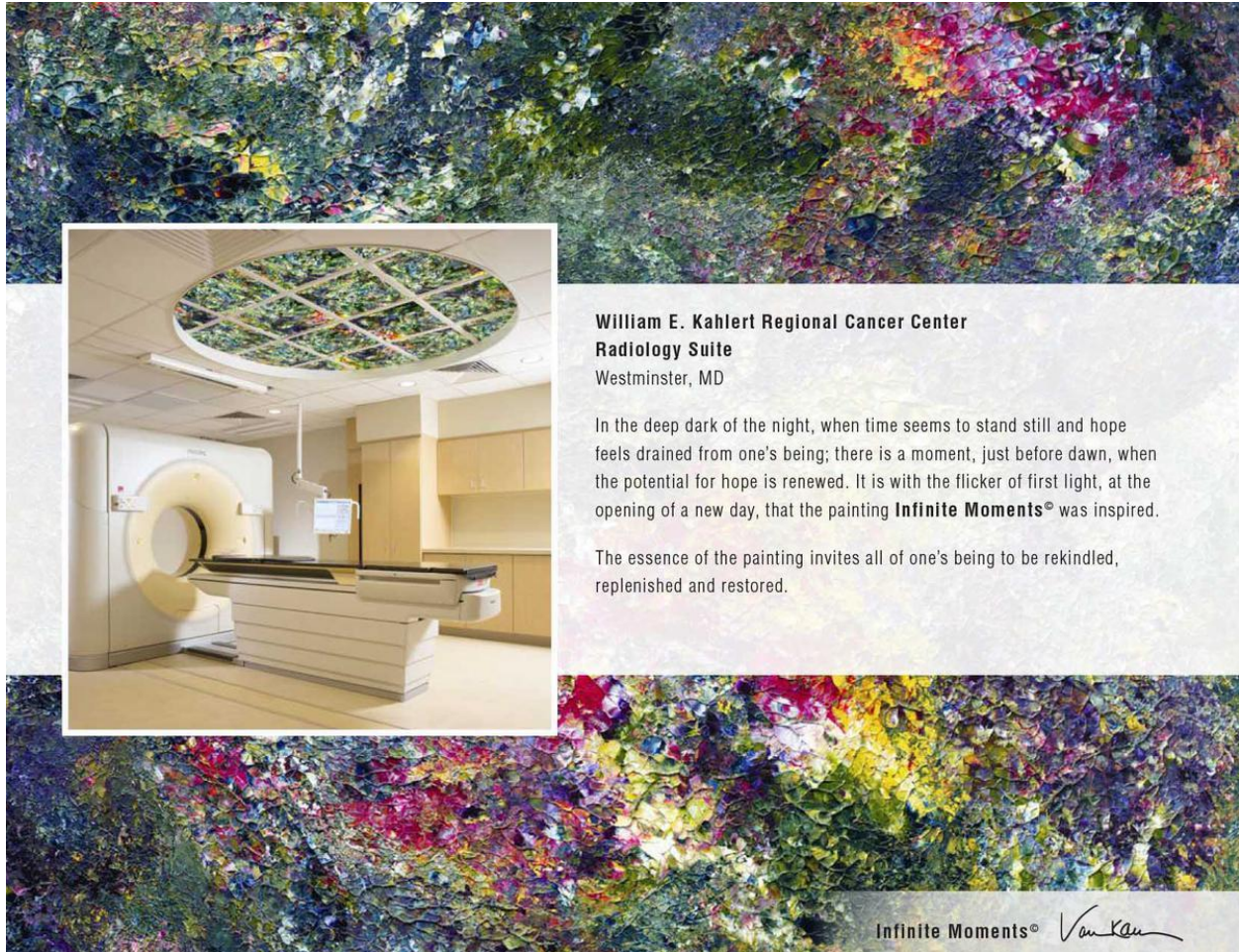
providing a positive point of focus while stimulating active imagination and inviting the viewer to a place of self-reflection.

*Crossing the bridge from decorative art to healing art, Vara Kamin's Images are powerful, therapeutic tools that move the human body into a healing state of equilibrium, harmony and balance.*

Mary Rockwood Lane, RN, PhD  
Co-Founder, Arts in Medicine Program  
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida



The intrinsic qualities and characteristics of my paintings assist in nurturing mindfulness while creating a connection with the body's innate healing capacities, especially for patients, the young and the elderly alike, and their families who are encountering stressful health-care settings.



*Kamin's paintings generate curiosity and discovery; there also is harmony that soothes and relaxes. The exposure to aesthetically pleasing stimuli can result in the release of endorphins; helping the body relax and enhance mood.*

Dr. Judy Rollins, PhD, RN

Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, DC

*In Health Environments Research and Design Journal 4(3), Spring 2011*

The replicated images of my original works of art that have been incorporated into health-care settings for the past 22 years were selected from more than 100 paintings that have been placed throughout the US, in private and public settings.

My images offer functional and supportive design elements for individuals of all ages, their families, and staff in a wide variety of adult and pediatric hospitals and clinical care settings, shared multi-use and satellite clinics, cancer centers, general and specialty dental clinics, long-term care facilities, meditation chapels, and wellness centers and spas.



Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Wellness Center - Interior View  
Erie, PA

Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Wellness Center - Exterior View  
Erie, PA

Moon Drops® *VanKau*

In recent years, with the growing awareness of the importance of nurturing mindfulness to connect with the body's innate healing capacities, as well as supporting the ability to develop self-management skills to cope more skillfully with the stressors of daily life, the use and placement of the replicated images of my original works of art continue to extend their reach to include corporate quiet/respice rooms, educational settings, and high-impact public spaces.

*Creating a potential passageway for the innate healing capacity of the body to follow, Vara Kamin's art provides a bridge into the realm of active imagination while inviting the body to engage the relaxation response.*

Joan Borysenko, PhD

President, Mind-Body Health Sciences, Inc., Boulder, Colorado

## **MY EVOLVING JOURNEY FROM BEDSIDE AND COMMUNITY NURSING AND HEALTH-CARE ADMINISTRATION TO THE HEALING ARTS**

I am a graduate of Massachusetts General Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, Massachusetts, and a former public health nurse, with a broad range of experience that is reflective of a background in health care and a lifelong interest and study in literature, philosophy, meditative practices, color, and design.

In 1980, after almost 10 years in nursing and health-care administration, my career focus shifted to writing, painting, and the healing arts. Published credits include *Family Circle*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and other national magazines, as well as an original collection of fables entitled *The Gold Key in the Mahogany Box* (1992, Putnam Berkley Publishing). The fables were the focus of lectures and workshops on "compassionate conversation" that I presented throughout the US and in South America.

As my painting career continued to evolve, original works of art were commissioned by various health-care, commercial, and residential clients throughout the country. In 1997, I attended a conference on Art, Architecture and the Creation of Sacred Space at

the University of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio. This conference was a turning point for my career, as both an artist and a nurse, when I was introduced to the burgeoning field of art and healing. This turning point provided an avenue for me to further integrate my background and experience in health care with my focus in the arts and their impact on the human condition.

Soon after the conference I was invited by a health-care architect to explore the potential of replicating the images of my original works of art (as an alternative to the more often used photographic imagery) for use in backlit ceiling and wall installations, initially in diagnostic and treatment radiology suites. As the use of the backlit images began to take hold, a better understanding of my work and its impact was recognized and acknowledged. Over time, it became clear to those providing care in these settings that the images not only provided a visual respite and a sense of safety and balance for the patients against the backdrop of the highly technical clinical spaces in which they were placed: equally, my images provided a calming and soothing visceral experience for the viewer as well. Pediatric and adult patients, including those from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds, have been similarly impacted.

In the past two decades, as advances in printing methodologies and image management techniques continued to evolve, I developed multiple partnerships with printing companies offering a variety of fabrication methods, and worked with graphic designers to create complex and intricate layouts from my original works of art. In time, additional working relationships with architectural firms, lighting companies, hospital facility departments, and general contractors evolved. However, it was the long-term working relationships with art consultants specializing in procuring art specifically for health-care settings, hospital and department administrators, nurses, and child life specialists that provided the opportunity for the greatest impact in the use and placement of the replicated images of my paintings.

Among the extended installations throughout the US, I have had the honor to work with these health-care institutions:

- The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia
- Inova Schar Cancer Institute in Fairfax, Virginia
- Children's Hospital Boston
- Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee
- Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland
- Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in Seoul, Korea
- Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Erie, Pennsylvania
- Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Fairview Southdale Medical Center in Edina, Minnesota

Additional client hospital listings are available at [www.varakamin.com](http://www.varakamin.com)

In February 2012, I received the designation of Arts and Health Distinguished Fellow from the Society for Arts in Healthcare (re-established as the National Organization for Arts in Health) for outstanding vision, leadership, and commitment to excellence in the field of Art and Healing.

**CHILDREN'S HOPE BUILDER: "BECAUSE VARA HELPS PEOPLE NOT BE SO AFRAID."**

A 6<sup>th</sup> grade religion class at a Catholic school invited me to tell them about my work, as part of a classroom assignment about people who inspire hope. Following the class presentation, the students wrote brief essays about their experience and their reflections about hope. The student's comments have often inspired me. Their expressed thoughts provide pure intent about the value and use of my images. The following are excerpts from a selection of the essays. (The children's names have been changed).

Dear Ms. Vara,

I learned that your paintings distract in a good way. They bring hope, happiness, and faith. I think the paintings also inspire the patient. A patient who is anxious, maybe because they are getting an MRI or getting checked for cancer, is not going to feel calm if they are staring at a plain wall. (Your) paintings, gets people thinking. The painting “Moon Drops” can be many things depending on the person who is looking at it. The paintings inspire everyone. Doctors, nurses, patients, and me.

Love, Annie

Dear Ms. Vara,

What is hope? Hope is a small seed waiting to grow. Hope is a gentle breeze on a hot summer day. Hope is looking at a painting and feeling more than just happiness. Hope is a brand new day. Hope is a wonderful thing to have. Hope is a dream of a new beginning and a better life. What else is hope? Hope is faith and courage. Hope is like a flower. It's a beautiful thing. And even the smallest daintiest flower can make someone smile. You taught me a lot about hope. Thank you. I think it is great that you help people.

Sincerely, Danielle

Hope and Courage

By Nicole

Ms Veera you told me many things about hope and courage. (Through your paintings that is in a person's room) you make this connection between you and the patient, even though the person has never met you. Some of the connections that are made are strong. Other connections are weak but they are there. The connections that are built give that person enough courage maybe to do their treatment and not be afraid. You also give hope to the people who see your paintings - they think, maybe I might get better, instead of saying I'm going to die tomorrow.



Dear Miss Vara,

Thank you so much for coming and talking to our class. Your artwork is beautiful and amazing that draws the feelings out of people and makes them think deeply. At first I didn't understand your artwork. I thought it was very abstract. But then I learned the meaning behind it, but also a deeper, inner understanding of your artwork. The thing I like the most about your artwork is that instead of staring at a princess picture you can stare at (the painting) and make it what you want. I can see why Dylan said you are a hope builder. You inspire me!

Sincerely, Susie

Dear Mrs. Vara,

Thank you for teaching our class about hope. I loved how you used your artistic talent to help others! After your lecture I realized what hope means to me. Hope is something beautiful. It saves lives and keeps people persevering. To me hope is something that helps me overcome and recover from everyday stress, fatal accidents in our world, and all the hate that is in our world. Hope helps me to be thankful for all that I have, and overlook the hate and notice the beauty in our world. Hope also lets me escape with my imagination from this world. Thanks to you, I have realized the hope in me.

Thanks, Ricky

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Vara Kamin, RN, is President and Artistic Director of Vara Kamin's Impressions of Light, Inc.

A Distinguished Fellow of the Society for Arts in Healthcare (reestablished as the National Organization for Arts in Health), she is recognized as a pioneer and thought leader in the field of art and healing. The evolution of her career into the healing arts is derived from her nursing training, decades of meditation training and practice, and the cultivation and integration of creative self-expression.

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