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Hands to heART: Art Therapy and Voices of Cancer

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Hands to heART: Art Therapy and Voices of Cancer

Co-Presented by Loyola Marymount University's
Art Therapy Research Institute
and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center's
Wellness, Resilience and Survivorship Program

“Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I’ll rise.”

-Still I Rise, Maya Angelou

Dedications

To all who use creative expression as a way to make meaning of difficult experiences.

To the memory of both my grandmas who lost their battles to cancer.

To my family, for all the love and support.

- Andrea Lemus Verano

To my role model and abuelita, Maria Yeomans. Even during your battle and recovery from cancer, you never stopped showing me unconditional love and the ability to persevere through anything.

- Reina Bicciche



It is my privilege to introduce this catalogue. The artwork is beautiful, provocative and powerful as are the opportunities for self-expression currently available to cancer patients at Cedars-Sinai. This art illuminates the emotional challenges that are a part of this disease and the ways that the creative process can help.

Art therapy has a long history at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Helen Landgarten pioneered the approach at Thaliens Community Mental Health Clinic, the outpatient arm of CSMC's department of psychiatry in the early 1970's. Supported by Dr. Saul Brown and others, she began a certificate program, developed a master's program and ultimately crafted the graduate program currently at Loyola Marymount University. Her humble explorations spawned over 800 art therapists.

Although art therapy thrived at CSMC for many years, in time the hospital diminished its psychotherapeutic services, closing its out-patient clinic and its art therapy program. Suzanne Silverstein, one of Helen's earliest students, is the only art therapist at CSCM, currently directing the **Share and Care** program for at-risk children in the community.

Recently, due to the vision of Dr. Arash Asher, art therapists began providing services in the hospital's **Wellness, Resilience and Survivorship** program. The work with cancer patients and survivors has been astonishing; helpful in palpable ways to the participants and compelling in measurable ways to the clinicians.

In a small and poorly equipped kitchen, dozens of cancer patients have found companionship, relief, self-expressive tools and compassion in the special magic that occurs when art making is supportively and knowledgeably facilitated.

This exhibition has been curated to maximize awareness of the experiences the cancer impacted participants are exploring. Often the art powerfully speaks for itself and sometimes the artist's statements clarify the experiences depicted. The art leads to a deepened awareness of the existential crisis of a cancer diagnosis and a broadened appreciation for the ways that artistic expression can soothe, inform and guide patients, family members and care givers on healing paths.

We look forward to expanding programs, sponsoring research and generally disseminating knowledge. Art therapy contributes to healing and CSMC is taking a bold step to integrate this modality in the services it offers.

I welcome the reflections of Arash Asher M.D., Heather Tarelton Ph.D, and Suzanne Hudson Ph.D. who expand our understandings of this work from their medical, scientific and art history perspectives.

Debra Linesch Ph.D.
Professor, Graduate Department of Marital and Family Therapy
Loyola Marymount University



Considering Rehabilitative Cancer at Cedars-Sinai

A recent study suggests that many medical doctors, educated toward ‘perfection’, experience burnout. I was offered a different perspective when I was gifted a collection of stories by a pioneer in wholistic care, Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen. She taught that perfectionism is possibly an addiction in many of our lives. She said that if we experience life as perfectionists, we lose the capacity to experience wholeness. Perfectionists tend to look for what is missing, what is “broken”. Remen suggests that, however difficult it may be, life is never “broken”. When I pursued a career in cancer rehabilitation and

supportive care, I reflected on how many of my patients feel “broken” by receiving a cancer diagnosis. Patients seek the best in medical care, hoping to be cured because they feel imperfect. But Remen reminds us that there is a difference between being cured and being healed.

As part of our commitment to treating the whole person, Cedars-Sinai Cancer Center offers programs to bridge the gap between perfection and wholeness. The art therapy programs we have integrated into our **Wellness, Resilience, and Survivorship** program have been integral to this goal. Believing that creativity has value, the inclusion of art therapy expands the holistic approach. I’ve learned that for some, processing thoughts and feelings through art can provide healing and lessons of wisdom, strength, and courage--in a way no medication can.

Arash Asher, M.D.
Director, Cancer Rehabilitation and Survivorship
Cedars Sinai Medical Center



Considering Imagery Impacted by Cancer

The long and varied history of art presents a record of human self-reflection and expression, often in the face of shifting circumstance. Instances of transformation are evident throughout. These extend from mythological shape-shifting—externalizing the process of a self that undergoes a passage into something new—to the rather less fantastical (if no less profound) development of a mortal life: through birth or adolescence, marriage or childbirth, sickness or equanimity,

aging or death. In the representation of these experiences, we discover bewilderment and pain, crisis and sometimes provisional resolution, even acceptance and joy. Above all, we recognize the mutual hope for connection that animates the act of putting pencil to paper or brush to canvas with the reciprocal engagement of someone there to look at it.

Art might serve, first, for the maker, as an attempt to make meaning out of a life, to find in a crisis—of health, as is the case here—a way to cope and to give of this experience to others; then, it continues to matter to those who bear witness to these efforts after they were achieved. We might find in the work of those who have come before us, as well as those who are our contemporaries, a way to access a remote experience. Or we might recognize something differently true, in being much closer at hand. Either way, looking closely and also openly at art extends the possibility for understanding another perspective. The history of art is one of action and reaction, offering and response. This is its gift, and the responsibility it engenders.

Suzanne Hudson Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Art History and Fine Arts
University of Southern California



Holistic Cancer Survivorship: Considering Research

As a molecular biologist and cancer epidemiologist, I have been trained to approach problems with a very objective lens. I've focused on implementing interventions in order to understand an exposure-outcome relationship and I've excelled at filing observations into pre-existing categories of possibility. And, of course, those observations that don't fall nicely in line with the average have been discounted as "outliers".

Through my work with cancer survivors, I have gained a greater appreciation for "patient reported outcomes"...also known as..."what is really bothering the patient the most and serving as a barrier to improved mental and physical health". In addition to the normative observations of "increased this" or "decreased that", I have learned that the biggest issues across the board were a loss of identity, a loss of self-efficacy, a loss of all the activities, patterns, thoughts, and experiences that once defined a normal life. **A loss.**

When I began working in partnership with art therapists to examine the impacts of exercise and art therapy on health and quality of life, I viewed art therapy as another tool by which to intervene on an outcome. However, I have come to appreciate that art therapy is not an intervention tool, but rather a setting of the stage **to facilitate gain**. To oppose the experience of loss by providing an opportunity for an individual to heal self and the added bonus of a group of survivors finding healing as a community.

My participation in art therapy research has forever changed what motivates me as a scientist and what I value as a research outcome. Consequently, I am not just a more open-minded person. **I am a better scholar.**

Heather Tarelton Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Health and Human Sciences
Loyola Marymount University

All images and written statements were published with consent from the participants. Participants were given the choice to be named or remain anonymous.

This catalog is divided into three main sections. The artwork in the first section comes from two different types of art therapy groups held at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. The second section highlights established artists who were diagnosed with cancer. The third and final section contains works produced by art therapists with various lived experiences of cancer.

Art Therapy Cancer Survivors at Cedars-Sinai

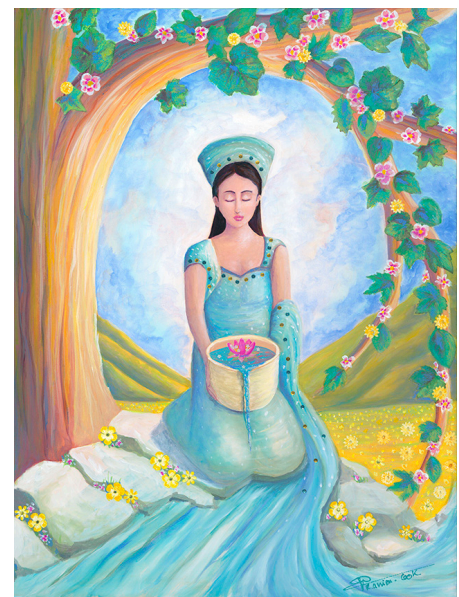
This section of the exhibit presents work made by cancer patients who participated in two different kinds of art therapy programs at CSMC.

The art in this section was made by three participants in an art psychotherapy group in which women explored their shared experiences of cancer diagnosis, treatment and survival.

Valerie Graniou-Cook

Gratitude is about gratefulness and letting emotions pour into the river of life, while centering around the realization that life is simply beautiful.

This is the first painting I did after finishing my treatment. Life became overwhelmingly beautiful. I discovered that what feels good are the small things available to me everyday. And I chose to appreciate and be present in the moment. I chose to trust that there is a design into life and that what I am experiencing has a purpose and a reason even if I could not see it yet. And with that there was less stress, more joy and gratefulness. One moment at a time.



Gratitude, 2019
40" x 30"
acrylic



Cancer Art Therapy Journal, 2019
16" x 32"
watercolor on paper

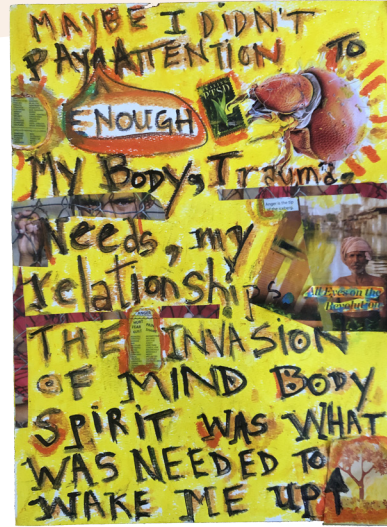
I am learning to live in the now and I understand that pain, hurt, fighting for my health, all coexist with listening within, transforming to create more life, love and joy. All of it is part of the now and is what life is about. This artwork is a very powerful vision board, that serves as a daily reminder of my healing and where I am heading.

Britt Enggren

I am in no way advocating self-blame, but in my case there was serious self-neglect that I believe weakened my immune system and eventually changed my DNA.

I come from people that have trouble taking the blame. I now take responsibility for my part.

I see where I failed myself. I should have learned self-care before my body got too weak. “



REVOLuTion, 2019
15" x 11"
oil sticks, marker, collage



PINWHEEL, 2019
12" x 9" x 10.5"
scratchboard, air dry clay, wire

I doodle. I'm drawn to people and faces. I think of being overwhelmed, spinning cells, and how damage can happen if your cells start spinning too fast. So, I etched a spinning cell, and then another... they became the eyes.

I am aware that we often want quick resolutions and certainty. Before we have an experience, we want to know how it will go, what it will bring, and how it will end.

But a good story requires a different kind of attention. It asks for us to invest our trust in it.

It requests that we focus on finding the right questions rather than on getting the right answers.

Be patient. Be present. Be courageous.

This is a story with a beginning, middle and a happy ending.



Origami, 2019
16" x 32"
collage

MM (The Warrior)

Going through cancer is not an easy feat. There are surgeries and treatments that are extremely challenging physically and emotionally. Even after surgeries and treatments one is never rid of physical and emotional scars. Reminders of past experiences and dread of future possible recurrences are always at the base of one's consciousness. To move forward with a life of joy and happiness takes a constant effort in which one seeks activities that physically and mentally provide strength, courage and a sense of well being. One of which was art therapy for me.

Though one remains grieving the loss of innocence, there is life after cancer.



Untitled Series (1 of 5), 2019
14" x 11"
mixed media



Untitled Series (2 of 5), 2019
9" x 24"
mixed media



Untitled Series (3 of 5), 2019
9" x 12"
mixed media



Untitled Series 4 of 5), 2019
15" x 8"
mixed media



Untitled Series (5 of 5), 2019
4" x 7"
mixed media

Art Therapy Cancer Survivors at Cedars-Sinai

This section of the exhibit presents work made by cancer patients who participated in two different kinds of art therapy programs at CSMC.

The art in this section was made by several participants in an expressive workshop that ran for sixteen weeks offering materials and support for participants to drop in and work on a variety of projects that were inspired by the work of an art therapy student, Beta Abdolahi, who had experienced thyroid cancer.



Even though it's almost been six years since receiving an official diagnosis and completing my treatment, my concerns about cancer haven't gone away. Some of these thoughts are reflected on the inside of the mask. The mask serves as a reminder to not make assumptions about people, as you never really know what's going on internally.

Beta Abdolahi
Beyond The Horizon, 2019
9" x 7"
marker, tulle, googley eyes on pressed paper

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can also be life changing for many of people. It certainly was for me and it has since remained a very relevant key component in my life's story. I bear a daily reminder of my cancer experience along and across my neck, in the form of a scar, and I am fortunate enough to have the option to show or hide that part of me depending on the type of shirt I wear or how I choose to wear my hair. I often wonder when is it considered an appropriate time to share with others that I've had cancer? I'm curious how other people bring it up? Are there certain people one might choose not to tell? How do people usually respond if/after you tell them?



Beta Abdolahi
Heavy, 2019
11" x 6.5" x 8"
tissue paper, glue, pipe cleaner, paper, tulle, yarn, fake eyelashes on styrofoam



These dual head art pieces gave me the opportunity to share how I stay positive in an extroverted and introspective way. For my extroverted Styrofoam self, I used bold/positive words, colorful beads and bright lipstick to show you can stay positive living out loud and beautiful. For my introspective Styrofoam meditative self, I used bright overlapping colors around my head to represent quiet positive thoughts and the butterflies represent transformation. Together it gives me strength, hope and courage to live my life fully everyday.

Heidi Cohen
Broken Open: Bold and Beautiful, 2019
 varies
 mixed media

Unmasking

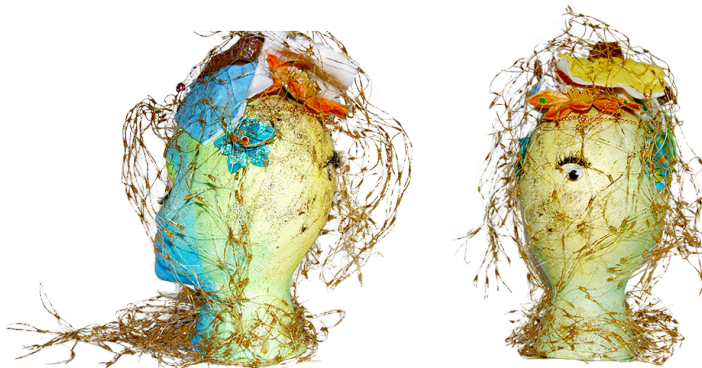
“Tangled Threads of Lies and Truths”

One might not be able to endure the dark-side
 Drudgery, Gloom, Failure, Dullness, Lethargy, Futility,
 Paranoia, Aggravation

One might be able to endure the bright-side
 Splendor, Sanguinity, Triumph, Brightness, Determination,
 Vigor, Valor and Solace



Laurel Welcome
Tangled Threads, 2019/2020
 varies
 mixed media



Laurel Welcome
Tears of Healing, 2019
 varies
 mixed media

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

People like to say You look pretty You look wonderful You look healthy
 Often times They are afraid They'll say the wrong thing Something that brings you down
 Trying to encourage you They may make-things-up To make you feel better They mean well
 You close your eyes You listen With a grateful heart But tears flow anyway
 Look up Look Down What do you see? A bit of you, A bit of me, A bit of a memory?

Beta Abdolahi
Three Kisses, 2019
9" x 6" x 3.5"
mixed media on pre-existing book



As time progresses, my cancer narrative has evolved beyond what it first started out as and it's been interesting to reflect back on the moments that stood out during those times. I'm taken back to snapshots of my life before cancer. I reminisce that I am actually not that invincible teenager that I once thought myself to be. Thinking about my life post-cancer, it's wild to think that I actually overcome one of the most mentally and physically challenging obstacles that could happen to someone during their lifetime.



Britt Enggren

The Cancer Train, 2019

9" x 6" x 8"

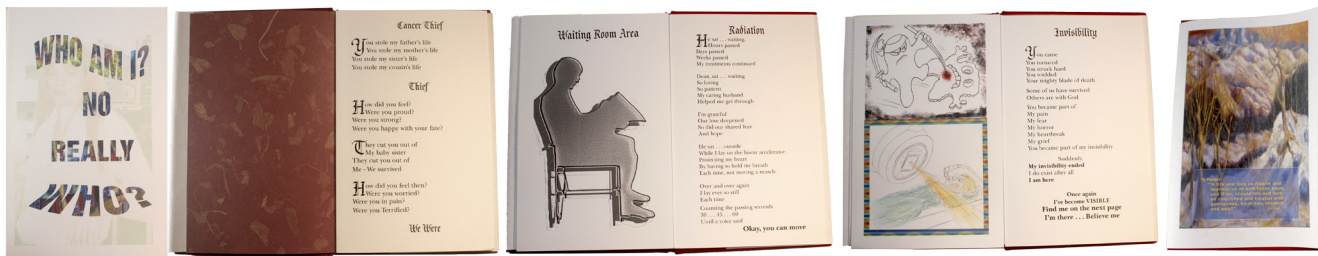
altered book, photography,
oil sticks, collage

My process is to start with the concept of expressing an aspect of living with cancer while considering different media to tell the story.

The idea of a book fascinated me. The Cancer Train represents the beginning of the book. The rest of the story grows stronger through the sense of community and is supported by the collective expression of shared experience through art.

The cancer train is a different train. You never return to where you got on.

My feelings of terror and lack of trust have diminished. After knowing Dr. Asher, Dr. Linesch, and Dr. Metzl, I no longer fear trains.



Laurel Welcome
Who Am I? No Really... Who?, 2019/2020
varies
mixed media, artist's own writings
and paintings

This workshop created an opportunity to take on a new perspective, temporarily putting aside our cancer fears, while enjoying the creativity and intellectual stimuli from our fellow contributors. The fun and camaraderie that ensued created strong friendships

LOVE IS THE CURE

Thank you for a life full of love, joy and happiness.

Please fill my cup with vitality, strength and energy so I can give back to all I love.

BY VALERIE GRANIU-COOK

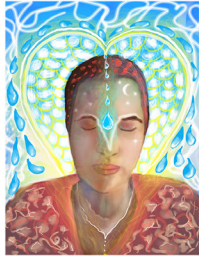


11 weeks of weekly chemo and my body feels like it is breaking apart. I feel the cancer experience is to rewrite me from the ground up within my core. I saw that the chemo is breaking apart every piece of fear, worries and limitations within myself and that what is left within the rubble, is me, my spirit. I felt that my core, past all the mental projections of uncertainties and questionings, is here, fully present, beautiful, strong and luminous. I felt my strength, I felt me who always has been and always will be. Then I heard "If only I knew truly that I will be ok, I could relax about my future and be more present for the now, going through my treatment with more ease and help myself with all my full available energies". Then I heard: "so why don't you choose to proceed with the assumption that you are going to be ok."

That was quite an understanding. I realized that if I chose to proceed with the assumption that all is going to be ok, fears would lessen. When fears lessened, I can be here now, fully present, fully available to be the best that I can be in this moment and that is huge. At that moment of realization everything felt ok, everything made sense. I understood that all the challenges that I have been experiencing are designed to make me grow, to break my limitations and that past my limitations is grace, presence and love.

I know from experience that it may be challenging to proceed with my new found understanding but I realize that doing my best will be to move ahead and replace the old thoughts with that new thought. I may need lots of prompting and help from the universe but I will make that choice as much as I can going forward and see how my reality evolves from that change. I have already realized that happiness is a choice. How we choose to view our circumstances impacts how we feel. We can be in heaven or hell within the same moment just from the choice we make within our thoughts. We can choose to see all the beauty and grace we are surrounded by and be filled with gratefulness for our life or we can be miserable and feel abandoned and victimized. It's the old half full, half empty glass analogy and it is so profoundly true and respected.

Once we make the choice to see how supported we are, once we focus on even the tiniest goodness, we choose light. When we choose light there is only love and growth.



The Art Therapy offered by the hospital allowed me to express my soul through the language of art which helped me heal. Through collages and colors, surrounded with kindred spirits and love I found meaning into my journey.

Valerie Graniou-Cook
Cancer Journey Booklet, 2019
11" x 14"
mixed media and digital

I know that all that matters is love and growth. That's what life is about. I choose to trust that it will all be ok. I realize how beautiful life is. Hurt, pain, fight, transformation, life, joy, love are all part of the now. They make life's beautiful fabric. Life needs to be lived now, with all of its parts.



Anonymous
Untitled, 2019
9" x 6" x 3.5"
mixed media



I am still constantly learning new things about this little butterfly shaped gland and I am by no means a thyroid expert but I know that by sharing my cancer story and experiences with others I can empower and encourage awareness, advocacy, and growth about thyroid cancer and thyroid-related complications/conditions.

Beta Abdolahi
Big Feels, 2019
 3" x 4" x 2"
 tissue paper, marker, paper, ribbon,
 pop-poms, googly eyes on wood



May Kramer
Untitled, 2019/2020
 3" x 4" x 2"
 mixed media



These two boxes gave me the opportunity to show my every day life versus a life full of adventure. The plain box represents my old life. Doing the same things day in and day out. It lacked adventure, laughter, creativity and happiness. I was not living my full purpose so my soul hurt. The colorful box represents living "Outside the Box" of societies rules and regulations. The new me is full of adventure, love, happiness, creativity and inner peace. I now follow my souls purpose and intuition. This is the happiest and healthiest I have ever been.

Heidi Cohen
Broken Open: Live Outside the Box, 2019
 3" x 4" x 2" (each)
 mixed Media



I want to shine through but some days I feel like I cannot. Since receiving a cancer diagnosis I've had to re-evaluate my relationship with my body. Some days, I'll admit, I wonder what it would be like to trade out my body for a new one? Would I miss the one I originally had? Would it still feel like such an effort to take care of myself?

Beta Abdolahi
Shine Through, 2019
12" x 10"
watercolor and marker
on fabric



May Kramer
Untitled, 2019/2020
varies
mixed media



Nicole
Doll's Felted Home, 2020
12" x 18" x 7"
mixed media

Parts of my body will be scarred and marked for the rest of my life and some future plans are now questionable. During this journey, I was grateful to have people and my faith as a wonderful source of support (the colorful chair). And the art itself has provided a great way to process this journey and have some control through it. Creating this artwork reminded me that things may come into my life that try to disrupt, but I have a "home" where I feel felt (the home lined with felt), understood, and loved.



Laurel Welcome
Welcome to My Art Studio, 2019/2020
 varies
 mixed media

RING THIS BELL
 This bell of freedom
 Let us sit and chat
 Let me hear and see you
 We are after all the same
 Filled with frailties
 Fears, doubts, despairs
 Hopes, dreams, love
 Come, sit and share

Button on the ear for my mastoid. Cherry down below for my hysterectomy. Red coil for my open heart surgery. Puzzle piece for my lung cancer.

Daisy for the tumor on my kidney. The seven dots that you can't see are the 7 radiations that I had..The one wing still let's me fly and soar.

The suitcase represents the baggage that we accumulate from life. I call my doll the HEALTHIEST GIRL ON THE PLANET



Joan
Cancer Baggage, 2019/2020
 varies
 mixed media



Britt Enggren
REPAIR, 2019
 varies
 mixed media

Since my first breast cancer diagnosis in September 2011, I've felt my voice disappearing. With women around a table, creating, it may come back. Thank you for helping us repair.

Artists Make Art in Treatment

This section of the exhibit highlights three artists who had established art careers before their cancer diagnosis.

All three used their art practice to cope with the experiences of the disease.

Two, Val and Laurel, participated in the CSMC art therapy groups and the other, Mack, passed away before those groups were established.

Val's and Laurel's art are testimonies to hope and Mack's, lovingly contributed by his dear friends, is a legacy to his belief in the creative process.



Mack McInnis
Ali's Cookies, 2015
36" x 9'
acrylic on canvas

During the grueling course of intensive treatments, he always appreciated the dedication and love from those that cared for him. Mack had been experiencing what he previously believed unattainable: Unconditional Love.

The great big happy swirls on multiple panels titled "Ali's Cookies" perfectly represents how much his heart had opened up to all that he loved, and to all that loved him back.

Mack painted "Ali's Cookies" as his gift of love for Ali, the 99 year old neighbor that baked those cookies just because she loved him!

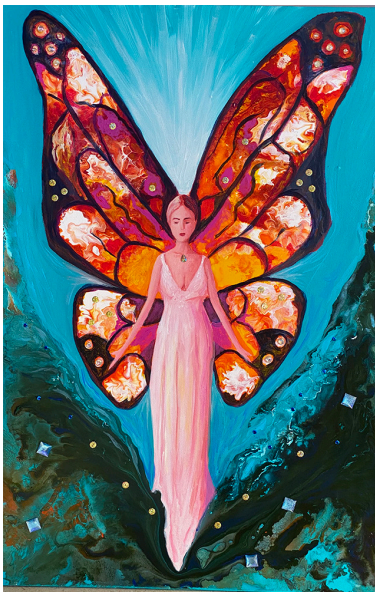
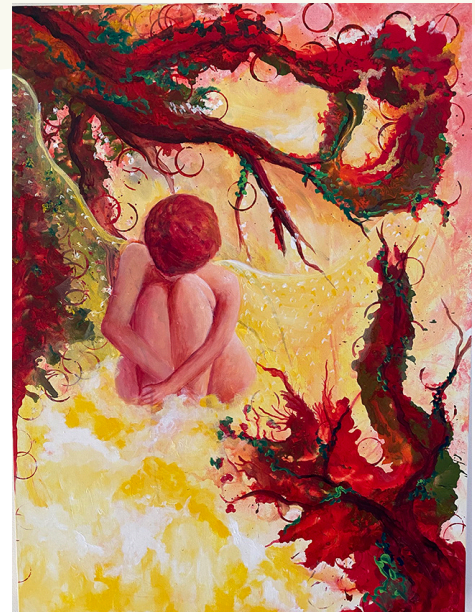
I'm Here,
With my friend Lily
We laugh a lot, wherein
TIME does not exist
Only our free flowing spirits
I am blessed to have such a friend.

Laurel Welcome
The Other Shoe Dropping, 2020
36" x 24"
oil



Through pain we learn compassion, love for the self and others, we deepen. Love yourself, recognize and accept how hard it has been. Have compassion for yourself and others. Allow the tears. Allow the pain to come out, feel it and let it go.

Valerie Graniou-Cook
Holding Through the Storm, 2020
40" x 30"
acrylic



Valerie Graniou-Cook
Emerging, 2020
36" x 24"
acrylic- mixed media

“Why do angels fly? Because they take everything lightly”
Light enough to fly.

We cannot always change the conditions of our life but we can become lighter. When we do, it becomes easier and we can fly.

This is a paradigm shift as when external conditions cannot be changed, we need to lighten our perspective which will bring more energy to heal and function properly. We will grow wings that will rise us above the storm.

Going through cancer treatment is like going through the biggest storm with the biggest waves. The way to make it through for me was to surrender to my True North and to allow the universe to guide me thru. Ride the wave of pain by allowing fear and anxiety to coexist with breathing and surrendering to your True North one step at the time. And one day at the time.



Valerie Graniou-Cook
True North, 2020
24" x 18"
acrylic- mixed media

The Imagery of Art Therapists Impacted by Cancer

This section of the exhibition presents artwork made by art therapists. It represents the lived experiences of clinicians who are connected to the sustaining power of art and use the creative process to express and explore their own relationship to cancer.

Personal Experiences of Cancer



Kimie Cho
The Silent Cryout, 2020
13" x 11" x 3"
paper

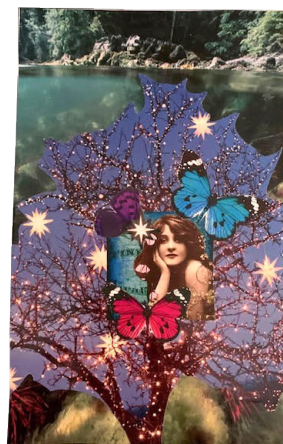
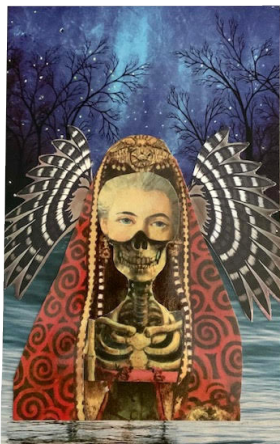
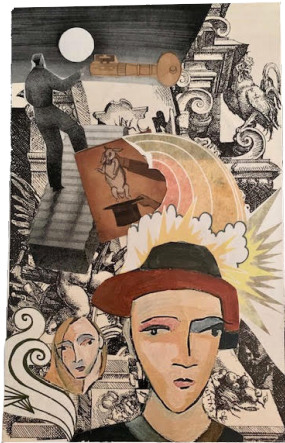
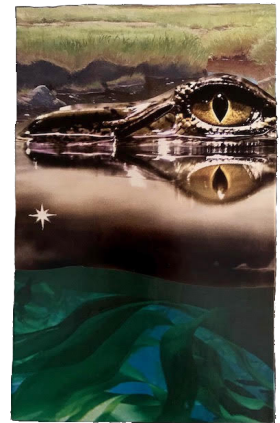
The Silent Cryout represents the tangled up complex feelings that I never put out in words until now. I started from tearing the paper and simply let my hands express the unspoken feelings. I was true to my feelings this time and my feelings did not allow picking any colors but pick few white papers with various thicknesses and textures. I ruled out thinking and let the touching of the paper be the guidance. And after finishing the art, at last, I was able to leave the past feelings with the past event.

A significant part of processing my journey with cancer included acknowledging the changes I would have to make, from adjustments in daily routine to major life decisions. I had let go of plans and hopes I originally thought I would have, and learn to look at the necessary changes as new possibilities. This reminded me of the common association between dandelion seeds and hopes and wishes. At the end of one dandelion's journey, the remaining seeds are whisked away by the unpredictable wind, given a chance to start again.



Chelsea Cota
New Wishes, 2020
9" x 11"
mixed media

I am a cancer survivor three times over. I lost my father due to cancer. I am an art therapist working with other cancer survivors. Needless to say, cancer is a big part of my personal and professional identity. Even so, I still find new and unexpected ways cancer impacts me. Working with structured materials, such as collage, is a way for me to explore the confusion and uncertainty that cancer evokes. This artwork represents a multitude of losses I have experienced as well as discoveries I have made on my shifting journey through the cancer experience.

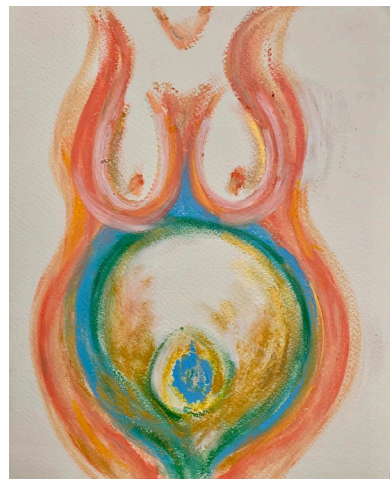
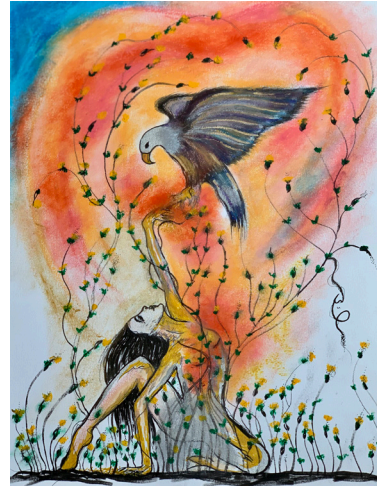


Sarah "Stella" Dunn, MA, MFTA, ATR
Dark Energy (Series of 7), 2011-2019
8" x 5" (each)
collage

Loss of a Loved One

This series explores my experience and feelings of my beloved's devastating diagnosis of cancer and all its demands. In this journey of meaning making, recovery and healing, the language of creativity, the images formed and un-formed, continue to shape my voice, to serve as vehicles and alchemical containers of meaning making. When the verbal language bounds, constricts, and limits, imagery and symbol can serve as significant and pivotal mediums in accessing the inner landscape, to sit with, relate to and make meaning of feelings and experiences. In this sense, Image becomes the cauldron, or the body, holding it all; it can serve as an ally in the journey.





Leyla Salmassian
The Revealing images of the Self (Series of 8), 2019
12" x 9" (each)
micron ink pen, gold pen, oil pastel

Blue for tears, the color of the ocean, the breath, the cells, the hoping and wishing, the drips creating their own pattern reflecting the experience of having little control. Red for blood, the radiation, the emotions of anger at not being able to stay ahead of this thing, the love I felt for him, and my own sense of fragility and age.



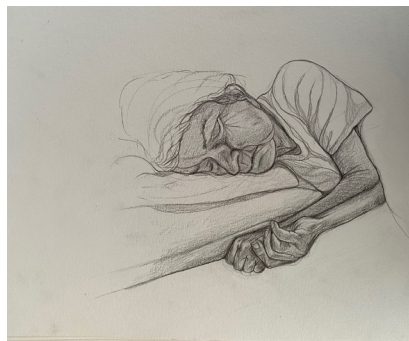
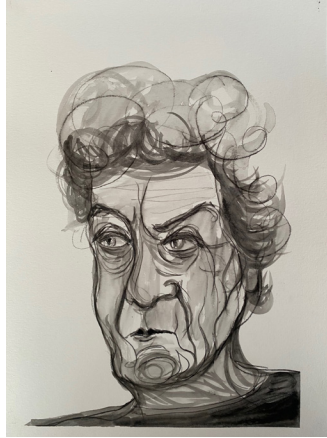
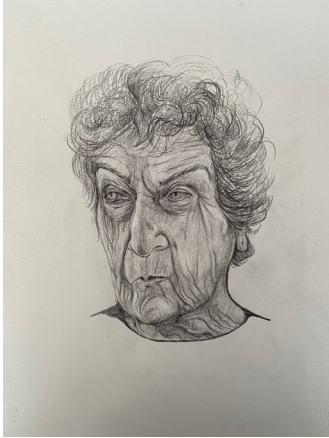
Linda Paterson Okimoto
*Esophageal Cancer Caregiver Experience &
Family Healing*, 2020
14" x 11" (each)
tissue paper, modge podge, sparkles on paper

There were many entities that my family had to weave into our lives after receiving my younger brother's cancer diagnosis. Learning to weave chemotherapy, radiation, medications, hospital stays, work and school disruption, being more aware of others' germs, and managing the physical, mental and emotional pain that came along with all of these entities was a stressful, exhausting and continual process. Even when a routine was created it was easily disrupted and more reweaving was needed multiple times to maintain some sort of equilibrium. This necessary reweaving changed our family and changes other families forever.



Alexandria Loiseua
Reweaving Life, 2020
9" x 12" x 3.5
paper and markers

Edie Moses
Mom Abstracted (Series of 6), 2019/2020
17" x 11" (each)
graphite



During the last six months, my mother's cancer and all the treatments she had undergone had taken a drastic toll on her. When it became apparent to me that her life was fading into an abstract version of what I knew to be my mother, I began to draw her. I drew her with the intention of finding and examining the light, how it caressed the lines on her face, which began to look like a map of her life's journey. I drew her as a way to attune to her. I drew her as a way to soothe myself through the grief process. And as the disease became worse, my drawings became more abstract and harsh. And I found that thinking and seeing my mother in the abstract was a helpful way to come to terms with her plight, and my loss.

Intuitively, the art directed me to where I left it: re-telling the moments of scattering his ashes at sea, sitting with what was now gone and what I could still possibly carry from the love we had shared. The title of this piece, taken from an E. E. Cummings' poem, settled somewhere between my ribs as a possibility.



Einat
i carry your heart (I carry it in my heart), 2020
11" x 18"
collage, painting, mixed-media on wood



Cecilia Sanchez
Transitions and Transformations, 2020
11" x 14"
multimedia

The three embroidered points represent my grandma, my mom, and myself always intertwined with one another in life and death.



Sara Heller
Three Generations, 2016
23" x 24"
multimedia

Patients in Clinical Work



The art was also a way to give them back a part of their childhood, to reach some of their developmental milestones that they were missing out on due to their exhausting fight to live. Art is a fantastic way to explore and develop curiosity within one's own experience. I wish I had at the time, an Art Therapy program within my hospital stays, as no matter what the age, we all need an outlet to express ourselves.

Isabella Williams
Don't Worry, Mama, 2020
11" x 14"
acrylic on canvas

This collage reflects my mixed emotions. I was frustrated and saddened that despite all efforts healthcare still didn't have the treatments that could save these patients lives. These feelings were balanced with memories of shared creative, expressive, caring connections and hope.



Rosalie Frankel, ATR-BC
Live Your Best Life, 2012
11" x 11"
collage



While supporting patients and families through their challenging cancer treatment, I have witnessed all extremes of the human experience. I have seen extreme challenges and pain along with unimaginable resilience.

Rosalie Frankel, ATR-BC
Insight Into the Journey, 2019
10" x 8"
mixed media painting

From the Perspective of Student Art Therapists

As second-year graduate students from LMU's Art Therapy program, we are excited to introduce the focus of our Master's research project, a concept we coined as exhibition as intervention. Our goal is to create a space that brings awareness to the possibilities of exhibition to amplify the voice and increase empathy between artist and viewer. Originally, our vision was to hold the exhibition at Cedars-Sinai to supplement the 2020 Art Therapy Research Symposium. With COVID-19 placing restrictions on public gatherings, the exhibition had to transform from a physical experience to a virtual one. The catalog which began as our secondary focus to the exhibit, shifted to become the primary source of communicating our intentions. Informed by the literature of our research, we felt a catalog best collected and organized the data, which in this case was the produced work of the artmakers. It is our great privilege to present this catalog with the works of artists engaging in the creative process to make meaning of their experiences with cancer.



Informed by a Gallery Practices Background

The idea of ‘exhibition as intervention’ may seem an audacious one, but it is one that I have been considering for many years now. My experience working in museums and galleries allowed me to be witness to the deep connections possible within this collaborative space of viewing and exhibiting. It gives permission for the artist to continue the creative process and go beyond the product. It allows the viewer intimate, non-verbal experiences which trigger emotions and feelings. For me, to be able to create an exhibition of works of art is to honor every

experience felt within the space. As our plans shifted dramatically from the physical to the virtual, my approach on how we would exhibit also had to shift. My belief in a collaborative approach to meaning making has shaped my identity as an art therapist and clinician, and guided my decision to continue to work with the art makers in a collaborative way despite our limitations. I am humbled by the strength and vision of the artmakers to share such intimate experiences with the world and I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

Andrea Lemus Verano



Informed by a Fine Arts Background

With the ever-changing state of our current global climate, our physical exhibition was not immune to adjustments that would shift our approach to the execution of our research project. With the physical experience of the exhibition no longer possible, we shifted to a virtual platform while still maintaining ‘exhibition as intervention’ as our primary goal. With my previous education in studio arts and prior professional experience in graphic design, these skills took the forefront in navigating these new challenges. The art was first viewed from a microscopic level; tenderly removing backgrounds and cleaning up photos, sometimes pixel

by pixel. While I did not physically touch the art I found that as much, if not more, attention was given to each piece as opposed to traditional practice of preparing and displaying art, as I wanted to showcase each artwork at its highest level of quality. Microscopic transitioned to a macroscopic focus as the artwork was organized and methodically placed into the catalog. After the artwork was placed into their respective sections based on the context in which they were created; color, value, form, and space, all played a role in the placement of pieces to create the overall design. I believe this catalog showcases a collaborative and creative process of working with the artmakers and using informed experience to create what is before you today.

Reina Bicciche

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Sarah "Stella" Dunn, MA, MFTA, ATR,
Sarah Heller,
Valerie Graniou-Cook,
and those who chose to remain anonymous.

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