



# Perishing Personhood

Alaina Mann

Research and Creative Arts Fair

Professor Mark Gilbert

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Spring 2022

# Initial Ideas

Injuries

Generations

Nursing  
Home  
Residents

Scars

Hidden  
Ailments

X-Rays

Dementia

Art  
Therapy



# A Study of Alzheimer's (Sharon Kraft)

- ♦ Medicine and art connecting through drawings
- ♦ Special emphasis on the development of her dementia
- ♦ Effects of pandemic
- ♦ Focus on relationships
  - ♦ Patient
  - ♦ Physician
  - ♦ Caregiver
  - ♦ Family



March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020



March 21st, 2021

# Sharon Kraft

- ◆ My birthday buddy!
- ◆ Legal Secretary
- ◆ UNO Regents Scholarship Recipient
- ◆ World Traveler
- ◆ Mom of 3
- ◆ Wife of 60+ years



# Recent Visits

Observations from drawings

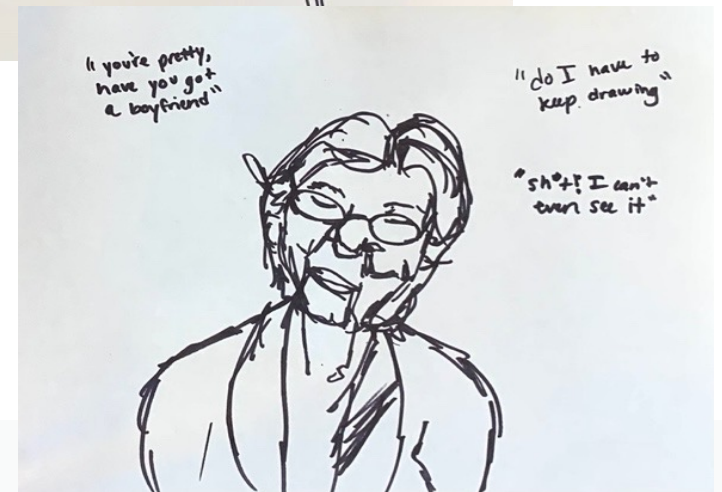
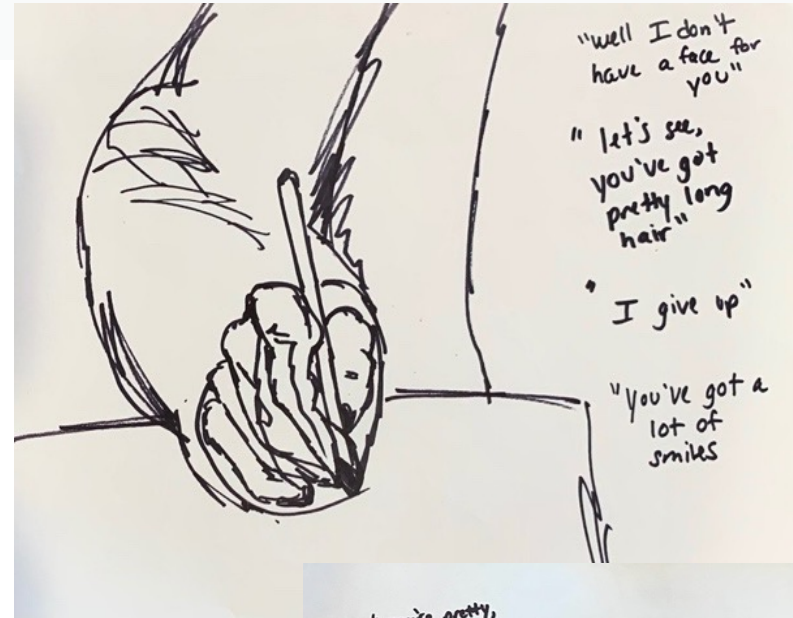
- Isolation
- Growth on face
- Limited visiting time
- Memory lapse
- Detached
- Immobile
- Mood changes
- Stringy hair
- Frozen shoulder
- Depression/ Anger
- Maintained spunk



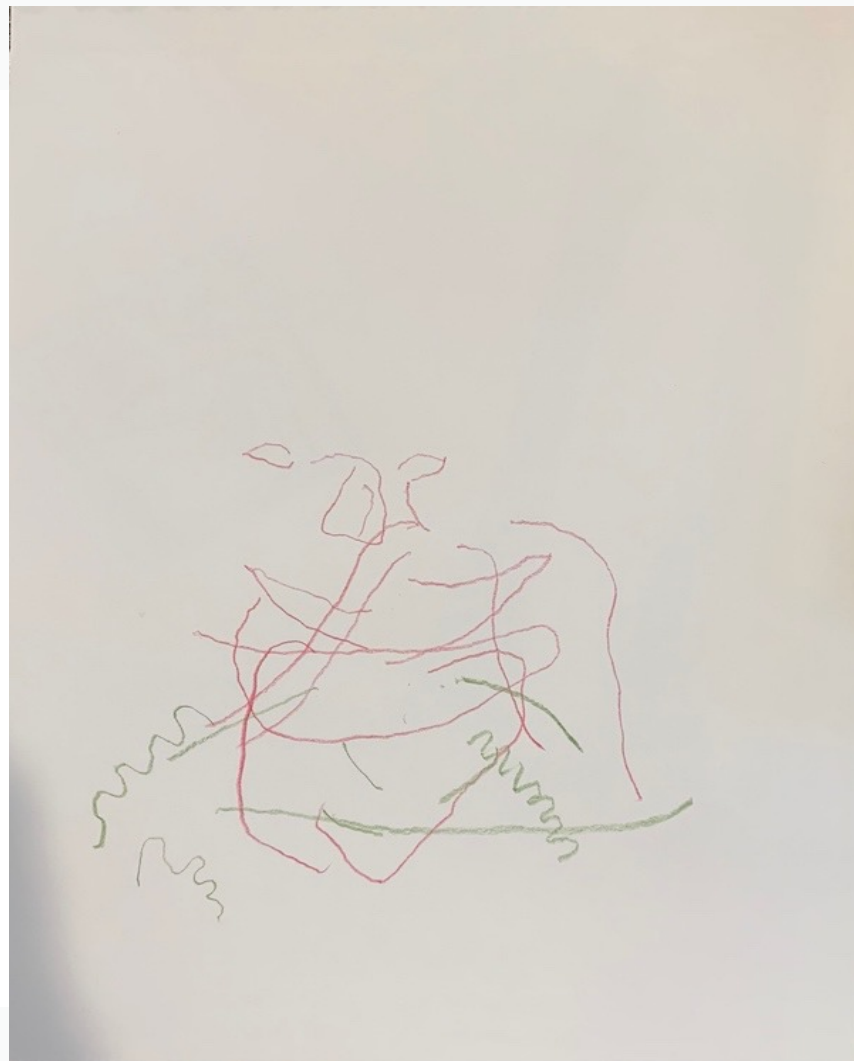
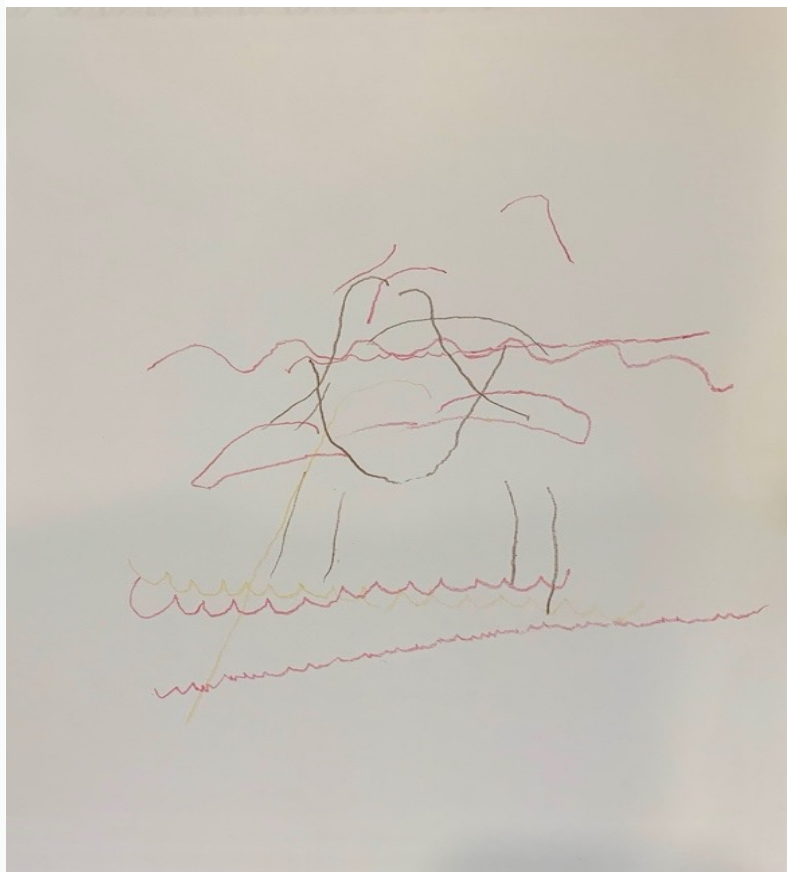
# Notable Experiences

Relationship between drawer and subject/model

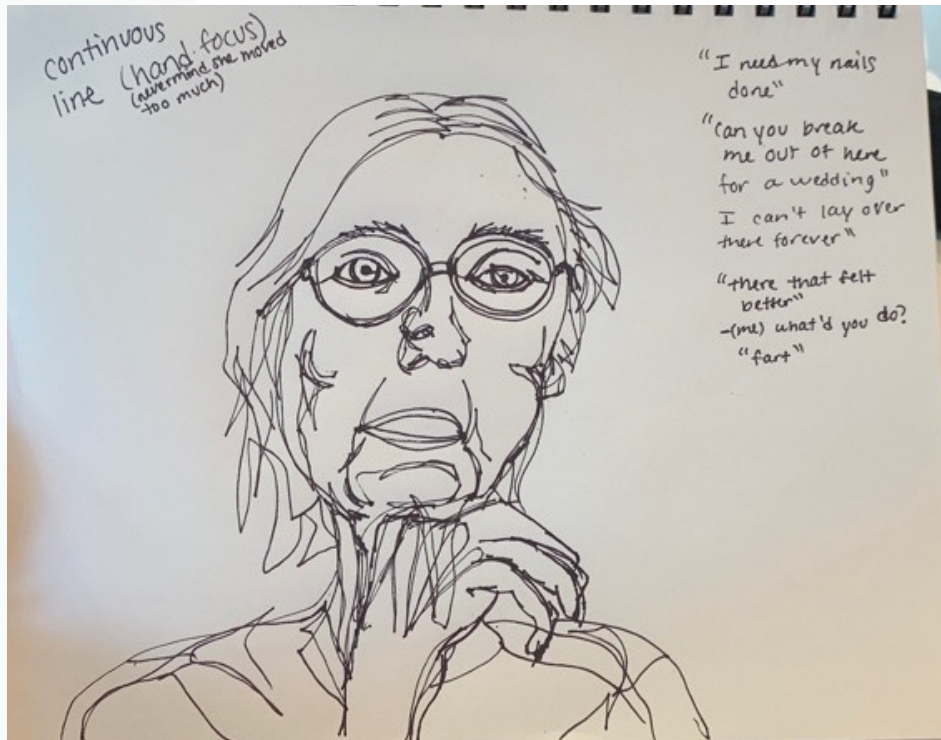
- Lots of prompting
- Difficulty maintain conversation while drawing
- Hard to not draw with previous bias
- Displeasure with drawings from life
- Fear of new memories replacing old ones



# Sharon's Sketches

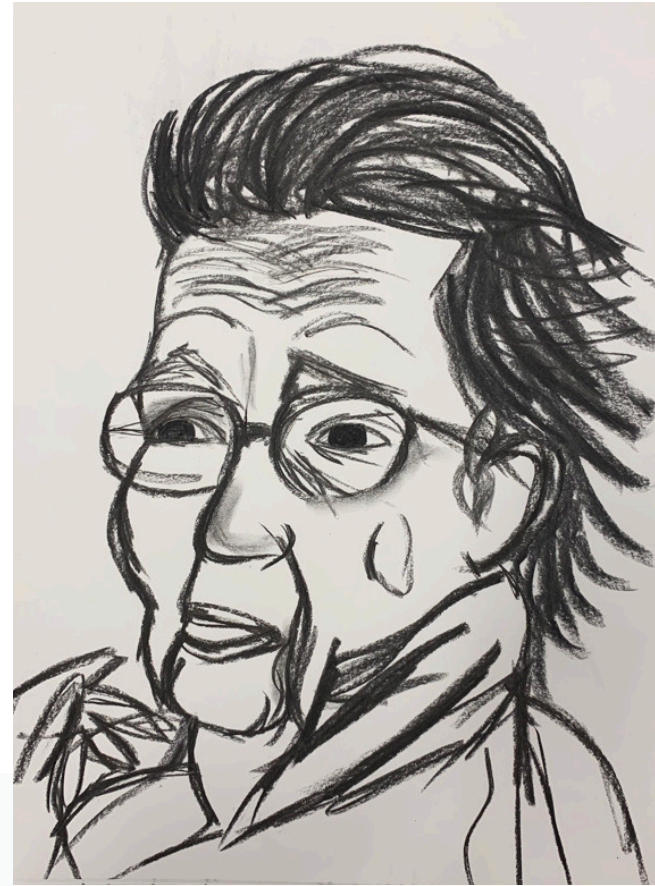


# Drawings From Life





# Drawings from Life



# Drawings from Photo

Pre-diagnosis



# Drawings from Photo

Post injury



# Caregiver Perspective

- Dignity in Life
- Ebb and flow of disease
- Comfort in recognition over remembrance
- Where is the line of no longer living?
- No caregiver's guide to dementia
  - Different for every patient
  - Remind yourself that the person you knew before dementia is still in there.
  - Respect refusal

"The greatest honor in life is to take care of those who took care of us"



# William Utermohlen





William Utermohlen

# Medical/Scientific Takeaways

- Mental illness can be as debilitating as physical illness
- Healing effects of expression through art
- Communication – for both patient and provider
- Means of measuring decline and capabilities
- Serotonin release – stress responses affected
- Understanding the unseen
- Learning tool



José St-Amant

# Artistic Takeaways

- Connection to subject/model
- Benefits of multiple drawing sessions
- Expressing tone and emotion/storytelling
- Difference in drawing from life and from photo
- Exploration and thought process from dementia drawings
- Artistic means of coping



Navy Medical Art of the Abbot Collection



# My Takeaway

- Growth in comfortability drawing from life
- The process can be more rewarding than the product
- Positive and respectful observation of disease
- Compassion over frustration



# Art as research!

## Observational approach

- Valuable data can be obtained
  - Balance between peace and pity towards subject
- Alternative perspective to statistical data
- Growth in medical humanities field
- Can create more in-depth conclusions



<https://emergingartsleaders.wordpress.com/2015/11/19/a-case-for-research-in-the-arts/>