

Summer 2025

For the Love

UCSF Sheri Sobrato
Brain Cancer Survivorship Program

UCSF Art for Recovery

of Art



Exhibition

UCSF Brain Tumor
Center



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In collaboration with UCSF Art for Recovery, the Sheri Sobrato Brain Cancer Survivorship Program is honored to present For the Love of Art—a powerful collection of original creative works by individuals living with brain cancer. This is the second event that celebrates the strength, insight, and artistry of those navigating life with a brain tumor diagnosis.

As you explore the collection, you'll encounter a vibrant mix of paintings, photographs, sculptures, and music—all created by members of our community. These pieces offer a window into the emotional and physical landscape of life with a brain tumor, while also honoring the joy, connection, and healing that creativity can bring. We invite you to take in the courage, expression, and hope captured in every work of art.

About Us

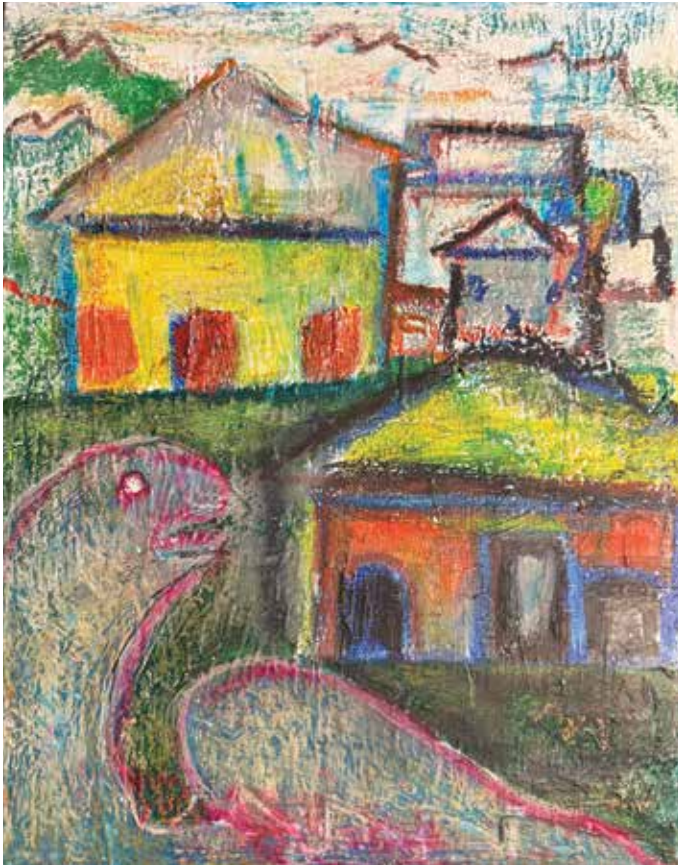
The Sheri Sobrato Brain Cancer Survivorship Program is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people living with brain tumors. Our services focus on emotional, physical, and cognitive well-being through a range of supportive offerings—support groups, wellness classes, educational events, and more. To explore our full list of resources, please visit: <https://braintumorcenter.ucsf.edu/support/survivorship>.

UCSF's Art for Recovery program offers a safe and nurturing space for adults facing serious illness to express themselves creatively. Through visual arts, writing, and shared connection, Art for Recovery helps participants process complex emotions and find healing through self-expression. Learn more about their offerings at: <https://cancer.ucsf.edu/support/afr>

Cover Art:

Jim Wagoner, *Breakers* and *Tide Pool Flows*.
Medium: Acrylic on canvas.

Noble “Greg” Von Allen Carlisle



He was a self-taught painter who studied briefly in Chicago, Portland, San Miguel de Allende, and San Francisco. Diagnosed with cancer in 2005 and given a year to live, he outlived his doctors and defied every prognosis. He lived generously, deeply, and symbolically — teaching the meaning of synchronicity and soul.

Bob Clark-Riddell



I play an acoustic guitar and sing my song “Reach for the Sky,” which describes my reaction to receiving my cancer diagnosis and my prayer. Song helps me process my emotions and is my coping mechanism. Playing is also therapeutic.

Vern Clevenger



This image is one of the best since the brain tumor. The tumor and my relationship with UCSF and Dr. Susan Chang have completely changed my work. Every shooting day is special – we never know when our health will alter. Thank you!

Lisa Kully

I'm writing this on Tuesday, three days before craniotomy #3 (12/15/2022, 10/18/2024, 7/18/2025). This photo of me under my nectarine tree weaves a thread between my submission to the 2023 exhibition, the piece that featured neon pink nectarine blossoms, and various artifacts from my initial UCSF treatment for glioblastoma in 2022. This time, rather than poetry or mixed media, I am singing Jane Siberry's "Calling All Angels," in honor of all the human angels who have walked alongside me and supported me through direct gifts of attention, love, practical help, or by sharing their vulnerable and real experience in the cancer journey in the Thriver peer support group or the awe-inspiring lovefest we call "Healing with Writing."

Art for Recovery is an angel in itself. To my good fortune, I found the UCSF Survivorship program, thanks to my friend, Virginia, just after my diagnosis of brain cancer. Three-plus years later, I am buoyed, strengthened, and most importantly, connected to so many other brain tumor and other cancer Thrivers. I have been so changed and supported by Art for Recovery, especially the writing peer group so lovingly and thoughtfully facilitated by AFR staff and frequented by people facing cancer. We all move mountains to get there every Thursday at 10 a.m. in our little Zoom spots. This has given me the opportunity to write, which is very healing, and to hear the sometimes heart-wrenching and always honest writing of those who are my comrades and friends. "Calling All Angels" also connects to my most challenging role of mother to a young adult in what I believe is a very challenging era to be a teen or young adult. Sometimes all I can do is call upon what I formulate, perhaps just for my own solace, as my daughter's guardian angel. When my daughter



was a baby and a young child, I sang to her each night as she prepared for sleep. One of the songs described four protective angels around her and above. I sometimes half-joke that my brain cancer treatment has been easy compared to parenting — a journey so vulnerable and uncertain and where feelings of success or competence are hard won and fleeting. In all of this, connection is the jewel.

Krista Lukas

FANS OF MY UNCONSCIOUS POEMS BY KRISTA LUKAS

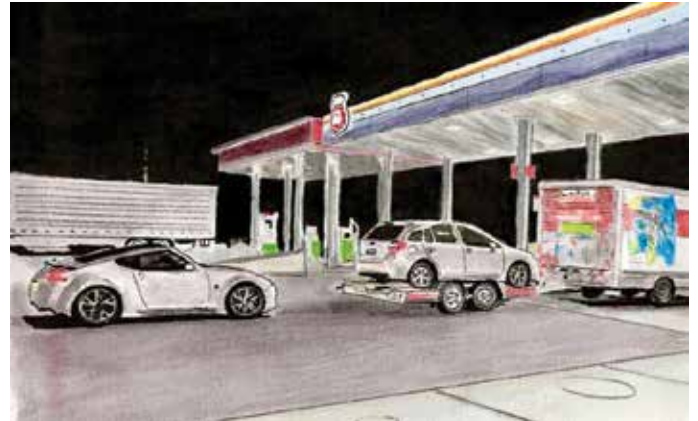


Bliss to Emerald Bay

We walked on
a path carved
into the side of a cliff.
Skyward rose a forested
slope and earthward
a plunging into the deepest blue.
Last time, the beauty
was astounding. Now, it struck me only
as an impression, distant
and faint.

Krista Lukas writes prose and poetry. She received the Nevada Arts Council fellowship in fiction, and she is the author of *Fans of My Unconscious*, a poetry collection which includes work that was selected for *The Best American Poetry* and *The Writer's Almanac*. When she first woke up after brain surgery, she said, "I feel so much better. I think I can write again!"

Kyle Maglalang



Art has always given me the medium (quite literally) to express what I see or feel. Compared to writing a journal (which I did every single day for 10 years straight through my late high school years, my entire college years and the early days of my military career) art can be shared and can be interpreted differently by every person looking at it.

A journal is meant to be private, but an artwork is meant to be showcased.

My brain tumor has affected my entire life. My capacity to think and perform activities is very different now, but creating art and playing music has always been my avenue to let it all out.

My art might have changed, but I will continue to create art to the best of my abilities.

Adeline McDonagh



All pieces are influenced by what's happening in my life at the time of the painting...whether good or bad.

Jeff McMahon



Writing a song wasn't influenced at all by my brain tumor, but it did all happen during a time when I was certainly looking for distractions. Writing and recording this song encompassed a solid week where I wasn't asked, "How's your head feeling?" but instead, "How's the song going?" So, it was just a chance to escape. That said... although it's supposed to be more of a song about love, it does technically somewhat apply to the health experience, as opening up about how you're feeling (aka wearing your heart on your sleeve) is something that helps ensure that you receive the best care that you can.



Rene Minneboo



My glioblastoma journey started the day after I returned from singing Beethoven's 9th in Ukrainian in New York and at the Kennedy Center in DC with the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra. I was unstable on my legs, and when I saw the neurologist, he gave me a diagnosis of ALS. About a week later, a CT scan revealed a 7 cm tumor. Surgery followed, and almost instantly, I got my strength back. Whereas the day before surgery, I was unable to get myself off the floor, the next day I was walking up stairs and lifting my arms above my head.

When I got home and tested whether I could still sing, I was delighted that yes, I could.

A week or so later, Judy and I attended the Hershey Felder show in Mountain View. He was portraying Rachmaninoff. I had brought two songs by him in Russian, and Mr. Felder agreed to let me sing one of them to an audience of about 500. It was so soon after the surgery that I was still quite weak and did not have the best voice. But the audience loved it, and I got an ovation.

Since then, I have sung a few times at the jazz school open mic in Berkeley, at Jazz Camp, and at a birthday celebration. I am really just a choral singer who gets to do solos. Hence, I soloed in Moscow, St Petersburg, Norway, South Africa, the US, of course, Greece, Hungary, and a couple more.

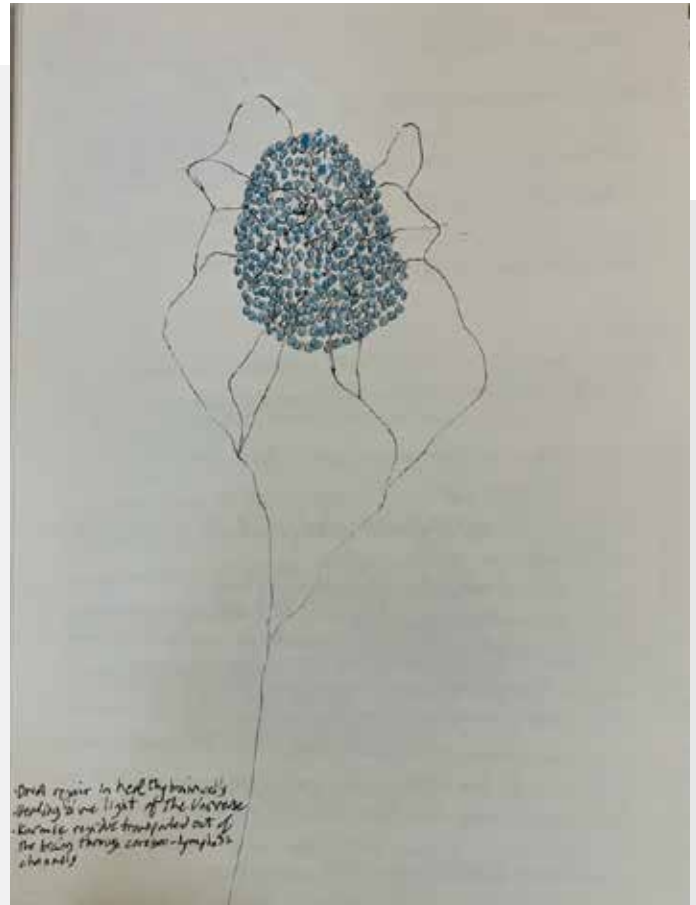
The medical journey is interfering due to a lack of energy and the constant need to sleep. I am now on chemo and wear the Optune device but have severe problems with lesions and unbearable itching.

All one can do is live day by day and hope for continued clear MRIs.

I am still waiting for a definitive diagnosis of ALS, which would be worse than the GBM, though both are fatal.

Robert Mittman

I have long kept notebooks that include “state diagrams” — visual, often gestural, representations of sensations I’m feeling in and around my body, chakras, energy systems, and other layers of being. Since my diagnosis of glioblastoma in early June 2025, my drawings have included state diagrams, state diagrams supplemented by “healing grids” (representations of the magical, energetic grids that I conjure to complement and integrate with the medical treatments), and visualizations of integrated scientific, medical, and magical phenomena that are part of my healing. This drawing came on Friday evening, June 18, after my first full week of chemo-radiation treatment. My radiation tech told me that weekends were the time for the healthy cells in the brain to recover from the week’s treatment. That those cells have functioning DNA repair mechanisms, while tumor cells’ DNA repair is often damaged. This drawing represents DNA repair in healthy brain cells, the Healing Blue Light of the Universe, and karmic residue (dead tumor cells) being transported out of the brain through cerebro-lymphatic channels.



Ryan Moon



Diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG) has a median survival of about 365 days. 278 blue hearts represent the estimated number of children diagnosed with DIPG in this country. 365 hearts also represents that we will fight each and every day until we find a cure for this devastating disease. Less than 1% survive beyond 5 years. At diagnosis, the next birthday they celebrate after diagnosis will likely be their last. Yet, they live on in our hearts.

Why was I diagnosed with such a treatable tumor? Of course, this is a rhetorical question. I've dealt with this guilt in two ways: connecting with and helping my peers through Thrivers and YABS and by committing my professional life to helping children with brain cancer as a pediatric neuro-oncologist.

As you view this painting, I encourage you to first start by focusing on one of the hearts that's calling to you and then slowly softening your eyes to look for shapes like constellations. They are the stars.

Lloyd Nattkemper



This piece, “Sevilla,” written by Isaac Albéniz originally for piano, has been played and recorded by numerous guitarists. It was transcribed for saxophone quartet by Marcel Mule. Monterey Sax, the quartet I’ve played in since 1990, has rehearsed the piece many times, and we’ve performed it perhaps six times. Through the years I’ve always played the tenor sax part. In 2022, I worked on the soprano, alto and baritone sax parts and using the GarageBand app on my Mac, recorded all four parts. There are 14 places in the piece with tempo changes — some of them very subtle, others sudden, and a two-measure portion with all horns playing a *solli* in fast sixteenth notes — that make for a challenge when recording this on one’s own! The fact that guitarists and pianists cover all the parts on their own (rather than four separate musicians, or in my case, a musician layering recordings done with four instruments), is very impressive.



Jennifer Neale



Have you ever gone walking in the morning, while the fields are still a bit damp, and the birds are still acting as if they own the land? In the springtime they cock their heads from on top of a branch higher than any other animal could get to them, just to say, "Hello."



This painting is larger than most of my pieces, yet the call for me was simple. A white peacock is found in Portugal and Spain, yet I am not sure how rare these birds are in the United States. Their eyes are dark blue or black like birds that are found everywhere — not like albinos — and this is the key to their history as "white peacocks."

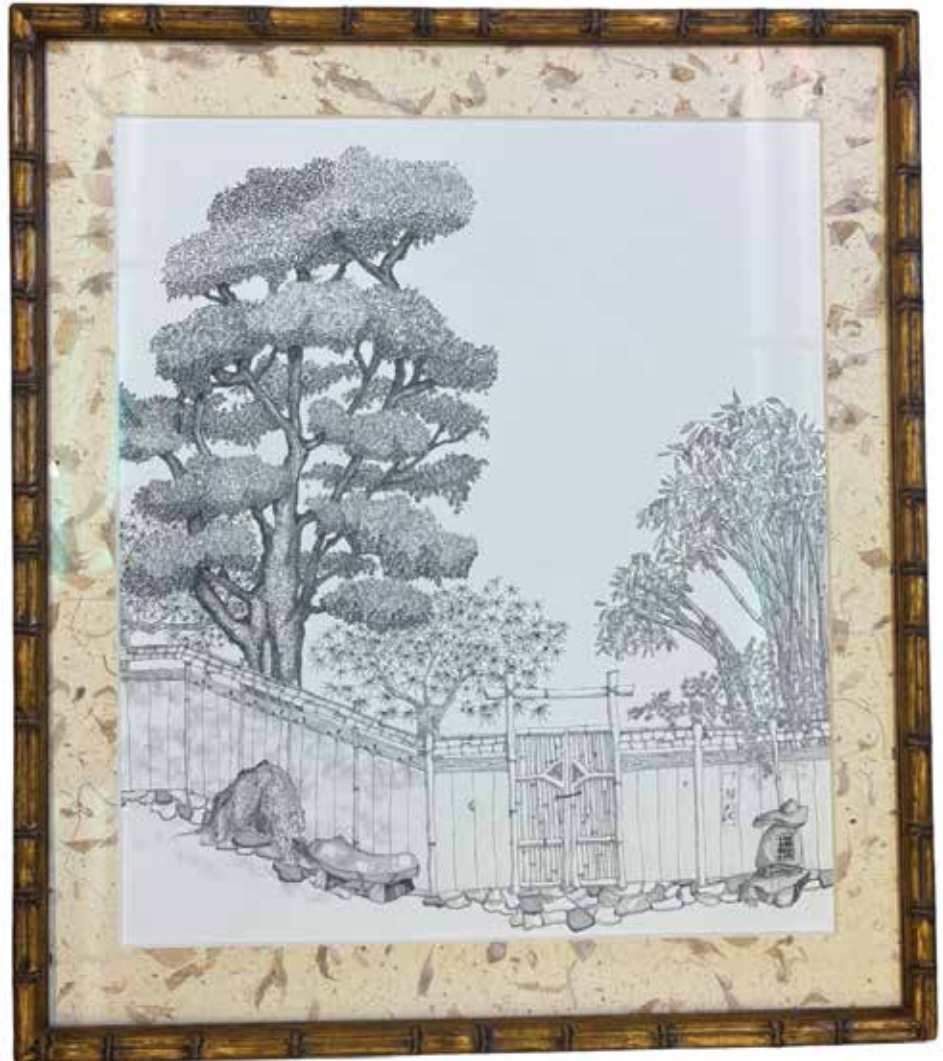


The debate between black and white drawings and four-color pieces of art continues. Each has its own balance. Each has its own statement. Each piece has a beauty of its own, and neither one can claim the leadership.



This beautiful male peacock has most powerful features, made of its bold colors. They are handsome, standing at all times as if overseeing the world around it and knowing that they own it. Their coat is overflowing, like the most fair and comely feathers so much better to be found...

In Japan, the fences and gates that surround what is inside, is a most special gift they have for everyone. People look to see what is inside, and even the smallest garden, with the gently waving leaves of bamboo plants and the branches of the tallest tree will intrigue you...



Tiffany Oreglia

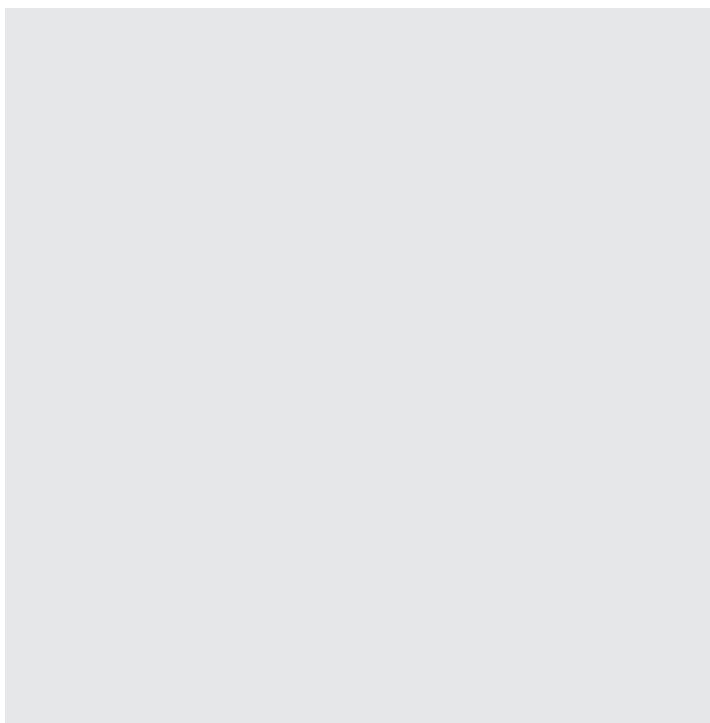
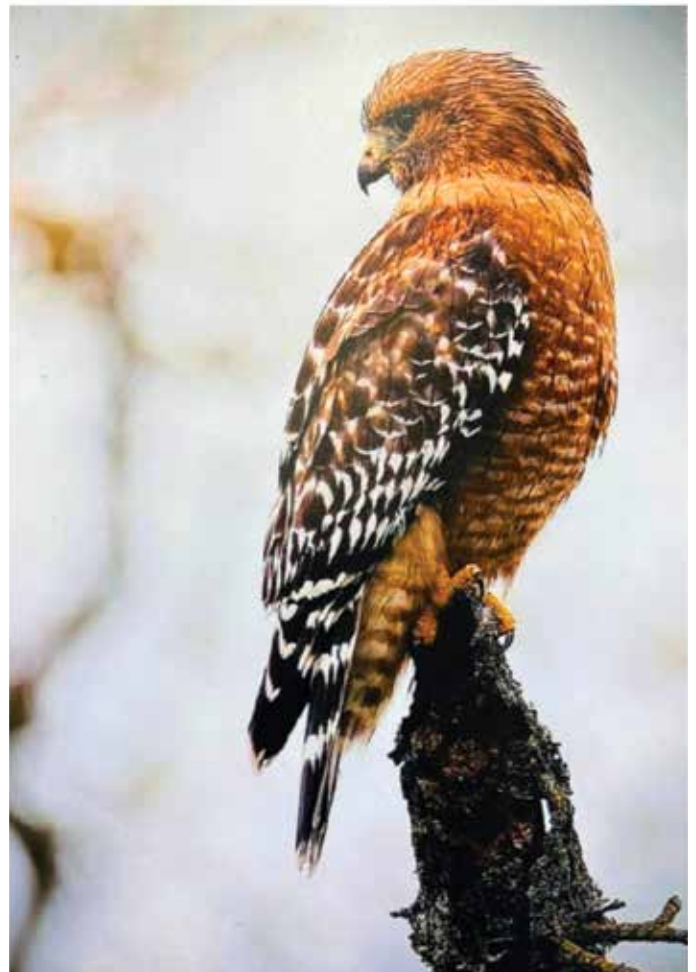


FOCUSING on NATURE'S PALETTE

Photography is exceptionally therapeutic!

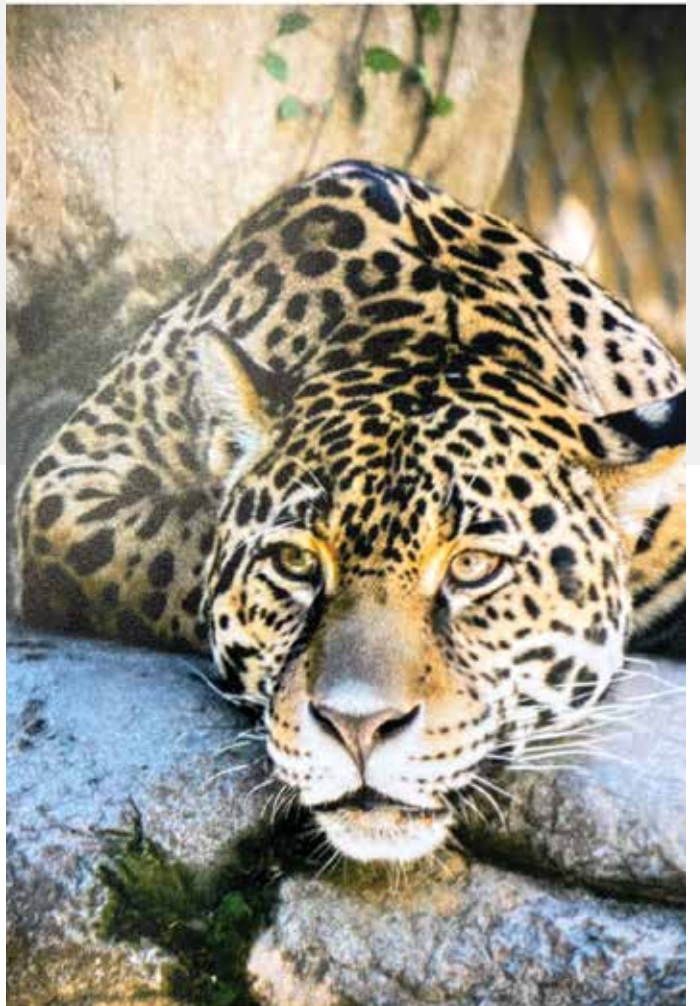
'Focusing on Nature's Pallet' absolutely helps me with my anaplastic astrocytoma journey. Picking up the camera and focusing on the art of nature not only shows me the wonder of the beautiful world, it provides a much-needed stress relief.

When I feel overwhelmed, I pick up a camera, a GoPro or even the phone camera. Then, I go out solo for quiet nature loving time. It helps me to FOCUS on the beauty and let go of the stress and fear.

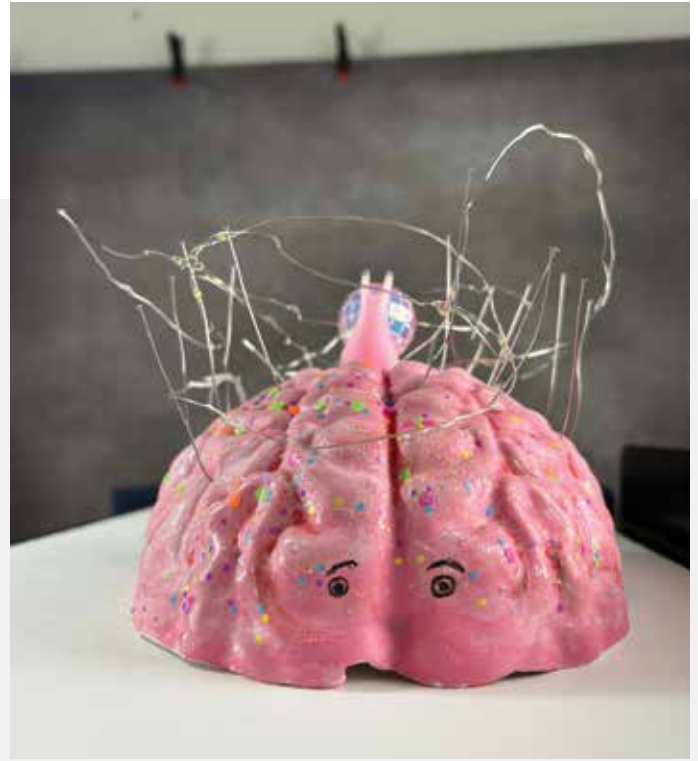




FOCUS on accepting!
FOCUS on healing!
FOCUS on loving life!



Sylvia Parisotto



Creative expression is the ability to capture feelings and emotions into a unique work of art. Creating art is a way to process complicated emotions that arise from dealing with cancer, like fear, anxiety, and vulnerability. What can be difficult for me to say or write can be expressed without hesitation or judgment with a color or the sharp points of a line with a black marker. Often times I come to understand and release negative emotions through the act of creating, channeling that energy into something positive. Participating in Art For Recovery has been a crucial part of my recovery. It is a supportive community of people living with cancer and sharing their experiences and encouraging artistic expression in whatever form that may take.

Ben Pax



Sure, there's fear that comes with a brain tumor; there's worry, bafflement and maybe regret. But along with all the turmoil comes a mountain of gratitude for everything that makes up this wacky world—and a boatload of appreciation for the love and beauty in which we swim.

All the Mountains and the Sea speaks to the challenges of serious illness, the challenges we all face navigating this topsy-turvy thing called life—that's the mountains.

The sea refers to the ever-present equanimity of the ocean against which the sound and the fury sometimes rages.

If KK Was a Bird is an appreciation of Karen Kolotrow, a wonderful Art for Recovery artist who's now passed. This quirky piece shows, I hope, my appreciation of her in this precious life, her courageous example and quiet mentorship—before she flew away...

benpax.com

Maria Cristina Prieto Conaway

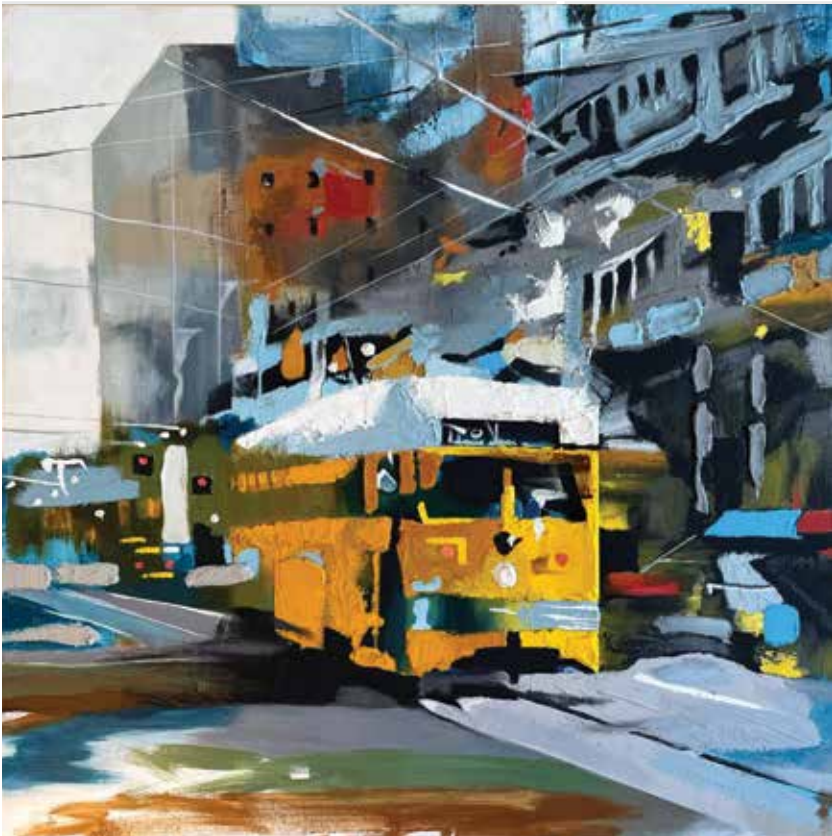


I was born in Cuba and spent my formative years in Puerto Rico, so the ocean has always had a strong influence on my life. Since being diagnosed at UCSF with glioblastoma in early 2020, I cherish the times that I am able to spend near the ocean and experiencing everything this special place has to offer. My husband Bill and I have been photographing wildlife since we first met, and we have used our time together since my diagnosis to continue to enjoy seeking out and taking images of nature. Nature photography provides an all-important reminder of the variety, resilience and robustness of life and a respite from the constant personal concerns that intrude into our daily lives and distract us from what is important about the experience of being alive.

Peter J. Sorin



@peteyjoso



Cary Tucker



The Crab in the Spindle

I slide headfirst inside the huge machine,
And as the tunnel gears begin to spin,
A cushion presses up against my ears.
I feel the needle prick my elbow vein,
But cannot see a clock to check the time
Nor move the mirror hung above my face.

What battle cry might I soon have to face
That issues from the mouth of the machine?
What if a second growth appears this time?
My water nuclei align and spin
As high magnetic fields surround each vein,
And then the scan begins to probe my ears...

Following radiology treatment at UCSF, my childhood brain tumor (astrocytoma) at last surrendered – but not without leaving behind numerous side effects, especially hearing loss. I first began wearing hearing aids in elementary school, and over the following decades, my hearing continued to decline. Now, I am still able to hear, but only while wearing cochlear implants. I have often chosen to express myself using nonverbal forms of communication such as drawing, dance, and writing.

Lauri Twitchell



30 years ago, around the holidays, I started making bird prints to give to my family and friends. I began with the white dove, the symbol for peace. Soon, it seemed to me that any or all birds could be considered symbols of peace. So each year I print an edition of a bird that has impressed me, such as the slate-throated redstart blown off course from South America and seen in San Francisco; the lesser goldfinch flying around in a vibrant field of California poppies; or the ubiquitous American robin with his repeating song of “cheerily cheer-up” found just about everywhere in North America. I have seen these birds in the backyard or wilder spaces. I make note of a bird that flies or walks right up to me, is rare to the area, or is just so heartbreakingly beautiful. It gives me hope. After 20 years of living with a recurring brain tumor, I, along with my friends and family, really look forward to the arrival of that bird.



Jim Wagoner



I live a few blocks from the beach, at the Monterey Bay. My art studio is in town, close to home. Since my surgery, I have restarted my paintings, but in a different style than I was doing before. Things are different in how I prepare and how I visualize my projects. I still stay motivated by relevant ocean-related pictures, which is wonderful. Looking at the bay, the water, the creatures, and the people interacting with it makes all the difference.

Living close to the ocean, you can't help but become connected to the daily tide changes. Since my surgery, I think about my daily walks on the edge of the beaches. The variation in the tides is so beautiful, driven by the sun, clouds, the creatures, and the time of year. All of these make a difference to the colors and shapes of endless possibilities.



Come

visit

August 15 through September 15, 2025

By appointment: Please contact Judy Choi
(judy.choi2@ucsf.edu) or Naomi Hoffer (naomi.hoffer@ucsf.edu)

btc.ucsf.edu

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