

For the  
Love



of  
Art



UCSF Sheri Sobrato Brisson  
Brain Cancer Survivorship Program

UCSF Art for Recovery



Exhibition

**UCSF** Brain Tumor  
Center

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Partnering with UCSF Art for Recovery, the Sheri Sobrato Brisson Brain Cancer Survivorship Program is pleased to feature original works of talented artists who have all faced the challenge of living with brain cancer. This inaugural event, “For the Love of Art,” showcases original pieces that capture the impact that a brain tumor has while also celebrating the beauty of life and the therapeutic power of self-expression.

As you walk through the exhibit, you will see a range of media, from paintings to photos to sculptures. You will also hear music created and performed by brain tumor survivors. We hope that these artistic works will not only inspire you, but also highlight the resilience and creativity of the human spirit.

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# About us

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The mission of the Sheri Sobrato Brisson Brain Cancer Survivorship Program is to enhance the wellness and quality of life of patients with brain tumors through a collaborative, multidimensional approach focusing on emotional, physical and cognitive health. For more information on the survivorship program and the Brain Tumor Center at UCSF please visit: [btc.ucsf.edu](http://btc.ucsf.edu).

The UCSF Art for Recovery Program provides a safe environment where adults can express the intense feelings that may arise in life-threatening illnesses. They provide a welcoming space for patients' voices to be heard, without judgment, in the company of others who know what it is like. To learn more about the groups and classes offered through Art for Recovery, please visit: [cancer.ucsf.edu/support/afr](http://cancer.ucsf.edu/support/afr)

Cover Art:

Dace Hines, *Untitled*, 2023. Medium: Digital photos printed on metallic rag paper.

# Leslie Allen



My interest in art, nature, animals, and travel have informed my language as an artist. I paint in watercolor and print my work on canvas and textiles. As a professional artist since 1982, I have had years to develop my art vocabulary.

The journey through three brain surgeries made me realize that I possess a powerful personal mythology that really gave me strength and helped me get through the experience relatively peacefully.

# DIGGING DEEP

A Journal for Young People Facing Health Challenges



BY ROSE OFFNER AND SHERI BRISSON

This book is dedicated to all the kids and teens with ongoing health challenges, their families, and the professionals who work with them. Thank you for helping us to understand your struggles and for sharing your triumphs.

# Rich Brodsky



Listen here



Creativity is healing. Music and the ability to create music has been the single most healing aspect of my brain tumor journey. But I also believe it works two ways. Yes, being able to create music or art of any kind is healing in and of itself, but I also believe that my tumor and changes to my brain perhaps opened me up to viewing music from a completely different perspective. I've played guitar for the last 45 years and have been in and out of various rock bands but was never very good at songwriting. About seven years into my brain tumor journey, I "discovered" new ways of composing original music on the computer that had never occurred to me before. I'm now in the middle of my tenth album of all original music, and I have discovered an infinite reserve of creative energy that I never knew I had. In some ways, my brain tumor has been a blessing.

# Vern Clevenger



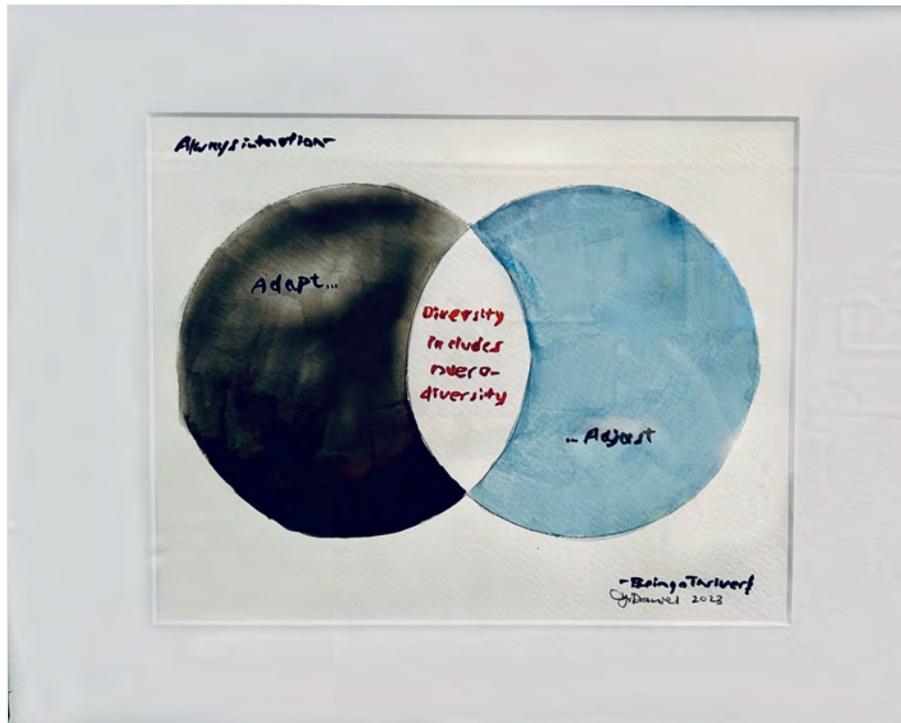
This morning was the last day of a workshop in early October 2011. This year had amazing fall colors also. But this particular Sunday morning had the finest light that I have ever seen over Bear Creek Spire and Little Lakes Valley. In my 35 years of living in the Eastern Sierra I have never glimpsed anything better. We left the parking lot in the predawn darkness and arrived in plenty of time to set up, be relaxed with coffee in hand, and be ready before sunrise. All 11 of us made amazing images of Bear Creek Spire, and of the crystal-clear pink light at the first hint of dawn. I used my 24mm Canon Shift/Tilt lens. It is an incredibly sharp lens, and very appropriate in this situation.

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!

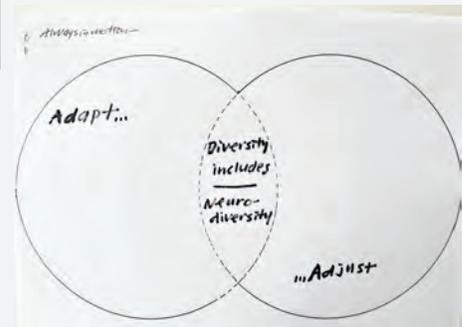
# Maria C. Prieto Conaway



I traveled extensively scuba diving and taking photographs of undersea creatures for over twenty years. Following my diagnosis with a brain tumor in February 2020 and surgery at UCSF, I pivoted to taking photos of wildlife here in Northern California. I enjoy hiking with my husband in search of a bobcats, coyotes, owls and other animals. Walking on trails has helped my balance and endurance while looking for these elusive animals helps to keep my mind sharp. The challenge of successfully capturing photos of wild animals in their natural environments has been very rewarding.



Listen to his description of his piece



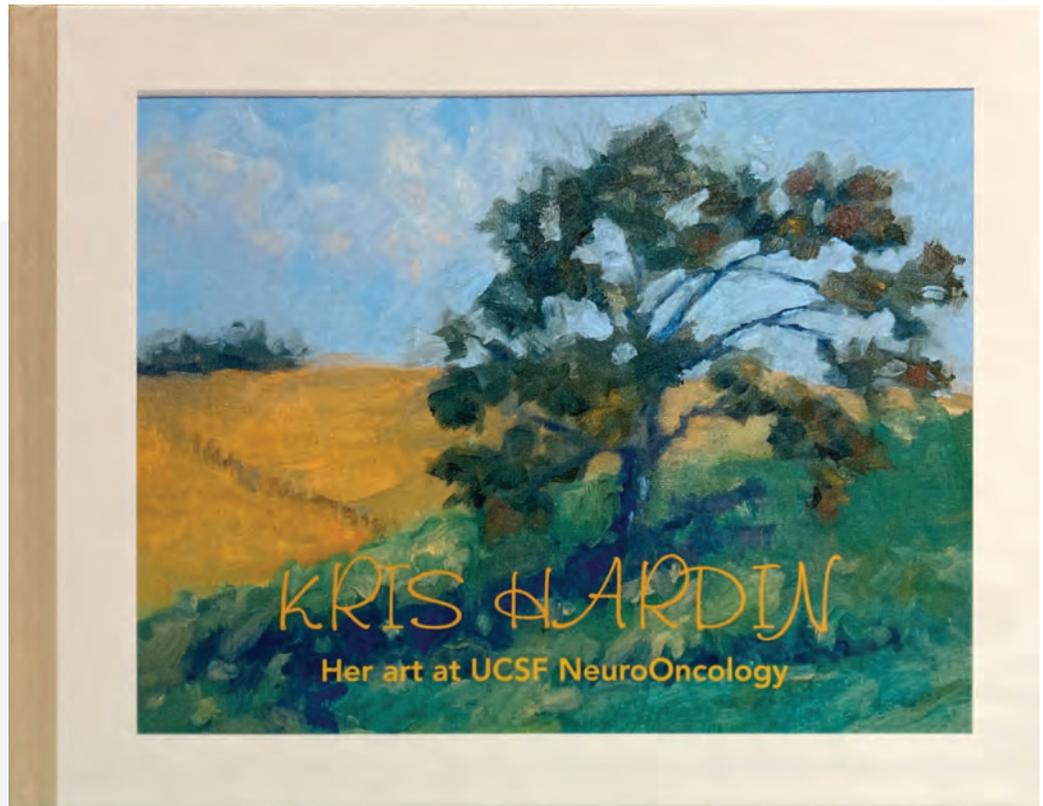
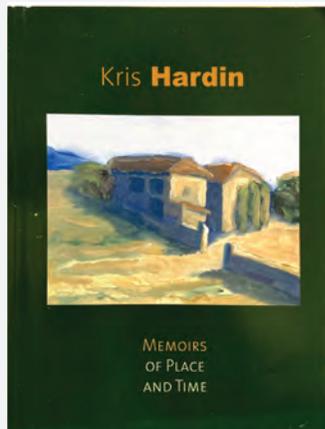
My submission for "The Love of Art" printed program is a mock-up of what you will see at our art show. My journey, or my path through brain cancer, is similarly incomplete. Like my "art piece" here, my new life is a work in process, but I have made progress nonetheless. When I joined Art for Recovery, I had been seeing so very many things in my life in straight black and white. Now, am I seeing things differently, so please be patient with me (again) as I try to apply color to my modest creation. With Gratitude, L Daniels

# Becky Hanson



This book is dedicated to the memory of Becky Hanson, a trainer, photographer, friend, mother, daughter, wife, and inspiration. We will forever be grateful for the courageous woman who you were and the legacy that you left behind.

# Kris Hardin



Kris Hardin was an extraordinary anthropologist who was diagnosed with glioblastoma in 2007 and passed away in 2012. She returned to painting after her diagnosis and found that she was more confident in her strokes and less afraid of color.

“Painting and drawing have always helped me focus more intensely on the place where I am. I then see things more clearly.” – Kris Hardin

# Dace Hines



It can be difficult to make sense of the world, even with a fully functioning brain. Living with brain cancer amplifies that feeling – inevitably forcing you to see things in new ways through a complex, shifting array of psychological, cognitive, and emotional states. The middle photo is a single-exposure self-portrait of me standing in a dark forest with a scrambled head – representing the simultaneous isolation, confusion, and clarity of the brain cancer experience. The end shots were taken using a technique I accidentally discovered a few years ago and have been refining ever since as part of a meditative creative process – multiple exposures of natural geological & ecological features which help me see hidden perspectives right before my eyes. They may look symmetrical at first, but slight asymmetries are revealed on closer inspection. I struggle with perfectionism (especially after two brain surgeries and comparing my current self to my former abilities). The subtle, naturally occurring imbalances in these photos liberate me from obsessing over trying to make them “perfect.” All exposures are done in-camera. No Photoshop, no layering. They have a “close, but not quite perfect” quality, a reminder of three important truths:

**First** – that things are not always as they seem at first glance.

**Second** – that there is always more than one perspective available.

**And third** – that no matter how hard I try, things will always be a little messy, a little off – and that’s okay.



Right after getting diagnosed with GBM, I sent an email to one of my writing teachers with the subject line: The ultimate motivation. Managing my own gratifying business and solo parenting made it hard for me to put aside time to write. Writing is a reliable and gratifying way for me to move through and transform traumas, and apparently, brain cancer is a trauma. My first cancer, but not my first trauma. Being close to the redwoods and plants is also very nourishing and deeply grounding. Just before I got sick, we moved to a home where I could garden, after seventeen years in a one-bedroom, yard-less (and laundry-less) apartment. The new property has several fruit trees, including the budding nectarine tree photographed here, as well as the young singular almond tree with its gorgeous pastel blossoms. (The deer will eat this tree, so I can't get attached.). Then, when I remembered the Galway Kinnell poem, "Saint Francis and the Sow," *Blossoming* started taking form.

This piece was inspired by my wish to express appreciation to the techs, nurses and doctors who accompanied me through the 30-session radiation journey with kindness, patience, humor, and, gentle guiding hands when my tumor-induced visual impairments left me too vulnerable to navigate the UCSF hallways. They welcomed my mellow musical suggestions until Day 30, when I asked them to blast Michael Franti and Spearhead's "I'm Alive!" (After I teasingly questioned Swan about how I was to hold still when she played James Brown, she told me, "You are the DJ!")

The "Care Haiku" was specifically written for the staff who sweetly helped me walk from the Radio Oncology waiting room and get into the right position on the table, then, eight minutes later...1,2,3, helped me sit up sometimes showing me where to put my arm in my jacket when my visual processing was out of whack. Some arranged almost sixty Uber rides between El Sobrante and UCSF. Swan, Adrian, Chris, Lena, Jiana, Rachel, Dr. Braunstein, Africa, Amy, Mindy, the kind greeters at the 505 Parnassus the front door who sometimes accompanied me down the hall, even walking behind me, just in case. I would wake up in the night for a month or so, planning the thank you cards. Of course, just like this art piece, I didn't get it fully together until the last minute, glue-sticking on the Uber ride, and getting help collating the cards and poems with my friend who came to celebrate the end of radiation.

I'm so grateful to UCSF for giving me not only a chance at life, but also for the wealth of healing resources that, more than anything, have lured me back to my own path that has been very much about healing and living out the answer to my lifelong question: "How does my life reflect what is deeply important to me?" I'm not done thanking people, because I'm not done.

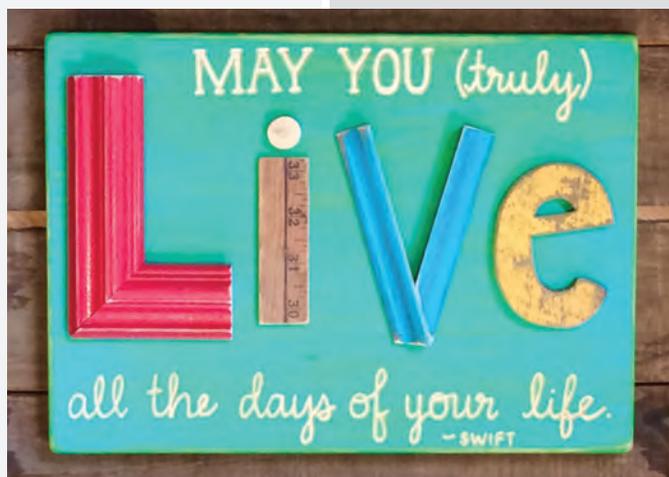
I definitely have more to write.



Migraines came with treatments and some days they are so spectacular, I fade away. Art has always helped me cope through challenging situations. To reclaim my brightness, I explored what a migraine would look like in form and color. Migraine Mary effortlessly unfolded on to my canvas as someone I deeply knew. She is the visual expression of how I experience migraines.

Sometimes I feel like I'm hanging on by a thread. Scans, medications, doctor visits and therapies leave me dangling in fear and uncertainty. And just when I think I've lost all hope, that inner Spirit softly whispers, remember the Cosmic thread. That Divine thread in which we are all woven into and out of, interconnected through space and time. The energy of perfection.

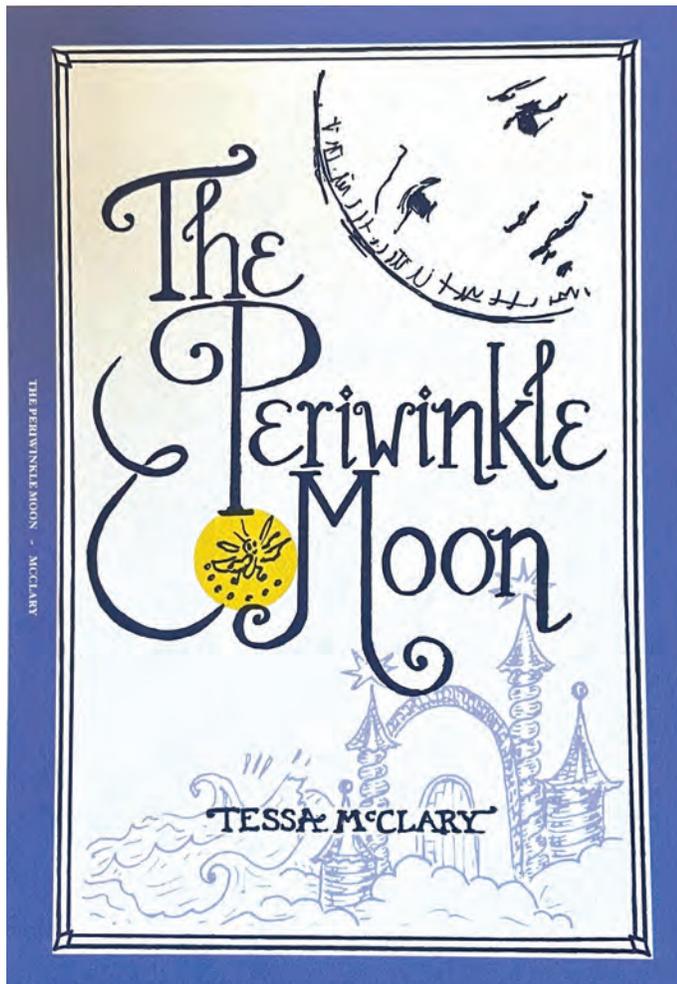
# Wendy Malcomson



I guess you could call me an “accidental artist” - in other words, my last art class was in middle school and my education and work experience are in healthcare and the nonprofit sector. I didn’t really discover my creative gift until my mom was dying from cancer in 2014, when “creating” suddenly became the only thing that lessened the overwhelming sense of loss I felt. I began with upcycled t-shirt dresses but quickly abandoned that creative outlet when a friend introduced me to a jigsaw... I fell in love with woodworking. I started a tiny shop called Creative Sister, a name coined by one of my older sisters, and created full-time for a handful of years before returning to healthcare. Although creating is now a side hustle, I can’t imagine ever giving it up.

I draw most of my creative inspiration from my experience living with inoperable brain cancer for the last 22 years. The pieces I enjoy creating most aren’t just something neat to look at or decorate with - they have meaning. My purpose in making them is to instill hope, strengthen faith, encourage, speak life and identity over others, clarify priorities, spark joy, and celebrate the love of flowers and the outdoors. It’s strange to contemplate the reality that if my life hadn’t been irrevocably changed by my own cancer diagnosis and the loss of my mom, I may not have discovered a big part of who I was created to be - I was created to CREATE. I guess that’s one of the silver linings in this journey, as well as the opportunity to be part of the UCSF Thrivers community to encourage and support others who have to walk this path.

# Tessa Rae McClary



Facing a life-or-death situation that required me to climb forward with fierce determination while simultaneously letting go of all control made this absolutely clear to me: I wish to be an artist. When I turned 21, my brain tumor — both the pain and despair in the weeks leading up to my diagnosis and the healing that followed—allowed me to redirect my trajectory completely and declare music to be my focus. In the years since then, I have found pursuing the creative arts as a profession is a windy road, both in practical and emotional terms, but I always refer back to that signpost: What do I wish to experience in this life? How can I participate to the fullest? The song I am performing tonight is the one I wrote soon after I was released from the hospital. Since then, I have written and performed music, taught piano as my profession, staged a play called “The Butterfly Ship,” travelled with a children’s version of this show, and during the pandemic created a YouTube show for kids called “Maya, Ever & the Ship of Treasure,” which invites viewers on magical adventures in search of the treasures of daily life.

Watch the "Ship of Treasures" show



# Adeline McDonagh



I look forward to waking up every morning and starting a painting... I feel extremely blessed to be alive and able to do so. It's been 19 years since my devastating diagnosis, I stay very positive and laugh a lot.

I'm inspired by beautiful images, people and photography... and all the world has to offer. I try to paint pieces that are poignant to me and reflect my mood for that day whether it's good or bad.

# Lloyd Nattkemper



Listen to his music

Since I was a little boy, I've loved creating, nurturing, and caring for others using my skills and a gentle approach. In spite of being a skinny and very introverted bookworm when I was growing up, athletics (rowing, running, cycling, bodybuilding) have been a part of every day for over 50 years of my life, even when I'm dealing with issues related to my tumor.

Growing up, my mom and stepdad always had music playing—Tommy Dorsey, Sinatra, Stan Getz, the Boston Pops, Ella Fitzgerald. My stepdad—he was an awesome musician—taught me the entire range of the saxophone the weekend before I started fifth grade. I've been playing sax (and other instruments) ever since, in school bands, professional bands, a band we put together here at UCSF when I was in dental school, a saxophone quartet (for 33 years and counting), and after my diagnosis and especially during the pandemic, I started recording saxophone quartet and sometimes more complex arrangements, all on my own at home using my MacBook and a microphone. A wonderful evening at the Hollywood Bowl back in 1978 shared with my mom inspired the first piece I'm presenting, named "Dreamsville". We went to see her favorite tenor, Luciano Pavarotti—accompanied by Henry Mancini and his orchestra. As evening settled in and the lavender lighting in the Bowl came up, Mancini opened with this piece. It was

magical. The version I've recorded includes Lori and Kip, two ladies from our Naval Postgraduate School band providing background for the 8 parts I cover on saxophones. The second piece I've just finished recording. It's inspired by my stepdad. Even though he had played in big bands, orchestras, and small ensembles covering a huge repertoire of music, his absolute favorite piece (especially when Stan Getz was playing it!) was "The Girl from Ipanema". Penned by Antonio Carlos Jobim, this piece is the most famous bossa-nova ever written. My presentation is a quartet recording (soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones), that emphasizes harmonic chord progressions and a distinctly Brazilian rhythm. Being diagnosed with a brain tumor didn't stop my desire—really my love—of playing saxophone and creating music. In fact, playing music has become a way to improve visual scanning and awareness, coordination, mood, and fight boredom. Yet, over the years since my diagnosis I find that reading music and keeping up, particularly with challenging pieces, becomes more and more difficult, and often frustrating. So, I cut myself some slack. And then get back to it, changing it up with things I know, new music, participating in three groups here on the Monterey Peninsula. Even when I'm really pushing it to keep up, everyone who knows me is incredibly supportive—and it truly gives me joy! I hope you'll enjoy listening.

# Jennifer Neale



Art, and creating with fabrics, is one of my two creative paths. I went from being successful in business to a new life. It is worth some attention, but not all of it. I went from one path to another, and the changes are clear...



# Scott Norris



The inspiration for Scott's self-portrait was his brain tumor. This is the first piece of mosaic digital art that Scott created. Before his brain tumor, he was a left brain financial and market analyst. Following his brain tumor surgery, he discovered a love for art. This mosaic was not designed to be a mosaic of his head; however, once all the pieces were in place, that is what it revealed. The butterfly symbolizes his life transforming and the love he tried to convey to his essence in spite of the tumor.

# Tiffany Oreglia



I play with the camera quite a bit. I actually look at it as my therapy. Sometimes I jump on the kayak and go take pictures of the birds. Sometimes I go to the zoo, safaris, under the water, hiking... anything that gives me a little solo time and enjoyment in the beautiful nature. A handful of my friends want me to make a photo book with Survivor in the title. Maybe I will do it someday.

# Elin Paras Jr.

Looking back, I now realize that even before I knew I had a brain tumor, it was affecting me. I felt as though I was overwhelmed and exhausted from the “noise” in my head and in my studio. I was short circuiting from the inside. At the time, I thought it was just me getting older slowly unraveling.

In December 2019, I had a sudden loss of memory and was taken to the ER at UCSF. I was diagnosed with a brain tumor and underwent brain surgery at UCSF to remove my tumor. It changed my life in a profound way. The recovery presented me with challenges that took me to a dark place. It was a mixed basket of emotional, mental, spiritual and physical struggles. A huge part of my recovery was being physically active and staying creative. I found healing in playing music as well as going back to my roots playing classical guitar, reading notes of my old pieces, and taking pictures of my environment during my recovery and the COVID lockdown. I am one of the lucky ones, and I cherish each moment I get to be here and walk outside, continuing my journey in this lifetime.

Listen here





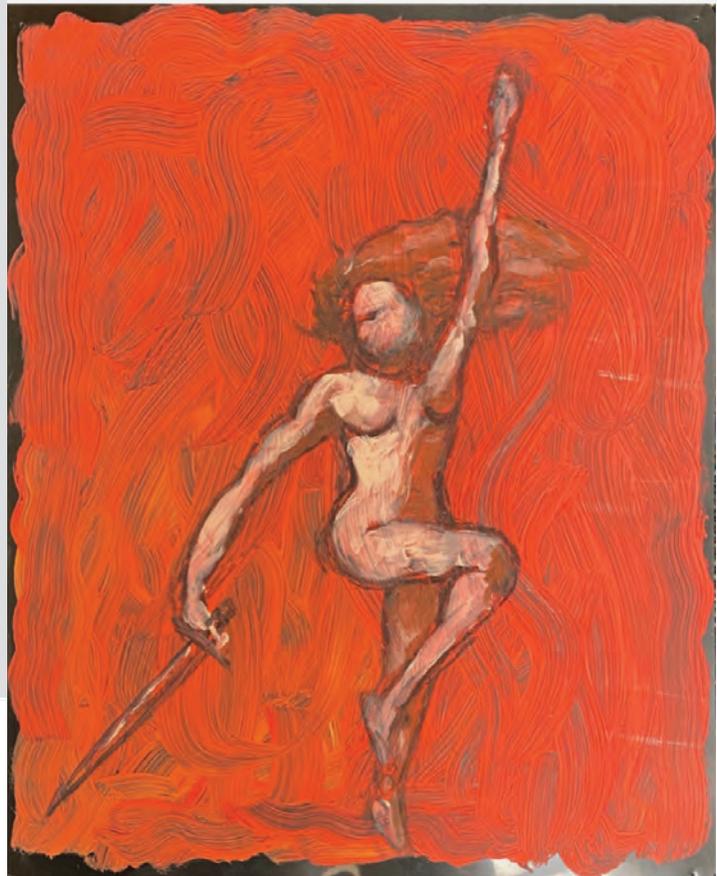
Any serious diagnosis undermines the notion of personal agency. The drowsy narrative of self-reliance is shaken and stays shaken. Personal identity, so long taken for granted, is in doubt. But the mind quickly reasserts itself: denial, anger, bargaining, rise to replace the lost illusion of autonomy. At least that's what happened to me the year I learned I had a brain tumor. Unmoored from old stories and assumptions, my mind ran rampant, reaching out for a fresh narrative, a new identity. This anxious mind-rush was not pleasant. Art seemed to bypass or sidestep my unruly ego—that part of my mind that seeks to dominate and conquer what I imagine to be the world—perhaps because the process of making art is fully engaging but, at its best, asserts nothing more than beauty and truth exist. I say, “the process of making art” because artmaking is more of an effort than an end, and art, like truth and beauty, is more found than created. Do this along with other pilgrims with a cancer diagnosis (in the UCSF’s Art for Recovery, for example), and peace will certainly calm these anxious times.



# Sylvia Parisotto

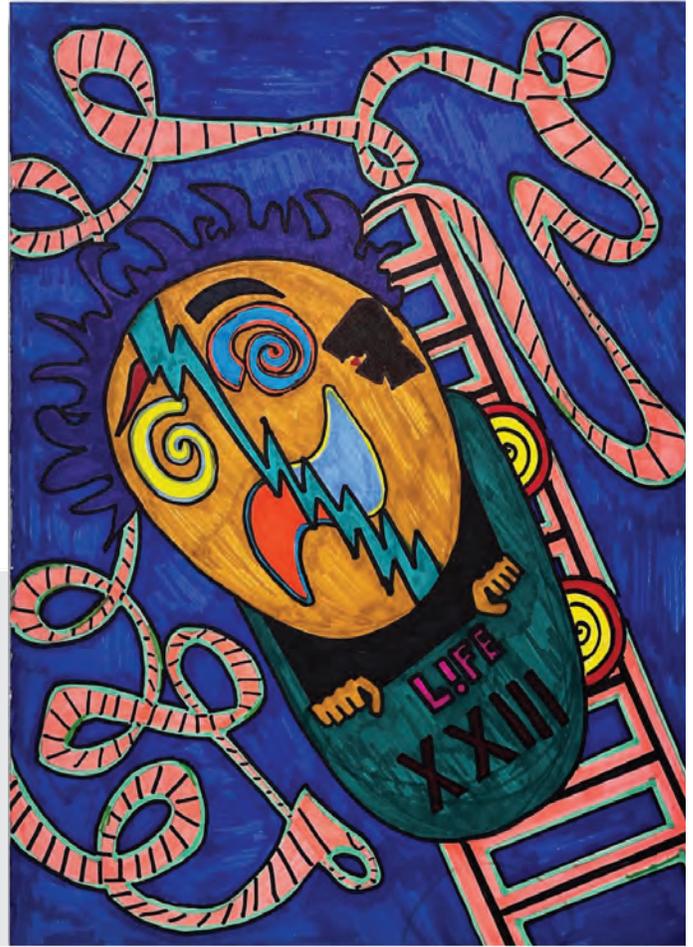


Creative expression is the ability to capture feelings and emotions into a unique work of art. Creating art is a way to process complicated emotions that arise from dealing with cancer, like fear, anxiety, and vulnerability. What can be difficult for me to say or write can be expressed without hesitation 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.



# Irina Santamaria

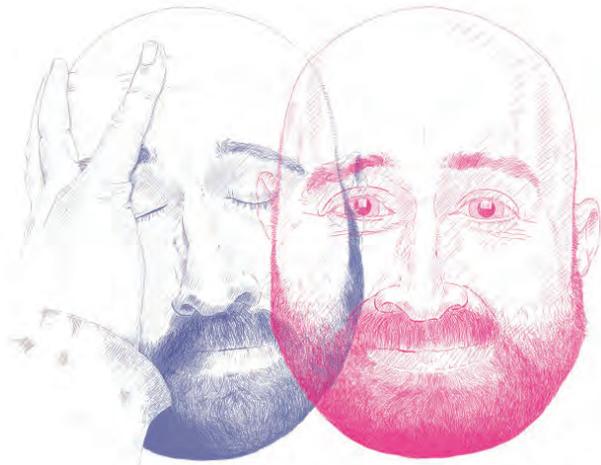
As a child, I always found myself doodling or drawing. I would usually draw other images and copy what was in front of me, rather than draw off the top of my head. After having a brain tumor, I cared less about what my art looked like, and more about if it made sense to me and expressed how I was feeling. I found ease and comfort in expressing my feelings of chaos, anxiety, uncertainty and loneliness, no longer caring if I thought it «*looked good*» or not. My opinion of my art became less critical and judgmental and more therapeutic and continues to be an outlet for me still.



# Justin Seago



I was diagnosed with oligodendroglioma of the right frontal lobe in 2011 at the age of 25, some years after I began pursuing photography as a hobby. I took this photo of a lake somewhere in the Nevada desert in 2012 while on a bicycle tour from Lake Tahoe to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon – a year after the first of three surgeries (2011, 2019, 2021), a clinical trial (2021-2022), and ongoing treatment. I don't consider myself an artist; however, the process of creating photos has been a tremendous source of peace and happiness for me throughout my adult life. Living with a brain tumor has increased my appreciation for the little things and what it means to be alive.



Scottish graphic artist Gordon Shaw's moving and often darkly funny graphic depictions of himself draw from his experience of living with a brain tumor. His illustrations of interactions with friends, family, medical professionals, and people with caregiving responsibilities provide a useful tool for people trying to make sense of a terrifying condition.

Gordon was the central protagonist of feature length documentary film *Long Live My Happy Head* (2021).

This self-portrait and text were created for *You Are Here 2020: Portraits Stories, Visions*, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, 2020.

**COVID-19 isn't the worst.**

**No, being told you have only months to live, during the COVID-19 pandemic, that's the worst.**

**My partner's flight from America was cancelled. My brother lives on the other side of the country.**

**I felt I was instructed to view the last few months of life from my living room windows.**

**I just wanted hugs.**

**It was later a friend suggested I should hug myself. This seemed incoherent, yet as soon as I did, my body erupted.**

**... ..**

**But then... light.**

**Hope.**

**The tumour... just stopped... growing.**

# Kat Shotz



After my diagnosis in 2018 of glioblastoma, I completed the Standard of Care Protocol. I knew I had to continue my healing journey. One thing I had learned from other difficult times in my life was that creativity heals. I am so grateful that UCSF offers the Art for Recovery programs. I think I have participated in almost all of them! I was surprised how much I enjoyed writing and painting. All the groups were led with compassion and encouragement, which paved the way to a deep and supportive community (even on Zoom)! Thanks to these programs, I continue to paint today.

# Will Tarantino



The moment I first saw an MRI image of the massive glioma in my brain I passed out. I was a 23-year-old graduate student, and my life had just ended. Fortunately, a new life emerged. I left school to explore the power of our world to conjure moments of awe. None of these moments would have occurred without my experience with cancer, and I am eternally grateful for all of them. These photographs attempt to capture the emotions evoked by these moments, as they hold you fast in their vast embrace.

# Melinda Jo Waterman



Unknowingly, I learn about intuition. Using the right side of my brain, I begin to remember more dreams... and I am inspired to paint with oils for the first time untrained. The year is 2000.

I have been touched by Spirit. I was afraid to tell anyone about this. That I might be crazy. It was hard to articulate. I went to my confidante, my supportive husband, Dan, and I couldn't express it well enough. I tried to draw, color, use pastels. I ended up with oil paints, and that is what led me to art.



Brain Tumor Survivor Care Program 360° was formed by medical personnel and a brain tumor survivor in Japan, in collaboration with the Sheri Sobrato Brisson Brain Cancer Survivorship Program at the UCSF Brain Tumor Center and Toho University Ohashi Medical Center. We aim to enhance the quality of life for brain tumor patients, survivors, and caregivers so that they can take the first step to their new life.

The feeling of isolation, anxiety and uncertainty is universal. We are sending you encouragement, love, hope, compassion, and prayer from our Japanese brain tumor community and spreading them on the flag. Please know that you are not alone. You are a valuable member of the international brain tumor family!

# Come

# visit

April 6 through July 1, 2023

[btc.ucsf.edu](http://btc.ucsf.edu)

UCSF Faculty-Alumni House  
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**UCSF** Brain Tumor  
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