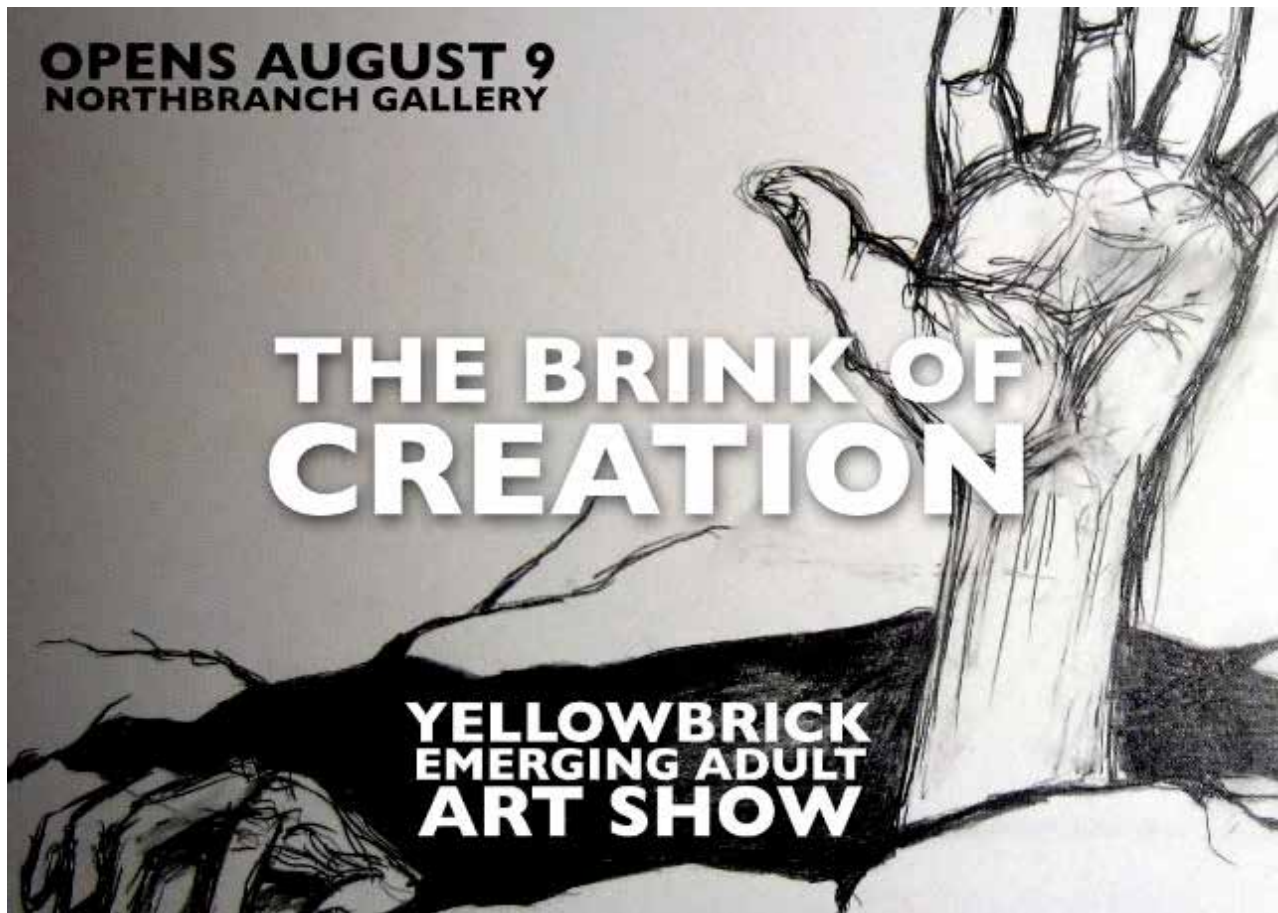


OPENS AUGUST 9
NORTHBRANCH GALLERY

THE BRINK OF CREATION

**YELLOWBRICK
EMERGING ADULT
ART SHOW**



Introduction

On the road of life, there are many obstacles to overcome. For the emerging adult, these challenges can be especially trying. Some struggle to put one foot in front of the other. Many have a hard time creating a home for themselves – not a physical place, but a feeling...a sense of safety, comfort and strength that they can take with them no matter where they go. And as the road approaches the horizon, some lose sight of their hopes and dreams, while a few forget they ever had any in the first place. It is for these young men and women that we have created Yellowbrick. It is to these individuals and their families that we offer hope. Yellowbrick recognizes and addresses the unique challenges of the emerging adult population through programs that emphasize multi-specialty evaluation, therapeutic residences, research-based strategies and life-skills interventions.

Yellowbrick is a private, physician-owned and -operated psychiatric healthcare organization whose mission is to provide a full-spectrum, specialized approach to the emotional, psychological and developmental challenges of emerging adults. Our treatment philosophy is guided by research findings that show that enduring success is facilitated by working alongside emerging adults who are coping with actual life experiences in “real time,” with a professional presence supporting the development of skills required to navigate life.

By combining treatment with active participation in the community, Yellowbrick sustains and strengthens personal confidence and familial support systems, and establishes educational and vocational accomplishments that anchor the emerging adult. Our community of peers and professionals, along with the neighboring community of Evanston, unite in a commitment to assist individuals in discovering their inner strengths, motivations and goals on which the foundation for a productive and satisfying life can be built. Yellowbrick offers emerging adults the opportunity to better understand themselves, access their strengths, develop necessary competence and actualize life goals.

The Emerging Adult Art Show is one of the many Yellowbrick activities that combine treatment with community participation. Self-expression through involvement in the creative process, self-observation facilitated through the writing of an artist statement, and self-fulfillment experienced through the presentation of artistic creations combine with collaborative participation in a community of emerging adults, family members, treatment professionals, and for this activity, a local art gallery. The words and images on the pages of this publication are testament to the power of providing emerging adults an opportunity to access their strengths, develop competence and actualize goals.

Jesse Viner, MD
Founder and Executive Medical Director
Yellowbrick

Foreward

The doors to Yellowbrick's first annual art show opened at 6:00PM on August 9, 2008 at The North Branch Gallery in Skokie, Illinois. The young exhibitors arrived with a sense of pride and expectancy. I watched as they exited their family cars and North Shore cabs, their pink and blue hair shining in the evening sun. I had never seen them dressed as they were this evening. Images of rock stars and red carpets crossed my mind. I was so excited for them and so proud. The night's exhibit, "The Brink of Creation" was the culmination of many months of work with these emerging adults. Their resistance to the structure and schedules I provided were unmatched by any other group of exhibitors with whom I have worked. My patience was tried. During the process I truly empathized with their parents and their struggles. At the same time, I knew what this art show would mean to them and it gave me the strength to persevere.

As they entered the room the artists gravitated toward their own pieces, and I was able to see them gain the new perspective that exhibiting in a gallery provides. They were able to step back. They shared with their families and friends their experience of creation. Some wrote artist statements, which help to illuminate the primary process of art making. These statements are testament to the meaning of their work and are included in this text.

Families stood beside their children and listened to what they had to say. I saw tears flow, both of joy and sadness. The connections seem to deepen between them. Some of these families had never shared a proud moment with their children. They had shared their transgressions.

Now they were posing for family photos with their children and their art. One such gathering looked like a birthday party with three different generations represented. I had never seen this young man look so happy.

Every stage of the creation of this exhibit was a joint effort, from the design of the poster and mailing card to the installation and preparation of food. Families joined this effort. It seemed they were glad to find a concrete and tangible way to connect to their children. Staff cooked for hours to prepare unique and aesthetically pleasing food. Some made sure the family van was available for transportation. Some helped with typing those last minute artist statements. Some helped keep me grounded. Our vice-president of clinical operations, Dr. Dale Monroe-Cook, spent his Saturday photographing the art in ninety-degree heat. Sonya Baysinger, the gallery owner, extended her grace and hospitality in welcoming all the guests. Some of our visual artists are accomplished musicians and they provided recordings to accompany the show. I want to thank them all for everything they did to make this event the success it was. Most of all I want to thank the artists for their commitment to their first art show. The sense of confidence and self-esteem they exuded that night will be with me for a long, long time. I hope they all may hold onto it themselves if they find they are struggling. It was an honor to work with each of them.

Betty Wolff, MA, ATR
Creative Arts Coordinator
Yellowbrick

Photography serves many functions. It can capture memorable moments such as weddings or prom night (which I didn't go to because I'm anti-prom). Through images, it can take you to countries with names you only recognize from the tag of your Old Navy dress shirt. It can be used to expose us to injustices we didn't fully comprehend, like a photo of a shanty town, or a gruesome scene of war.

Photographs can capture the moments which epitomize humanity. One of my favorite photographs, which I happen to have framed in poster-form on my wall, is that picture at Tiananmen Square with the four tanks rolling in and the lone individual standing in their way. That photo shows the courage of one person to stand against the violent cowardice of nation. Through juxtaposition, it brings to light and amplifies the atrocities that human beings are capable of carrying out against each other, and the tragic costs that incur when states abuse their power against their own patriotic citizens.

I do photography for my own reason. I do it because it forces me to look at the beauty in the world. To find the details, the angles, the colors, the combination of things, the way the light hits an object. To look more closely than I normally do. Beauty is always there if you look the right way.

My approach to photography can be summed up words I saw stencil spray-painted on a sidewalk on the UCLA campus: "There is beauty in everything but not everyone sees it." Needless to say, I took a picture of that.







When I first came for assessment at Yellowbrick, the clinical staff asked me to bring a few candid photographs of myself as a young child. I rolled my eyes in anticipation of whatever silly therapeutic exercise might ensue, but complied. We didn't end up having time to look at the photos during those first meetings. They did, however, ask me incessant questions about my childhood and family. I found myself thoroughly vexed and annoyed. I didn't enter treatment for problems I had twenty years ago; I sought help for issues like paralyzing depression and anxiety, profound isolation, and chronic unemployment.

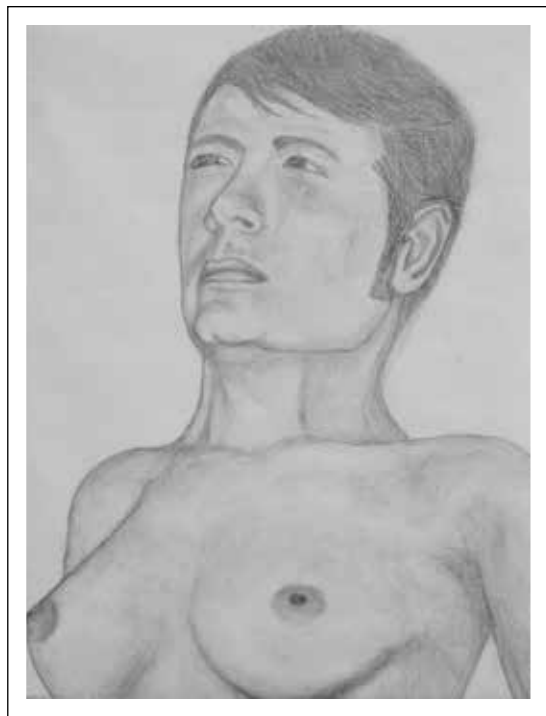
I subsequently spent some time looking at the photographs myself, and found them similarly vexing. The world in those pictures, full of brothers and sisters and ragged brown carpet, is not a place I have lived for a long time. I rarely speak to most of my family and I moved away from Michigan seven years ago. That is on purpose. I did everything I could to build a new life and a new identity after I left home.

But I couldn't deny that the little girl in the photos looked an awful lot like me. I had distinct memories of the setting that came to me quite clearly. There was that metal butterfly hanging on the wall, the ratty green couch when it was perpendicular to the television, the way my father wore his hair before he had given up on life, and most of all the sheer chaos of six children and two parents in a one-story ranch house. I remembered it all, but it seemed like an alternate dimension, as if recalling a dream I had last month.

As therapy trudged on, my alien twin from the photographs kept popping up. Even after ten months of revelations and tears and anger over the shit that went down in that ranch house, I still struggle to think of myself as the same person as that beleaguered girl in pink pajamas.

Shortly after I moved out of the Yellowbrick residence, I came upon a small cardboard box full of torn photographs in an alley. I carried them to my kitchen table and excitedly pieced them together. The life of a woman named Carol started to appear. The earliest pictures depicted her as a teenager in the late 1960's; the most recent shots (unfortunately very dim) show her with a young girl--perhaps a granddaughter. Examining each image to determine whether they contained the same woman, the continuity of her identity fascinated me. I focused on two pictures in particular: one of Carol, dated 1967, sitting up very straight with her eyes closed, and one bearing the words Carol and Jim graduation night 6-1-68. I began drawing from these photos. I suppose you could say (especially if you were my therapist) that my fixation on these old pictures of Carol is a way of reconciling myself with my own past vicariously. Okay then. Maybe once I draw my own photographs I will be cured. It's worth a shot.





As is my custom, I have waited until the last possible moment to complete my artist's statement. I find it difficult to accurately describe the process I have gone through in this artistic endeavor. There were ups, there were downs, times I thought I could do it all, and times I wanted to quit altogether. Sometimes I would find myself so frustrated with a piece, I wanted to destroy it and start over. Sometimes I did. In retrospect, I realize that this creative journey, through its trials and tribulations, as well as its triumphs, reflects my life and the way I have lived it. In this way, I have brought a whole new meaning to the "self-portrait" aspect of my art. I did not intend to do a self-portrait themed series for this show. I would have considered something like that to be self-centered. I began working on pieces for the show right after I came back from rehab. While in rehab, I had gone through some dramatic changes. Upon my return, I discovered my new sober self was more creative and capable of bringing across what I felt in my artwork. I became excited about something for the first time in years. It felt as if I had found a piece of myself I thought I had lost forever. My ideas were erratic and disoriented.

I wanted to draw everything and anything. Finally I settled on painting people I had sketched at AA and NA meetings, in addition to a few other random pieces. A few weeks into my work, I began a drawing of myself. I notice that I spent more time on this picture than on my other work. I began looking through old pictures of myself, and was surprised at how much my face had changed over the years. It was as if I was looking at different people. The pictures reminded me of those times in my life. In each of those pictures I felt like a different person. Perhaps I was trying to be a different person. In making pieces from these photos, I rediscovered even more aspects of myself that had disappeared in the years of addiction and depression.





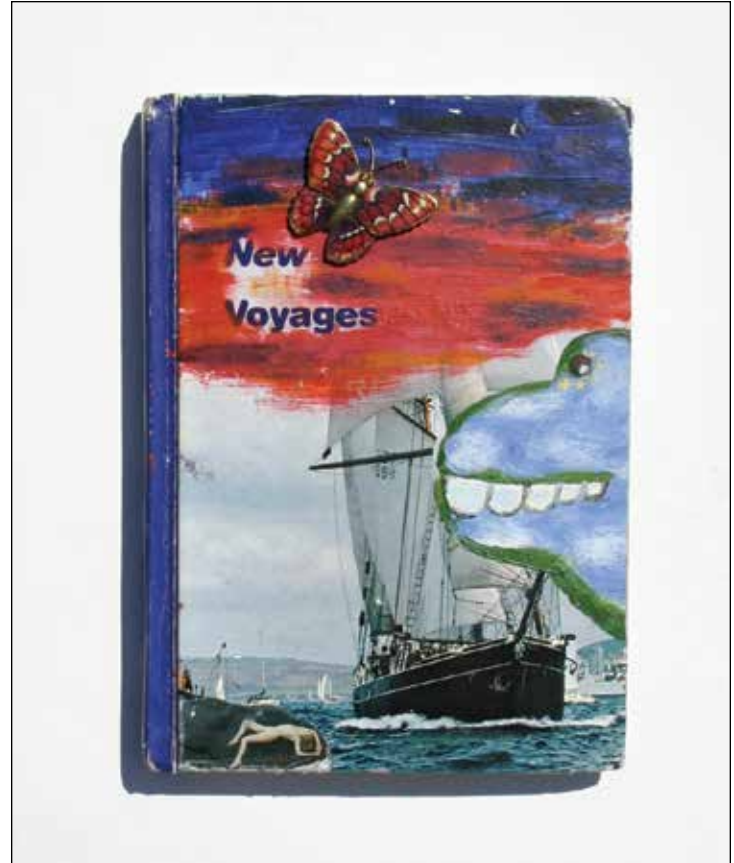


Hello. Sometimes I take books and cut them up and paint them and things. I never start a book with a theme in mind but themes seem to find their way into my books anyway. This book's theme came largely from the title: New Voyages. (I think it's an ESL textbook.) I found it. It was an accident. Everything important in life is very much a beautiful accident. Most of the creative choices I make in mixed media work are accidents. Then I make choices out of those accidents. I arrived at Yellowbrick in a similar fashion—accident after ridiculous accident, followed by a series of uncharacteristically awesome choices.

The cover of the book features a ship (movement, transition), the sea (emotions and the subconscious), a butterfly (rebirth) and a reclining nude (vulnerability). There is also a monster made of clouds. I refuse to assign meaning to him. He has meaning but I'm not going to tell it to you.

Inside is a carnival or my brain or perhaps it is nothing important at all, or maybe it is all three of those things, or an alternate combination. There is a picture of my friend Star when she was a child dressed as a lion. It is an image of assertiveness, of necessary wrathfulness. There is a box. It is nice to have a place to hide things. There is Alice holding her own book. The book Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is one of a journey, of growing up, and of logic in a nonsensical world. I very much identify with these things. There is a picture of Canyon de Chelly because that is my safe place in my head. There are stars sprinkling slowly between a gap in between formidable storm clouds, along with the phrase "I can only wait." Also a watercolour painting that I did of a boy named Levi playing guitar. Levi doesn't have blue hair, but it looks nice, doesn't it?

On the back is Ali smoking a cigarette and sneering a little, and a clown. I don't know why the carnival theme, but there it was in the book (see passage inside book in indented section) and I went with it. Also me kissing my friends. These pictures mean many things. These pictures are sweet, bittersweet, controversial, silly and painful. At the bottom is a Jungian definition of **self**. What a nice thought it is.







“I am the dragon. I am many things. I started off as a CD rack, paper, tape, and a robe. It took a while to build me up, it took a while for my creator to see me for what I am. I am to represent my creator’s anger, but when I was started my creator did not know what I was. My creator was frustrated with me, and tired of me, but I stood the test of time. Not only am I her anger, but I am her whimsical and light-hearted side. My creator learned to accept me for what I am. I am what you see. What do I evoke in you?”



It's all very "Dia de las Muertos". In colors that are bold and crayola-esque reminiscent of the bright sheets of light that are familiar to any of us who have partaken in club-life. Below the skull I cut up pictures including one that was particularly hard for me to part with of my ex in his neon yellow sunglasses that we stole from urban outfitters – memories not of joy or love but a mildly fulfilled lust for glamour and the chase for things that seemed faster and sexier and more fun that in fact were things I could never obtain without sacrificing my health, my safety and even my life. I was dead for years. My mind was full of bright colors and drug induced emotions. This picture is about temptation. It is about a toxic culture that looks so exotic and chic that I could no more rip my heart right out of my chest than avoid its embrace. But it's also about my journey. To express this on paper is no longer to chase it. To share it is to leave it behind.

In drawing the skull I was unaware that I was emulating something very much in the style of the Mexican holiday "El Dia de los Muertos" (The Day of the Dead) in which the common symbol is a skull (colloquially called calavera), and relevant to the piece – the idea that is is an illusion, a false promise of grandeur – that under this mask is something very dark. (Done with a ballpoint pen, markers and some cut up photographs.)



As long as it takes to write it down, that's how long it took. The poem began with the idea of "I'm a work in progress," that was one thing that I kept from an art class that I was in. The rest is my thinking about being a work in progress.

The first two stanzas I wrote were just the past and were kind of depressing. The opportunity was to simply submit these two stanzas. I did not like the idea, so I decided to talk about past, present, and future, with a little help from Melissa. To me, the second line is really important. "Like Dante finding just finding Beatrice" ---he met Beatrice early on in his journey. I see this as his journeying through hell for the rest of his life with Beatrice as his beacon for getting to heaven where he will actually be with her.

There are two interpretations. One of my interpretations is what I would call the "delusional thing," but there is also this idea of functioning and being consistently happy, and that notion is my beacon. There are goals that I have as well that are not purely aligned with Dante. I also see this poem as paralleling my life. I see this poem as part of the story of my life, and my future.

The thing that is not worked on in this poem is that I may not be functioning while I am fully functional. I have all the gifts, talents, and skills necessary to function, but I lack the tools to apply those gifts.

The Coastal Redwoods, if, where they live in California, they live isolated they will be uprooted in a storm, but when they depend on each other they entangle all their roots they don't blow over. I can't function alone and that's true whether I'm a tree or a house. I can't become a house without the help of other people. In my distress I'm unable to help others because, quite literally, I can't help myself to function.

It was so painful. I had so many great visions, but I feel like I failed. I failed to create my vision with the first attempt at this project. I wanted to create light effects on three panes using the see-through nature of plexi-glass. It caused 'light' suffering and I was so dissatisfied. I only drew on one pane of glass, but there was so much more that I wanted to do. It's like a tree that could be a house. It doesn't necessarily function for anyone, it's just wild.

Now I want to change my poem, I want to add stuff to my "present." I feel that I left out certain key pieces in my poem and that I've actually been wordy which may be a result of my lack of editing and re-writing. I made no revisions.

*I've been a work in progress
Like Dante just meeting Beatrice
I've in the past experienced distress
And truthfully I must confess
The last few years I considered myself a mess*

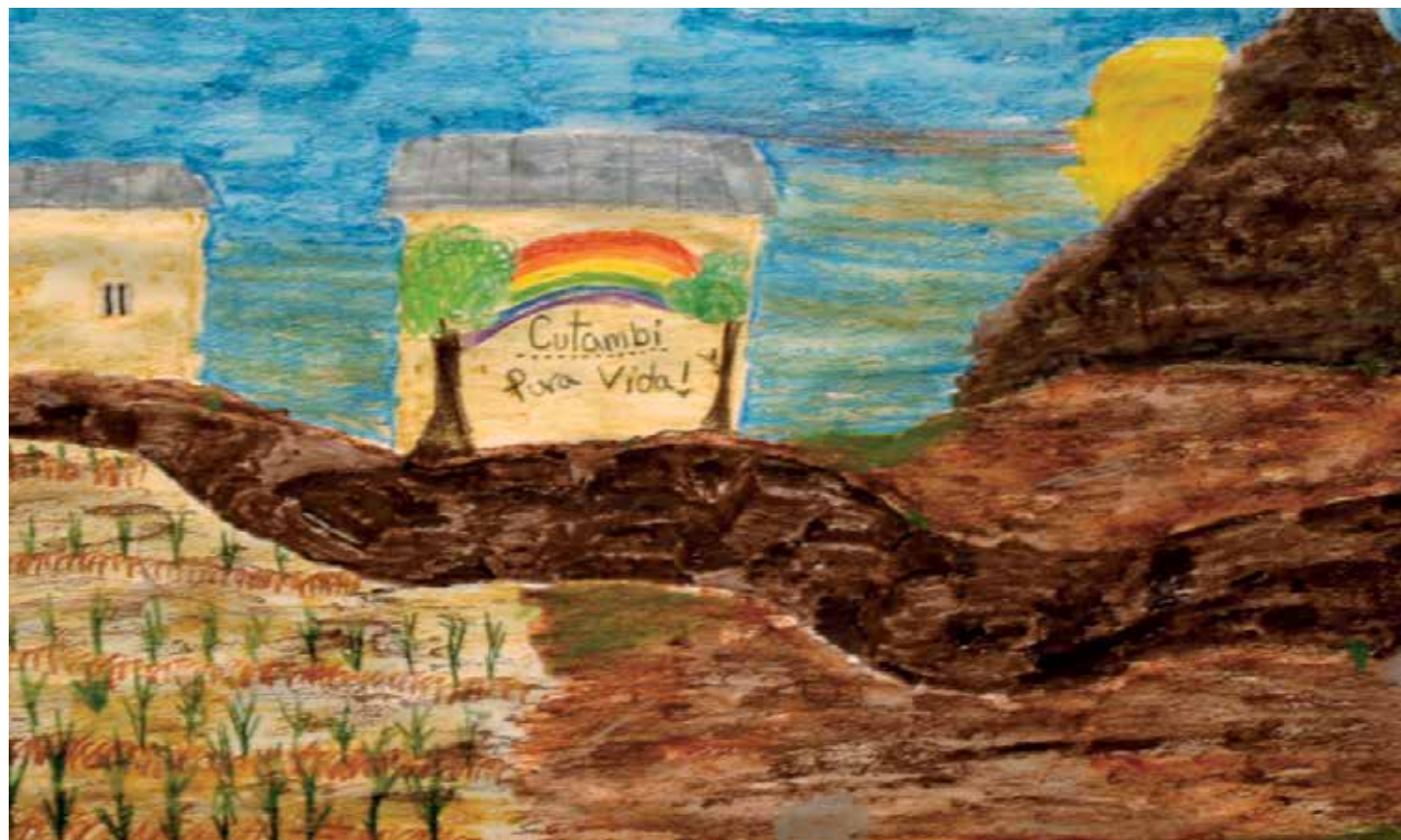
*Two points I feel the need to impress
Are (1) the many years I spent depressed
And (2) the pure chicanery hence morals lost
Seemingly tossed out and destroyed
Through substances I've employed to end the madness*

Drugs and alcohol do not end distress
I've learned to alter consciousness
In and amongst painful emotions
To undulate with them
As of the waving of the sea's motions

I've learned to learn and to experience
To not run from painful emotions - to move
as quickly toward them
That to end unhealthy behaviors
Is similar to creating my own small saviors
So that I may live a lifestyle that is worth
its weight in gold
And I'm still a work in progress.

Work is key for best survival
Where survival is me at my best
Not worrying about the rest
For what I do is more important than what they think
And my life at this moment more important than how you see this ink

And five years from now
I hope I'll look back and say
I did it best surviving that way
I want to move in emotional and physical reality
I want to stay in physical and emotional sobriety
I want the best and I know
That up to the point where I take my final breath
I'll always be a work in progress



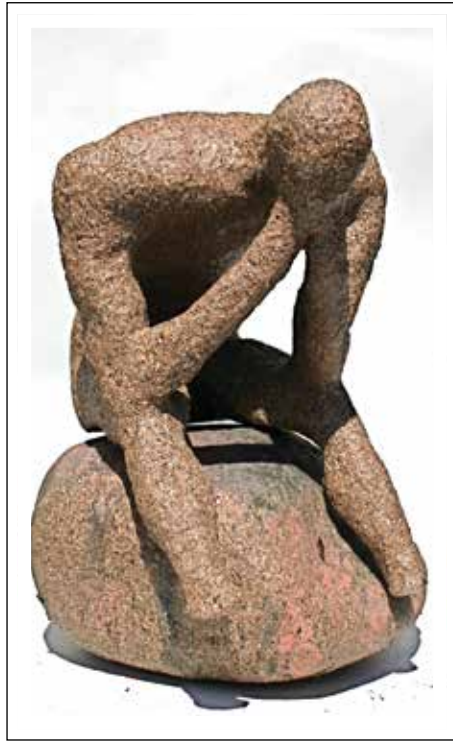


It's a miracle that I have a work in this art show. It began with a sketch, an outline of the figure you see before you. The sketch was unacceptable, and I gave up. A few days later, it occurred to me that it would be easier to make a three dimensional figure than to learn the techniques to draw one. The first rudimentary form of the sculpture was also garbage. Once again I threw my hands up in defeat. When life fails to mirror my visualization of what it should be, I become overwhelmed, underachieving, and inconsolable. This was the best I could do.

It has long been my interpretation of the two that rationality is the function of strength, the emotions the product of weakness. While I may know that there is strength in emotion, I have not yet been able to believe it. My rational and emotional minds operate on two entirely separate planes; that I can recall there has never been a point in time in which the two crossed paths, or "agreed" on anything. When I feel an emotion, my mind finds a way to invalidate it, push it aside, and store it. When I come to a rational conclusion, my emotions tell me that it is not "true" to my nature. Much like today's scientists who know more about what lies outside our Earth than what lies in it's oceans, I understand the world around me infinitely more than I understand myself.

There was a time when I was more in tune with my emotions. I could cry, I could be angry. I might not have expressed them in the most productive fashions, but I could express them. I have since been desensitized, reprogrammed to desperately leap away from vulnerability, in trying to shield myself away from the pain of betrayal. I allied strength with avoidance, while in fact every instance made me weaker.

The man in my sculpture is crying, weeping, for me. My eyes have been dry for too long now, creating a well of tears and rage that I am trying, but as of yet been unable, to draw from. It was the best I could do.



Looking at this painting you wouldn't think this would cause so much controversy, drama and frustration. First, there were two "tagging incidents", then I got spray paint on the bricks of the garage (much to Betty's frustration), and finally, because this painting is made with spray paint, the paint dripped, I ran out of blue, and trying to save the painting was almost as much work as painting it in the first place.

Graffiti and street art has been an interest of mine for a long time. I love walking or driving through the city and seeing the pieces that artists put up in the middle of the night, trying to avoid the eyes of the police. And they are artists I know many people think "taggers" are a nuisance, that they destroy public property, and they probably are, and they probably do. But tagging is not about destroying property and being a "rebel." Tagging, for the artists who do it, is a form of expression. It's a way to get their ideas and their beliefs out in a public way.

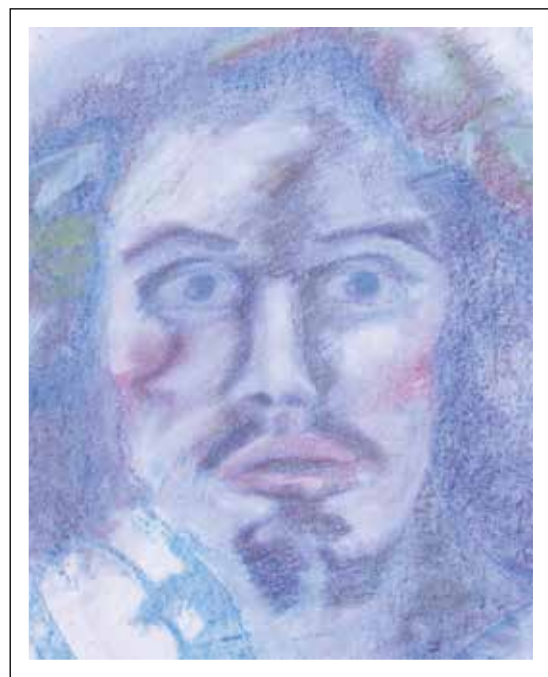
Have you ever looked at a piece of graffiti? I mean really looked at it? Using a can of spray paint to create a picture is one of the hardest things I have ever done. And I did it with stencils. The paintings that I see all over the city mean something to me but know I means just as much to the person who created it as "The Vitruvian Man" meant to Leonardo Da Vinci.

So when I walk around with a can of paint or a marker or a pen, I am not doing it to deface your property or to "rebel". The art means something to me. It is something I am good at, and it is something I love. There is beauty in all art, in all things. If you can open your eyes, if you can open your mind, if you can allow yourself to see it, you might just be surprised.



ish.









I have somehow found myself at the end of this process not knowing how it all began. I still argue this fact, how this project came about, but I guess that is not the important part. The important part is that I have finished and all that occurred on the way. At first the idea seemed somewhat appealing, although that quickly changed. The sheer thought of colored tiles angered me. Originally I believe this project was to help with the anger but it soon became a constant source of projected frustration, anger and confusion. I decided to create an image of a horse. This is an animal from which I gain much comfort and strength. Horses are incredibly majestic creatures. They captivate a part of me not otherwise reachable. As I began to lay the tiles, and the horse formed a picture on paper to a colorful representation of my inner workings, nothing ever seemed good enough. The horse disappeared and re-appeared upon this table many times. As the final image began to become more permanent, more frustrations and judgments haunted me. I often felt the urge to take an axe to it and threatened to do so many times. The closer I came to the end of the project the more I came to like this animal I was bringing to life. I befriended him. He is my persistence. What you see before you is a result of a process that has carried me through much of my treatment. It is a symbol for everything I have doubted, that has found a place in my life.





Acknowledgments

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