



SPIRIT

Snippets

BY STAFF REPORTS

Art & Soul

Artistic images of people's cancer journeys are now on a journey of their own.

Entries from the 2006 international biennial art competition *Lilly Oncology on Canvas: Expressions of a Cancer Journey* are on a nationwide tour throughout most of 2007. The exhibit, featuring 200 pieces of art, includes the global winner, an acrylic piece titled "Hair Again," by Linda Dibblee, a breast cancer survivor. Dibblee wrote of her piece:

The title "Hair Again" symbolizes the end of cancer treatment and the hope and joy that follows treatment. The flowers in my head also symbolize the many flowers, cards, and good wishes I received from my friends, family, and health care providers during my treatment. It is also my wish to provide hope to others beginning their cancer journey.

"This is Not a Dress Rehearsal," a photograph by Anne Wilson of daughter Katherine and her father showing off bald heads, was the U.S. winner. Wilson wrote of the piece's title:

Our precious daughter felt strongly about these words from an early age. It was as if she knew something the rest of us did not know. When Katherine was diagnosed at age 23 with small cell lung cancer, she continued to remember these words.

Tour dates for the exhibit, presented by Eli Lilly and Co. in partnership with the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, can be found on the NCCS website, www.canceradvocacy.org.

Leaning Together in a Storm

Twelve older men in shirt sleeves
sit around the Cancer Center
sipping ice water and making jokes
waiting for the meeting to begin.
"Ever notice how no one parks
in the Cancer Center zone?"
I am one of them tonight
meant to acknowledge
our story within

our private brotherhood.

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The counselor rises to welcome us
asks each to state his cancer story:
give his name and dates
the procedure we chose
tell how long he's survived.

And I take real joy
in hearing them speak
sensing their eyes, their bodies
seated beside me here.

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Then a door opens
and our leader rises
to introduce the night's speaker
a young surgeon, his slide-tray at his side.
"Greetings, Gentlemen," he grins
snapping on his slides, projecting
our organs onto the wall,
touching them with his pointer
in blunt precision,
warning us again of lymph nodes
cells outside the prostate
that can end our life.
We swallow a hundred nightmares
with smiles and nods.

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I interrupt his gay delivery,
"What about orgasm ... ?"
"Forget orgasm," he grins,
"You don't have a prostate."
Another asks about second opinions,
"Go ahead ... what can it hurt?" then adds,
"Unfortunately it won't help much either."
I want to escape this torture by words,
but ask instead, "And what about theradiation seed implants they're doing in
Seattle?"

He turns on me like a cop. "We're doing those now.
So it's a question, how big is your ego?"

Some smile at this, others know
how cold the knife is, how his words
cut across our lives, our wish to live
each breath, see morning spread
across our lawn, our grandchildren's faces.
We all have this unspoken need
to pace our life
like a heart beat.

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In the end we let it go
trade our feelings for facts
we already know,

“It’s a game of numbers,”
he says again, and I wonder
if these others want to drive
this witch doctor from the room
and gather warmth from the fire
we sit around, share our stories
together of going on

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“Leaning Together in a Storm”

from *A River Remains* by Larry Smith, ©2006 WordTech Editions, Cincinnati, Ohio