

**Inclusive Arts Vermont
CYCLES Exhibition
Artist Statements and Biographies**

Ashley Strobridge

Artist Biography

Art, Science, Magic, Nature, Truth, Justice, Music, Love, & Creativity:

Through Astrobridge Artistry, I aim to communicate the magic and wonder of nature, hoping to make the beauty & healing powers of the natural world accessible and inviting to all. As someone with multiple disabilities and limited mobility, I interpret the inherent beauty of easily accessible natural places, proving that you don't need to be able to climb a rocky mountain trail to enjoy nature. Whether I am taking photos on a dirt road two steps from my car door, on an accessible nature path, or on my own balcony in my "magic garden in the sky," illustrating that nature can be accessible is a main mission, while also creating access to nature through my art if it is otherwise inaccessible. I hold up nature as an inspiration for creativity, because all of us need a place to escape to, whether through a walk in the woods, or through an image and some transportive words! The links between nature, magic, and science are endless, so showing that you can educate about ecology and justice issues while at the same time tapping into childhood wonder and fantasy is another of my artistic goals.

A social justice and eco-activist with an academic and career background in (and deeply established family history in) environmental policy, I'm an artist, poet, photographer, writer, and performer who is maverick in gender and am a vegetarian, neurodivergent, disabled, FATabulous Woman on a mission to illuminate the bridge between nature, spiritualism, science, justice, history, ecology, creativity, literature, magic and art, as all are linked in the fabric of the universe.

I began my life as an artist, writer, and performer, later trying my hand in the family tradition of enviro policy, eventually interning directly under the advisor to President Obama on Climate Change, but soon realized that I did not belong in the button up world of politics, so returned to my creative roots, and am now pursuing preserving nature and seeking justice, through my first loves of art and literature!

My most recent work is whimsical and impactful nature photography and poetry, with literature, justice, science, conservation, fantasy, and history themes, available on my website, in shops, and at various events in prints, greeting cards, books, and more. I also have plans in motion to begin painting again, so though this particular piece, *The Depths of Seasons*, is

unavailable for sale, if it speaks to you, reach out and follow me through the methods below, as I plan to have more pieces available for sale.

I have also begun a major project, which is to write the unique bio of one of the most remarkable and influential women in American history. An intersectional feminist, abolitionist, suffragette leader, Matilda Joslyn Gage, who was an inspiration for *The Wizard of Oz*.

If you would like to see more of my work, including my nature photography and poetry, please see my website below, complete with shop page for things like greeting cards, books, bookmarks, and stickers:

Website: www.astrobridge-artistry.com

Instagram: @AstrobridgeArtistry

Facebook: @Astrobridge Artistry

You can also find my work in various shops in Vermont, Maine, in Upstate NY at the Matilda Joslyn Gage Center, and at various Hollywood conventions and Red Carpet events, where I vend in partnership with Horror Scream Queen/Actress, and Disability, Racial Justice, and Fat Activist, my friend, Lilith Fury. Wonderfully, at the Netflix Wednesday red carpet premiere none other than Danny Elfman, composer of the soundtracks to nearly every Tim Burton movie, singing voice of Jack Skellington, and Lead Singer of Oingo Boingo, showed an interest in my Beetlejuice card, which he now has a copy of!

Recently, I have also exhibited at the Pathways Home exhibit at the Karma Birdhouse in Burlington, VT, and in various exhibits at the Center for Arts and Learning, the TW Wood Gallery, the Montpelier Senior Activity Center, the Kellogg Hubbard Library, and the North Branch Nature Center in Montpelier, VT.

Artist Statement

The Depth of Seasons is a piece I created while I was cycling through different bipolar meds and through my own bipolar manias and depressions as a teenager at an arts high school in Salt Lake City, Utah in 2000. It represents seasons of the mind, and visually represents the cycles of the seasons, with green vines as summer, but also with autumn leaves falling from those vines. It also represents cycles of migration, with some leaves seeming to try to mutate into birds, flying the nest, which was fitting for me at the time, being a senior in high school, and striving to leave home. That year, I would be accepted to the number 4th ranked studio arts program in the country but would be unable to attend due to my disabilities. A portion

of my healing process to overcome childhood trauma and mental health stigma was achieved through gardening; through nurturing the pumpkins and morning glories I grew. I witnessed their growth improve and strengthen with soft, kind words, and in turn learned how to treat myself with the same kind words, thoughts and care. This piece also represents a foreshadowing of how I would heal from the pain I was enduring at the time of creating this painting, as almost wherever I have lived, I have grown a garden of some kind. These garden and nature themes are also important because I paid my way through college to earn my environmental policy degree with a women and gender studies minor almost entirely on Garden Club scholarships. This piece also represents the cycles and depths of the mind, which are represented in the background with shades of darkness and light, and how in a kind of trick in shading, the vine seems to pop out from the background, helping to create that depth. An element of this I'd like to incorporate is the element of light! For when viewed in shadow, this piece is dark and foreboding, with very little color, but if viewed within the prism of light, the colors are brilliant and joyous, rich and fascinating, illustrating how sometimes, simply viewing a situation with light and hope changes entirely how it is perceived and can completely shift a mood or feeling. So, if possible, this piece should be viewed with an interactive light element!

Aurora Berger

Artist Biography

Aurora Berger is a queer disabled artist working with photographic and alternative processes. Coming from an academic background, Berger uses language and imagery to challenge ableist and heteronormative ideas. She creates works that investigate the concepts of normalcy, disability, agency, visual acuity, and interpretation. Berger holds an MFA from Claremont Graduate University, as well as a BFA and BA in Art Education from Prescott College. She is the recipient of the Kennedy Center VSA and Wynn Newhouse awards, and was a resident of the Art and Disability program through Art Beyond Sight and the 2021 Slant Projects artist programme. Berger has presented her work at several conferences, including the 2020 College Art Association National Conference, and her writing has been published by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, Drkrm Editions, and in an anthology from Brill | Sense. Her work was recently featured in an exhibition from Women Enabled International and Photoville at the United Nations.

Aurora's website is www.auroraberger.com. You can also follow her on Instagram at [@auroraberger](https://www.instagram.com/auroraberger).

Artist Statement

Sometimes you forget it's there, this gaping hole in the universe, because it's difficult to conceptualize that it could even exist. Because two weeks ago you didn't even know it existed. Sometimes for just a few minutes, it slips away and you forget. The tension in your chest begins to loosen and you think that maybe you'll be okay. And then it's like everything is new again and even though you once had grown used to the pressure and the tightness and the grief, when it hits you again you forget how to breathe. For who am I to defy the gravitational collapse of an imploding star?

Callie Coffman

Artist Biography

I have been drawing and making artwork all my life. For me it is therapeutic, fun, and a good way to use my free time. My parents and teachers have encouraged me to pursue art in a way where I can be more professional. As someone with extreme anxiety, making art helps calm me and gives me something positive to focus on and something to ground me when I am feeling lost in my own mind. My recent boosts in confidence in my art have led me to take risks, to try new mediums but still trust in my process. I feel extremely honored to be in another exhibit and to have another chance to show others the kind of art I do now. I am happy that people can see the end result of a lifetime journey of perfecting and finding my own style.

Artist Statement

My art relates to the CYCLES theme in the literal way that both my characters are out on a nice biking trip. I like to think that this is an action they have done together as they have grown and matured, and to them biking together is part of their friendship and growth as dog and owner.

Conor Cleveland

Artist Biography

I am an artist, poet and self-advocate who paints what I feel. I make art, longing to be seen. Art lets me be looked at for who I am, not for how people perceive me. I show myself in my art. I have been painting and writing poetry for over ten years.

Artist Statement

The cycle of emotions I experience is like the waves of the ocean. The red is my happiness, and the blue is depression creeping up on me. The emotions I cycle through are pain and hope. I paint for myself to process my feelings.

David Roy

Artist Biography

My art journey started during the pandemic and with my involvement in "MASKED." Growing up with hearing loss was a very isolating experience. Art has allowed me to create stories of what I have observed in my life and make new stories using recycled materials. In my day to day life, I observe how society is built on certain characteristics with an emphasis on how we communicate through nonverbal cues. This helps motivate what I choose to design next.

Instagram: [@piecesandscraps](#)

Artist Statement

The focus of this art series is our cycle of destruction. We as humans are the original invasive species. Leaving our print wherever we go and leaving where we've been in destruction. I wanted to use 3 panels to show how we impact our environment around us. If we continue with this cycle, we are leading ourselves toward our own destruction.

Dominik Gabrielsen

Artist Biography

This artist attended the Rhode Island School of Design from 1999 to 2005. Studied painting, drawing, architecture, illustration, beaux arts de l'ecutaite rendering, 12th century sienese glaze technique, carving, 3D modeling, AutoCAD, and has been drawing and painting since childhood.

His work is generally derived from a mix of environmental and human inspirations. This artist tends to prefer drawing and painting. His favorite mediums are charcoal for drawing and glazes.

Artist Statement (emoji version)

Caterpillars 🐛 build a cocoon and hibernate 🛌 in order to go through a metamorphosis, transforming within the chrysalis 💎 to a winged 🦋 butterfly 🦋. This process is natural, their lifecycle ebbs and flows 🌊 with the seasons. A caterpillar 🐛 at first forages amongst the leaves 🍃 and trees 🌳. As they crawl along, they dream 💭 of flying into flowers 🌸 and gathering nectar. This process also pollinates flowers causing more life, the pollen sticking to their bodies catches a ride ✈️. Itself a mystery of life, this simple photo merely depicts a butterfly 🦋 I happened to walk past and was quick enough to record on medium. The resolution is higher and allows for some up-close clarity one might even miss in person.

Artist Statement (non-emoji version)

Caterpillars build a cocoon and hibernate in order to go through a metamorphosis, transforming within the chrysalis to a winged butterfly. This process is natural, their lifecycle ebbs and flows with the seasons. A caterpillar at first forages amongst the leaves and trees. As they crawl along, they dream of flying into flowers and gathering nectar. This process also pollinates flowers causing more life, the pollen sticking to their bodies catches a ride. Itself a mystery of life, this simple photo merely depicts a butterfly I happened to walk past and was quick enough to record on medium. The resolution is higher and allows for some up-close clarity one might even miss in person.

Eva Seyller

Artist Biography and Statement

Eva draws inspiration from life experiences, photographs, and stories, and transforms them into abstracted images with bold colors and shapes. Over the years, she has enrolled in the many arts education courses offered by Inclusive Arts Vermont. This past year, she has benefitted from the weekly art sessions offered by Leif Goldberg in the art room at Champlain Community Services. He introduced her to the freer technique of watercolor media. Although she still draws with her wide array of Prismacolor pencils, she decided to exhibit works in watercolor for the first time.

Her work has appeared in two group exhibitions sponsored by Inclusive Arts Vermont: *MASKED*, a statewide traveling exhibition, and *FLOURISH*, an exhibition at the Amy E. Tarrant Gallery co-sponsored by the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts. She has also shown her drawings at August First Bakery & Café in Burlington and at Scout & Co. in Winooski. Her photographs have been included in group exhibitions at the former Penny Cluse Café and the Fletcher Free Library.

Gillian Rae Svensson

Artist Biography

"There is an analog cassette mix I made constantly playing music in my brain. Hang on a sec while I flip the tape."

Gyllian Rae Svensson is a violinist, a seamstress and a filmmaker from Vermont. A two-time cancer survivor, Gyllian celebrates the manifestation of art and music from the raw materials of life that surrounds us. An avid collector of books, records, toys and ephemera, Gyllian's artistic expression explores themes of ancestral memories, nostalgic joy, overwhelming grief and the female experience of creation.

Gyllian earned her Master's degree in Sustainable Business and Communities and her Bachelor's degree in Visual and Performing Arts, both from Goddard College. She also studied music and art at The New School for Social Research, Eugene Lang, Maine College of Art, and The University of Southern Maine.

Find Gyllian online:

[@GyllianRae](#), @americanbindi, and/or @queenies

Artist Statement

Every new skill or new technique learned, practiced and mastered is a testament to the inherent value of the artist; the value and worth of me in spite of my disabilities.

I am a cancer survivor times two. Grateful to still be here among the living, yet I struggle daily with the physical effects of the cancer treatments. Due to neuropathy and lymphedema in my left leg, I needed to re-teach myself how to sew again, but now using my right leg. The cataracts and poor vision with my eyes have left me relying heavily on touch and feel, zooming in, zooming out, do I see what you see? No. Can you see what I see? We will never know.

For many years now, I have been pondering the idea of generational cycles. What gifts and traumas am I carrying along with me from previous generations? In the beginnings of my ancestral quest, I had my DNA analyzed and began creating my family tree. As most people do, I began by following the patriarchal lines of my father, to his father, and his father, and so on. Over the last decade, I've learned so much history and "met" many fascinating relatives.

Only recently, though, have I learned about my maternal haplogroup. I knew that fathers passed along an identical copy of their Y gene down from father to son, but I did not know that a similar process happens from mother to daughter through her mitochondrial DNA. This realization struck me like a bolt of lightning!

In the search for myself, I had been following in my brother's shoes. I needed to flip the tree upside down. The question I really needed to ask was: Who is my mother's mother's mother's mother? Where did she come from? What was her life like?

My mother's mother was a seamstress. Her mother was a seamstress. Was her mother's mother also a seamstress? Perhaps. ;)

I am a seamstress. This fiber art collage, *Who is Mitochondrial DNA?*, was made from the fabric scraps left over from my hand sewn dresses, stitched from the vintage remnant fabrics, of my life and my ancestors. One shape stitched into another shape and so on and so forth until all the shapes have come together to form the background.

The patchwork has been quilted with cotton batting to the purple blue silk fabric backing. The red letters were hand drawn, hand cut and appliquéd onto the patchwork. Every part of the process was photographed. The individual photographs were animated into a film with original violin musical accompaniment.

Isabel Frantz

Artist Biography

My name is Isabel Frantz. I am an artist that takes photography. I live in Burlington, VT. My hometown is Charlotte. I took a digital photography class at CCV back in 2021 and I've been doing photography for about 2 years. I love taking photos of landscapes of Vermont. I need to learn to take photos of people. Art to photography is to me, my favorite thing to do with music. Playing music is my passion. I play piano, guitar, and drum set. I have been writing my own songs since I was 14 years old. Photography is my favorite thing to do. I post stuff on social media that people love.

Artist Statement

My piece of art for the *CYCLES* exhibit is *ONE Tree*, taken at Shelburne farms in the season of winter. It was taken in winter 2022 with all the snow on the trees by Lake Champlain near the Shelburne Inn. I originally took a photo of three trees but thought one tree in the frame was more beautiful.

Jodi Whalen

Artist Biography

Jodi Whalen: The Art of Playful Abstraction

Known in the digital world as [@jodibeingjodi](https://www.instagram.com/jodibeingjodi), Jodi Whalen is a self-taught artist who brings a unique perspective to her prints. With only two formal art classes under her belt, the most recent in screen printing, Jodi has found her passion in this medium, blending it with a rich background in graphic design, sign making, and abstract painting.

Jodi's style is a lively mix of playfulness and abstraction, deeply influenced by movement, imagination, folly, and the whimsical elements of nature. Her

work is a celebration of the fleeting, the quirky, and the ever-changing tapestry of life.

As a serigraph printer, she embraces traditional silk screen printing techniques, infusing each piece with a sense of freedom and spontaneity. Jodi's latest work, *Queen Anne's Lace*, featured in this exhibition, is a dreamy, abstract tribute to the delicate dance of Queen Anne's lace flowers in the summer breeze of Hinesburg, Vermont. This piece is not just an artistic creation, but a manifestation of a moment of tranquility and wonder, observing nature's subtle yet captivating patterns.

Living with ADHD, Jodi finds art to be a harmonious escape, a way to channel her neurodivergent energy into something tangible and beautiful. Art, for her, is a pursuit for newness and surprises, a satisfying challenge that engages her senses and intellect in ways nothing else can.

Retired from owning the beloved August First Bakery in Burlington, Jodi now spends her time foraging, hiking, cold water dipping, cooking, and traveling. Each of these activities feeds into her artistic process, providing endless inspiration and a continuous journey of discovery.

In every stroke, every print, Jodi Whalen captures the essence of her experiences, inviting viewers to join her in celebrating the joy and freedom of artistic expression.

Artist Statement

In the summer of 2023, I discovered a special kind of peace while sitting amongst Queen Anne's Lace and Black-Eyed Susans in a field after a hike. Surrounded by the verdant greens of Vermont, I felt a connection to something larger than myself. As I sat under the late afternoon sun, watching the flowers drift with the wind, I was reminded of nature's resilience against the elements.

Those warm days, caressed by a hot breeze, were a gift. They deepened my appreciation for the fleeting vibrancy of Vermont's short summers. Inspired by the swaying flowers, I sought to capture their movement in my art. I embraced colors and patterns that mirrored the breeze and delved into the geometric intricacies of Queen Anne's Lace.

For someone with ADHD, taking time to sit and observe is a significant achievement. Immersed in the world of these flowers, I felt transported to a distant realm. I lost myself in the patterns, movement, colors, peace, and tranquility around me. Soft pastels became my medium of choice, reflecting the warmth of the summer day and the soft glow of the afternoon light.

This journey was more than just creating art; it was about forming a bond with nature and discovering a part of myself. Through my artwork, I share this experience—the warmth of the breeze, the brilliance of the sun, and the ephemeral beauty of life that these flowers embody. It's a celebration of nature's simple yet profound beauty, and a testament to how slowing down can reveal an entirely new world.

Julien Majonen

Artist Biography

I am a neurodivergent, chronically ill person with OCD, major depressive disorder, and severe anxiety. After a particularly bad mental health crisis brought on by progressive physical decline and medical trauma, I turned to pottery as a way to try to get back into the world and find some semblance of feeling okay again. I took a class, knowing absolutely nothing about pottery, but thinking maybe I could meet some people and learn to hold conversations again. Not only did I make some of my current best friends, I found an art medium that literally changed my life and gave me renewed purpose. Over the last five years, I've fallen head first into pottery, teaching myself everything I can, making pots nearly every day. I now have my own studio, and when I'm able, I sell my pots at markets. I'm starting an LGBTQ+ clay group as a safe space for folks like me to gather and learn and play with clay, just getting to make art in any way they want to. Pottery gives me a reason to get up when I'm feeling particularly terrible and depressed. It helps ground me when I'm anxious, and focus me when I'm upset. And best of all, it gives me a wonderful way to express myself, and allows me a way to communicate myself into something beautiful that can be shared with others, which I've found so difficult before. Pottery is medicine.

Artist Statement

This piece represents the cycles in the life of the queer person, the repeated death and rebirth of who we are as we find our truths, and reveal our truths. Each new person we have to come out to, community we find, or people we lose. The large systematic cycle of slow acceptance, then hatred and fear creeping back in, and, hopefully, love overcoming in the end. We are mushrooms, uncountable genders. We are trees, reaching our leaves towards the sky. We are butterflies, transforming from strange little caterpillars into the gorgeous winged creatures we're supposed to become.

Karen Lloyd

Artist Biography

Karen grew up inspired by the vibrant contemporary arts community of her hometown: Mystic, Connecticut. In 2004, she graduated with Departmental Honors from the University of Vermont with a BA in English and minor in Animal Science. An art professor encouraged her to pursue art professionally, but it would be five years after graduation until she decided to take the plunge into exhibiting her art. Not content to be limited to one medium, she has thrown her creative energy not only into photography and acrylic painting, but has also become accomplished at the customization and painting of realistic miniature model horses using mixed media of pastels, acrylics, and colored pencils.

"The best way I can describe it is that art is part of me and the essence of my very soul. I cannot fathom living without ever again creating art in some form – it would be like no longer breathing. I'm not as prolific as some artists, in great part due to the limitations of chronic tick illness, fibromyalgia, and migraines but I'm frequently 'framing compositions' in my mind's eye when I go through my day."

Over the years, Karen's award-winning photography has been featured in numerous exhibitions in Vermont, including at the Darkroom Gallery, Champlain Valley Fair, Art + Soul, Winooski Pop-Up Gallery, Winooski Memorial Library, the O'Brien Community Center, Feldman's Bagels, and University of Vermont Alumni exhibits, as well as four previous exhibits through VSA / Inclusive Arts Vermont.

"Amidst the challenges of living with chronic tick illness and fibromyalgia, I have continued to explore the realm of natural aesthetics in my acrylic paintings and photography. Through whimsical beauty and dramatic contrasts, I endeavor to spark reflection upon our relationships with the animals and landscapes increasingly overlooked in a fast-paced, human-oriented society, with the hope of evoking an emotional thread to our natural surroundings. Ultimately, my pursuit is to capture and share the essence of my subject. For me, creating art that awakens a deeper emotional connection is one of the most extraordinary and rewarding challenges to achieve. Within a single piece, there is often a suggestion of an allegorical dichotomy of light and dark: tempering the interweaving threads of perseverance, challenges and 'storms,' with themes of empathy, hope and joy."

Karen resides in Winooski, Vermont with her two sweet house rabbits, Journey and River.

More of her artwork can be explored at www.natureheartstudio.com. Karen's art cards are offered year-round at the ArtHound Gallery (Essex Junction) and Guy's Farm & Yard (Williston location), as well as online on Etsy at:

www.etsy.com/shop/NatureHeartStudio. Follow [Karen J. Lloyd's Nature Heart Studio](#) on Facebook for the latest projects and behind the scenes.

In addition to the metal print in this exhibit, *Phoenix Rising* is available as art cards, fine art prints on high quality Canon paper, and magnets.

Artist Statement

The Phoenix is perhaps one of the greatest mythological symbols of the CYCLES of transformation and rebirth, as despite an ending / death, it rises from the ashes to flourish with the hope of better things to come. Painted in the Fall of 2022 on the precipice of my 40th birthday, I view my acrylic painting *Phoenix Rising* as a symbolic self portrait. It represents all I have overcome and also all that I am still persevering through. It is everything that I am choosing to embrace and engage in, and also celebrates that I still very much exist despite the challenges of life. There is a sense of liberation for soaring above difficult transitions and of the kind of joy that can only be known due to having experienced the opposite.

Unique compared to my other paintings, the background of blues, teals, and violets was painted with a wider brush in fast strokes while dancing to some of my favorite songs. There was a rare "freedom" of energy with that looser style juxtaposed with the sitting down leaning over the canvas with a 0 fine tip kolinsky brush for the very meticulous, time consuming process of slowly creating each detailed feather. I found myself appreciating the rhythm of both stages. Likewise, the Phoenix's gaze is focused yet understanding, strong yet kind. It is a creature at once powerful in its self-realization while still exuding empathy for others in its path.

Loosely inspired by its "earthly counterpart" the Peacock, the vibrant rainbow of colors and symbolic imagery of my Phoenix represents various facets of my being and life. Completed mere days before my 40th birthday, the candle-like "trinity" of crown feathers atop its head is a nod both to my spiritual faith and the ending of my third decade with my milestone birthday. Likewise, its illuminated, peacock-esque tail feathers feature three eyes ("third eye" like in meditation) with heart-shapes at their core to honor my studio name Nature Heart Studio. I see the Phoenix daring us to let go of what no longer serves us and empowering us to live authentically to ace life. The inner purple feathers on its wings celebrate with pride a personal part of my identity. In the months that followed its completion, the Phoenix has also become for me a very inspirational symbol for the courageous decision and painful transition of divorce. It continues to be my reminder of rising above the many health challenges I have faced for over two decades. Living with the limitations of Lyme, fibromyalgia, and migraines has often been a very

difficult journey that has redirected my paths, and like the Phoenix I had to let go of my "old life" in order to recognize a resilient new version of myself.

I have long considered art to be my life's purpose, my way of giving back to the world. Especially when in that elusive "zone," there are moments when I feel like a piece takes on a life of its own – using me as its instrument – and I am driven to pour all of my heart into the creation. This was very true with *Phoenix Rising*. My hope is that my art leaves a positive impact on others. When I am struggling in life, my artworks often lift my own spirits as well. Creating art often feels like a lifeline as due to symptoms such as brain fog, debilitating fatigue, and chronic pain I've been unable to work a "traditional" job for over a decade now. In the summer of 2023, my original canvas painting of *Phoenix Rising* was displayed at the Champlain Valley Fair. Hearing bystanders' reactions expressing finding it inspirational really touched me. I love that the Phoenix serves as a reminder through the cycles of our lives that we can rise again, restored anew, and take flight reaching for our dreams in the sky.

Kate Adams

Artist Biography

Ancestry = who I am, am becoming? Still in the life cycle.

Formal education: first in my Abenaki family to graduate from college, University of Vermont education, and later Master's in curriculum development. Shared learning in public and private teaching places and now at farm and woods.

Primary learning from life experiences, observing creation, and listening. Experienced in public and private learning places, gifted with folks with neurodivergent differences from genetics, trauma, environment, sharing and encouraging them in nontraditional, the indigenous way, of connection with nature and horses.

Artistic expression in photography and storytelling with words and images grew from seeds of watching my Dad. Continued to learn by observing, comparing, and trying a different perspective.

Live at southern base of Mt. Ascutney, a sacred place, as a caregiver, with four medicine horses who are shared as teacher and healers for folks with neurodivergent differences from genetics, trauma, environment.

Personal journey of cycling through learning with ADHD (attention distraction hyperactive difference) brilliance and healing from trauma. Images to share beauty, comfort, teachings of Creator.

May you pause, ponder, and participate in peace. Creating a gallery at Ascutney Mountain Horse Farm to host opportunities for camping, horse connection, nature walks, and photography workshops.

Contact Kate at AscutneyMthorseFarm@gmail.com or kateadamsimages1@gmail.com, or follow on Facebook at [Ascutney Mtn Horse Farm L3c](#).

Artist Statement

Cycles,
ancient Greek word
for circle,
circle of life

Forty-seven years ago
I gave birth
to my daughter Valerie.

Three years ago
she was diagnosed
With breast cancers.
Three rare aggressive.

For two years
she battled for her life
with chemo, natural,
prayers of family and friends,
and mother.

Last spring,
the raging destruction
stole her breath of earth life.
That morning of my last
moments with her
I went to the pond
near her home,
my earth eyes amazed
by changing hues of colors
as the sun rose up over
the eastern mountain
tinting the mists

reflecting off the water surface
and glistening in my heart.

I was comforted
that she would be
traveling to heaven realm,
be completely healed
and embraced by others
loving her.

This phase of her life cycle
completed
from cocoon to butterfly
spreading her color filled
joyful wings to glow
In everlasting light and love.

Kathryn Peterson

Artist Biography

Hartford, Vermont based artist Kathryn Peterson briefly studied art and photography at American River and Ventura Colleges in California. Kathryn works in acrylics, graphite, watercolors, inks, mixed media, and photography. Most recently, Kathryn returned from a five-year stay living and working in West Africa. "My travels have inspired and influenced my journey as an artist. I love the adventure, sights, sounds, tastes, and vibes traveling gives." She started painting after a 38-year hiatus from a career in advertising, media, and foreign service. As a child, I identified as an artist. I had an appreciation for colors, textures, and shapes. Art was my outlet in school, and it was something I could excel in. If you drew a tree or a person backward, it didn't matter. I didn't have to sound out a color. Mispronouncing wasn't an issue. As an adult, I stopped drawing and painting in my early twenties, and photography became my creative outlet.

"I am a visual storyteller. It's a conversation and a connection with the world around me. The topics change, as do the colors and media." –Kathryn Peterson

Recent Shows

2021 Group exhibition, *LOCAL Color 2021*, South Pomfret, Vermont

2021 Juried exhibition, *Calling from the Moonlight*, Lebanon, New Hampshire

2021 Juried exhibition, *Blue*, Cambridge, Massachusetts

2021 Group exhibition, *Small Works 2021*, South Pomfret, Vermont

2021 Group exhibition, *A Wintery Mix*, Lebanon, New Hampshire

2022 Juried exhibition, *Arts Connect*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont

2022 Juried exhibition, *Stick with Love*, Lebanon, New Hampshire

2022 Group exhibition, *The Magic of Light*, Lyndon, Vermont

2022 Juried exhibition, *Drip*, Barre, Vermont

2022 Group exhibition, *Art for All*, Randolph, Vermont

2022 Juried exhibition, Parks and Recreation, Bennington and Jeffersonville, Vermont

2022 Group exhibition, *LOCAL Color 2022*, South Pomfret, Vermont

2022 Group exhibition, *A Wintery Mix*, Lebanon, New Hampshire

2022 Group exhibition, *Small Works 2022*, South Pomfret, Vermont

2023 Juried exhibition, *Arts Connect*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont

2023 Group exhibition, *Daily Artist 2022*, South Pomfret, Vermont

2023 Juried exhibition, *Whir, Clank, Beep*, Barre, Vermont

2023 Juried exhibition, *The 2023 VWS Spring Exhibit-Emergence*, Jericho, Vermont

2023 Juried exhibition, *Celebration of Trees*, Middlebury, Vermont

2023 Juried exhibition, *You're Absolutely Spineless*, Barre, Vermont

Artist Statement

My work explores the relationship between figurative and abstract art through my empirical instincts and bouts of my newly acquired vertigo. The challenge is visually connecting my vestibular disorder, dizziness, and altered vision by working through the disarray to express myself on paper.

I create art inspired by the world around me, awake or asleep, by juxtaposing curated silhouettes with dramatic, colorful movements. I illustrate my narrative using both positive and negative space in the paintings. The subject conveys minimized color, giving the surrounding background the stage.

In *Singing to an Ocean*, the painting relates to the ebb and flow of the tides. The moon pulls strong on the water, affecting the feeding ground distribution of plankton and fish. Humpbacks change songs or locations of singing based on tidal current. Life is cyclical. Everything moving in a predictable pattern with amazing results.

Kit Arlo

Artist Biography

As a lifelong devoted encaustic artist, I find solace in the ancient art of painting with molten beeswax and resin. My journey into encaustic art began as a meditative practice, a way to connect with the raw, elemental nature of the medium. Through my work, I aim to evoke a sense of tranquility and introspection, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the rich textures and ethereal layers of my pieces. My artistic process is deeply rooted in humility and reverence for the natural world. Each piece is a testament to the delicate balance between control and spontaneity, as I allow the wax to guide me in shaping its captivating forms. The fluidity of encaustic allows me to capture fleeting moments of beauty and grace, preserving them in a timeless embrace.

Artist Statement

"In my artistic practice, I seek to cultivate a sense of tranquility, connection and introspection, inviting viewers to engage with the subtle yet profound beauty of the encaustic medium. Each piece is a reflection of my deep reverence for the natural world and the transient nature of existence. Through the tactile and luminous qualities of encaustic, I endeavor to create a space for contemplation and stillness, where viewers can find solace and connection with the world around them. My art is a gentle invitation to pause, breathe, and immerse oneself in the quietude of the present moment. Drawing inspiration from the delicate interplay of light and shadow, I aim to evoke a sense of harmony and balance, infusing each piece with a quiet energy that resonates with the soul. Through the encaustic medium, I strive to create a sanctuary for the mind and the spirit, where the viewer can find refuge from the noise and confusion of the world and reconnect with the essence of their being. My art is a testament to the power of simplicity and mindfulness, inviting the audience to embrace the beauty of impermanence

and the serenity of the present moment. Through the encaustic medium, I hope to awaken a sense of wonder and gratitude for the profound beauty that surrounds us, inviting viewers to embark on a journey of quiet introspection and self-discovery."

Kit Arlo's encaustic artwork beautifully embodies the theme of cycles through its inherent connection to the cyclical nature of life, nature, and creativity. The process of creating encaustic art itself reflects the concept of cycles, as the wax transitions from solid to liquid and back to solid again, mirroring the ebb and flow of existence. The layers of wax and pigment in Kit Arlo's art represent the passage of time, much like the rings of a tree or the layers of sediment in the earth. Each layer symbolizes a moment in the ongoing cycle of growth, change, and renewal, capturing the essence of impermanence and continuity. Furthermore, the encaustic medium's ability to preserve organic materials, such as natural fibers, leaves, or other ephemera, speaks to the interconnectedness of all living things and the cycle of life and decay. These elements become embedded in the wax, serving as tangible reminders of the ever-repeating patterns found in the natural world. The theme of cycles is also reflected in the visual textures and patterns created through the encaustic process. The rhythmic movement of the wax, the formation of organic shapes, and the interplay of light and shadow all evoke the cyclical patterns found in nature, from the changing seasons to the celestial dance of the stars. In essence, Kit Arlo's encaustic artwork serves as a visual meditation on the universal theme of cycles, inviting viewers to contemplate the interconnectedness of all things, the passage of time, and the enduring beauty found within the ever-turning wheel of existence.

Kristina Gosh

Artist Biography

Kristina Gosh is an interdisciplinary artist and educator based in Vermont and Chicago, IL. Her art practice combines yoga asana & philosophy with writing, social performance, sculptural painting, installation, and collage techniques to ponder the organic dichotomies of life . . . the natural and the synthetic ~ the urban and the rural ~ the modern and the antiquated ~ the balanced and the unstable ~ the dis-eased and the well ~ the sane and the mad.

Kristina is deeply inspired by the Fluxus art movement and navigates the world through the idea that art and life are one and the same. Slowness, experimentation, and chance are at the crux of her process. The lyrical worlds of musician Neko Case also provide great artistic inspiration ~ Case's

gritty, ethereal fables resonate profoundly with the internal dreamscapes that inform Kristina's work.

Kristina became a member of [ARC Gallery & Educational Foundation](#) as an emerging artist new to Chicago in the late nineties, and credits her early professional development to the sisterhood and mentorship she received from fellow members of this feminist women's cooperative. She served on the board of directors, then on the advisory board, and over 20 years later remains an affiliate member of this historic alternative gallery that was founded in 1973.

As an educator, Kristina has 25+ years of experience working with nearly every age group from toddler to college student. She has been a ski instructor, nanny, ESL tutor, after school program manager for under-served youth, curriculum designer, college faculty member, arts integration specialist, teaching artist, art camp instructor, and most recently an arts and SEL (social and emotional learning) education consultant for Chicago Public Schools. She is currently shifting focus to share embodied SEL techniques with students and teachers through trauma-informed yoga resources. This sharing takes place during in-school, arts integrated movement residencies and after school clubs.

Kristina has exhibited and performed her work worldwide at venues including the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Galerie der Gedok (Hamburg, Germany), The Redhead Gallery (Toronto, ON), Amos Eno Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), The Chicago Humanities Festival, The Center for Book & Paper Arts (Chicago), Spoke Gallery (Chicago), The Chicago Moving Company, ARC Gallery & Educational Foundation (Chicago), Ragdale Foundation (Lake Forest, IL), eye lounge (Phoenix, AZ), Studio Place Arts (Barre, VT), and Art on Track Chicago - a mobile art festival on a CTA train. She also performed fluxus scores by Alison Knowles in a concert ensemble led by Knowles at Columbia College Chicago.

Kristina holds a double BA in Studio Art & French from the University of Vermont and an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts & Media from Columbia College Chicago. She is certified in youth mental health first aid, trauma-informed yoga education for children, and is currently working on her [RCYT](#) certification through Yoga Alliance.

Kristina was selected for the 2016 teaching artist cohort of Arts Connect (sponsored by Inclusive Arts Vermont), a graduate level professional development that trains participants on blending arts integration and Universal Design for Learning pedagogies. She has been the recipient of a

3Arts Award nomination in the teaching arts category, two CCAP TE@M Convergence Learning Fellowships, and the Albert P. Weisman Award.

kristinagosh.com
[linkedin.com/in/kristinagosh](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kristinagosh)

Artist Statement

I have been creating for as long as I can remember. Most of my earliest memories from childhood ~ and some of the most joyous ~ involve making things. The motivation to make has always felt like the pull of an inward force that is much more powerful than myself. It's a presence that's always been with me. I respond to its call and nurture it as best I can. My artistic practice is becoming more and more therapeutic, as it increasingly brings much-needed fitness and soothing to my brain and mind. It nourishes my body and spirit by moving through practices that cultivate pause and slowness. I live with a bipolar disorder in my brain and body. The symptoms I endure from this illness demand consistent pause and slowness to offset the toxic speed with which our modern society moves. My art practice brings me to this sacred space where those two states meet in harmony, a space I strive to inhabit as my natural, perpetual way of being.

The self-portrait landscape in this exhibition – *duo in three parts* – is part of a series I started in 2015 titled *ice shards on puddles*. The series commemorates the process of ending a terrifying era of perpetual self-stigma directed at my bipolar illness and the start of an internal revolution to shatter that vicious cycle permanently through self-trust and self-advocacy.

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"A puddle is a small accumulation of liquid, usually water, on a surface. It can form either by pooling in a depression on the surface, or by surface tension upon a flat surface. A puddle is generally shallow enough to walk through, and too small to traverse with a boat or raft. Young children enjoy splashing in puddles, often while wearing Wellington boots. Small wildlife may be attracted to puddles." ~ Wikipedia

Well, I'd been there before
But I guess this time the path came through a different fracture
This time though
I was gonna run away
Just this once
I thought

If I just run away this once
to the woods
To the deep thick mangy woods
then somehow I'll be able to breathe again
But I got into the trees
And was STILL gasping for air
The purity of the oxygen didn't really matter I guess
This was below the surface tension
Much deeper
Grief deep
That gasping exhaustion hit so far down it scraped my bones
Bone deep
Bone deep grief
Bone cracking grief
So stitching those cracks back together wasn't gonna cut it
But linking by chain
That might do the trick . . .
bound by chains electively
Those gasps for air were already prison though
But still
those chains those binds those binding chains
Those binds covered bone like a blanket of snow
one that still somehow manages to maintain its drippy lacy-ness
on the branch
in the puddle
with the ice
And somehow that brought back the comfort.
That brought back the oxygen.
That brought back the purity of the air.
That resumed my breath.

Leah Schulz

Artist Biography

My name is Leah Schulz. I am 35 years old and live in Williston, Vermont with my husband and our cat Norman. When thinking about writing this artist bio, I considered listing my professional achievements as is traditionally done in a bio, but this exhibit and this painting are about what happened after those achievements.

This painting will be shown in some of the places I used to exist in. I received my MBA from the University of Vermont. I walked through the Davis Center every day as a student. As a business consultant, I did projects within the walls of the Vermont State House. Once upon a time, I was

selected for Leadership Courses in Brattleboro and St. Johnsbury. Then, five years ago, I became too disabled to work, and I suddenly no longer existed in any of these places. What can I say about the last five years? What have I accomplished? For the last five years, I have been cycling, in and out, up and down, riding the waves of chronic illness. It took a year to find a diagnosis and several years and two surgeries to find some relief and a symptom management plan. I have fought through health insurance and social security denials and appeals. I have been socially, financially, and systematically removed from society. The accomplishments these last five years have been in my persistence to continue to exist.

The only thing that tethered me to society is art. I leaned into a different side of my brain that I had never allowed myself to explore before and found I loved crochet, block printing, and painting. This is my first piece to be included in an art show. I am grateful to Inclusive Arts Vermont for giving me a way to exist in these places again.

Leah can be found on Instagram [@Presence works](#).

Artist Statement

I have drawn a diagram of my pain cycle over and over again in my journal and it goes like this: something happens to induce more pain or symptoms, it sends me into a flare and my reaction is to panic, a feeling like a free fall, and then freeze up and curl into the fetal position. I would try and help myself, reaching out - seeing specialists, and researching possible diagnoses and treatments, but I was getting crushed over and over again by a cycle of uncontrolled symptoms. At my lowest point, just after I became too disabled to work, I got very lucky to see a pain specialist who taught me a method for tackling symptoms in a more manageable way. It allowed me to dive into each symptom individually and find the tools, treatments, and supports I needed to remove the symptom from the list. In the beginning, I had 52 symptoms that I would experience regularly. I systematically attacked each one, preventing them from cascading from things like tension in my neck to knots and then into a migraine. This technique allowed me to finally surface, come up for air, and begin to trust that I could trust myself and my body to remove myself from this cycle. I would draw this out in my journal - what triggered the flare, what symptoms I was experiencing, and what interventions I could do to stop it from getting worse. It allowed me to ride out the pain and symptoms, like a wave, each time with less distress and more trust. Sometimes I still get sucked under that wave and spit back out at the beginning and I have to repeat the cycle again and again before I find a resolution to the symptoms. I still have chronic pain and illness, but the intensity and frequency of my flare-ups have significantly reduced. It is also difficult to make the best choices or predict my needs all of the time. I

wanted to reflect that it is also sometimes okay to sink to the quiet bottom and look up at the surface to gain a new perspective. These are cyclical choices, and there is power in each option. I am learning to take comfort in and embrace these cycles and choices. Over time, I have learned that this cycle doesn't just apply to chronic illness. It can be applied to learning and growing in any capacity. It often feels like a free fall or a repetitive, ladder climbing. We are all cycling, and learning our choices matter, again and again.

Lissa Nilsson

Artist Biography

I've been drawing since I was a child, took art classes in high school, and almost majored in art in college. Deciding not to "starve", I graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in Geography and became a cartographer. After falling chronically ill with ME/CFS in 2010, I rediscovered art as a way of expressing myself.

Artist's Websites: <https://www.lissanilsson.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/nilssonlissa/>

Artist Statement

The Healing Tree: mixed media on paper - acrylic, colored pencil, and pens

"Epigenetics" is the study of how environment and other factors can change the way our genes are expressed. It has recently been discovered that trauma gets coded into our DNA. Therefore, we may inherit various unhealed traumas from our ancestors. Likewise, this creates a cycle in which we can continue to pass these traumas (as well as our own unresolved traumas) along to our descendants.

This painting follows the tumultuous lines of two ancestors, one from each side of the family. Simple words laid upon the roots of the tree define their life trajectory and how it impacted the following generations.

The roots are exposed to reveal what had originally been hidden over a century ago. They also lead to a soft blanket of stars which represents countless layers of ancestors going back into time. With nature's sense of balance, the sun symbolizes bringing things into the light - which promotes the process of healing, leading to a "4th Generation Epiphany".

The trunk of the tree holds the light and dark side of trauma's aftermath. The branches on the left side are sparse, broken, and contain words of import regarding the multiple generations that have been stuck and

struggling – never realizing that these patterns were inherited and also fostered through learned behaviors along the way.

The right side of the tree has roots that lead to a wheelbarrow. This represents the process, tools, and hard work of healing these inherited trauma cycles. Above this section of the tree are healthy branches, with words describing the positive impact of these changes.

“The Healing Tree” suggests that cultivating a deeper level of healing is worth the incredible effort. This can help break the “Intergenerational Trauma Cycle” – thus resolving these traumas not just for our ancestors and ourselves, but for future generations to come.

Abbreviations (used on painting)

MGGm: Maternal Great Grandmother

PGGm: Paternal Great Grandmother

MGf: Maternal Grandfather

PGm: Paternal Grandmother

Michael Poss

Artist Biography and Statement

I have been working on my photography since high school. I have always been interested in the arts - drawing, theatre, singing, etc. I have been in every IAV exhibition since *Engage*. I am lucky enough to have two pieces accepted for this exhibit. Thank you to IAV for the opportunity and forum to do this.

Paul Betz

Artist Biography

It has been somewhat challenging because I am in a wheelchair, so I have a very different perspective of the camera lens. One of the reasons why I said I have a unique view from the camera lens, or in my case, the monitor, is because once I’m looking at the monitor, which is essentially my camera lens, because I’m able to look at the picture while also moving my wheelchair seat up and down, that’s how I’m able to get all my interesting shots with a little bit of assistance from my people that help me do my everyday life.

I have been in two Inclusive Arts shows. My first one was *ANEW*, which started my photography duty, because from that *ANEW* showing, I actually got the Library Window displayed by Senator Sanders' aide to have it

displayed in his office in Washington, DC. My second photo was in *MASKED*. That was *Mossy Crevice*. That happened to be a random photo that was just taken by my phone.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/bestbetzphotography>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/paul.betzjr>

Artist Statement

The way my theme CYCLES works is because I'm referring to the cycle of what patterns of weather that we are having at any particular time of year or day. That's how it relates to the theme of CYCLES, I believe.

Persephone Ringgenberg

Artist Biography

My parents would say I began creating artwork when I was in preschool. One of my favorite pastimes as a very young child was grinding up my sidewalk chalk and mixing it with most anything I could find. (These were not always safe choices!) This was a form of entertainment and an outlet for my feelings of loneliness – I didn't really have any friends.

My art is a coping skill that helps me calm my anxiety, it helps me maintain my memories of experiences I've had. It also helps me understand how I experience the world around me. Art has opened some doors to meeting others and providing opportunities I didn't have in the past.

Instagram: [@Worldthromyeyes](#)

Artist Statement

Physics! When hanging by one's hair, you will cycle! There can be pain in cycles, there can be joy in the spinning (which I love), and there can also be joy in succeeding in the accomplishment.

My presentation shows how a cycle might look in motion, not always the same, but connected.

Sarah Metcalf

Artist Biography

Sarah has always had a love for art. Through the years, she has kept up her artwork practice at home and through the Howard Community Services Resource Center, under the direction of Jacob Weber. In addition to the art enrichment Jacob has provided, Sarah has benefited from weekly sessions with Topaz Weiss of Expressive Arts in Burlington, Vermont. Sarah has also

studied under Mamta Upadhyah, an art teacher from India, through her lessons both on Zoom, through Color Trekking, and, more recently, in person.

Artist Statement

During the pandemic, Sarah focused on her artwork and through Zoom meetings with Jacob from the Howard Center, was able to explore the lives and artwork of several artists. It was at this time that Sarah was able to use acrylics, watercolors, and oil pastels through her various art projects, a practice she has continued with all of her teachers; and she is very excited to be in this art show to share her work with a wider audience.

Scott Brodie

Artist Biography

My name is Scott Brodie, and I am from Barre, Vermont. I work as a Peer Mentor at Washington County Mental Health Services. I use supported typing to communicate. I am an advocate for myself and others who have communication challenges. To advocate for myself, I need to educate others about autism. I think that it is important for everyone to advocate for their own rights, but sometimes it is helpful for others to support them. The work of advocacy is never done and takes a lot of energy and time to keep going.

I belong to an advocacy group called The Communication Alliance which is a group that advocates for everyone's access to communication that works for them. The Alliance educates people by doing conferences and webinars, using PowerPoints, videos, and poetry to show how people with communication and sensory challenges are advocating to live like everyone else. I have traveled to Iowa, California, New Hampshire, and in Vermont. Other Alliance members have traveled as far as Japan, Finland, and Sri Lanka to educate people about sensory issues and the right of everyone to communicate.

I write poetry both for fun and to educate others about autism. The poetry I have written has been on display at the Vermont Center for Independent Living in Waterbury, VT, the Vermont State House, and Poem City, Montpelier, VT, 2020, 2022 and 2023.

Artist Statement

I started to create artwork for educational purposes in the spring of 2023, but I have been painting since childhood. The process I have been using lately to paint is: I use an already painted canvas and tape messages to the painting with painter's tape. Then, I paint over the tape. When it is dry, I peel the tape off to uncover the message. The painting is then used to educate people about autism and everyone's right to access the

communication that works for them. The paintings are also used in my PowerPoints that I present at webinars. Autism is the thing that shapes my artistic mind. My autism is the thing that cycles. My autism cycles with the seasons and with things that are going on around me. Too much input sensory wise can throw my intelligent mind into overload. It is a continual cycle of regulation and dysregulation.

Taylor Galgay

Artist Biography

I started drawing from a very young age and developed a love for scrapbooking during my high school years. I delved into art during a time where I was struggling with my body image after scoliosis surgery. Art is a cathartic release for me -- many years of medical gaslighting, chronic pain, and finally, disability acceptance and embracement. Art is the way I am most comfortable expressing my experiences.

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/taylorgalgay802

Artist Statement

Cycles resonates with my artwork in many ways -- I continuously reconnect with nature as part of my healing process. During this healing ritual, I allow insects and animals to move freely around me. I observe the natural cycles and processes within nature. Sometimes, I'm lucky enough to capture these moments with my camera.

Willow Bascom

Artist Biography

Hi, my name is Willow Bascom. I grew up in Saudi Arabia and Panama, and traveled extensively in Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Far East. That childhood gave me direct access to the world, and immersed me in the many diverse ways people use color and design to express their perceptions of the world and themselves. What I find most fascinating is the way so many traditional art styles and design motifs have traveled around the world, carried by cross-cultural migrants to new locales, only to influence and be influenced by the traditions and styles in those new places. Art, I have come to see, is a universal conversation – a visual conversation.

I call this sharing of design styles, motifs and elements World Art. World Art is like World Music, but for your eyes. My art is my contribution to the discussion. But there is another aspect to my work. I regard it as a gift that came to me from being very ill. For a dozen years, I had very active lupus

with a lot of cerebral involvement, including a mild stroke. Recovery was a process. First to return was my love of music, then my vocabulary. Prior to my illness, I could copy well, but not create art. As I started getting better and realized I couldn't work outside the home, I started drawing.

<https://www.willowdraws.com/>

Artist Statement

Because of reading [The Brain's Way of Healing, by Norman Doidge](#), since I had so much cerebral involvement with lupus and used art to facilitate my recovery, I gave myself an art challenge as I read this inspiring book. For the first chapter, drawing my pain was the goal.

I am lucky (?) that lupus comes with its own animal icons: wolves and butterflies. I began with a mandala of wolves. Clockwise, the grey wolf in the two o'clock position is caught in a trap, the next two are attacking me, the next gray wolf has been trapped for a very long time and has given up, the golden wolf at ten o'clock hurts so much, the howling wolf at midnight is prayer out of the depths of pain. Surrounding them all are hornets, wasps, ticks, beetles, mosquitos, gnats - sharp pains and creepy crawly feelings. Moths abound in my night. Poisonous mushrooms and the putrid green surrounding it all symbolize the wooziness and "offness" I felt. This is the first (and only) time I set out to create an ugly piece. And yet in the blackness in which I found myself, I was separate from the pain, no matter how small I felt and how dark my view, I was still there. The bits of sparkle are the moments I felt the grace of God to persevere and the love of my family holding me together. The hummingbird was very special to me, each day it would come by the window and hover in front of three little knitted pigs my mother made for the kids. That I would look up and notice it in the midst of the pain and fog I perceived as a gift, a message that I was not alone and this time would not last forever.