

# Creating Within

*Art from Rikers and  
the NYC Health + Hospitals Art Collection*



## CREATING WITHIN: Art from Rikers and the NYC Health + Hospitals Art Collection

NYC Health + Hospitals presents here its first-ever exhibition to showcase creative works by individuals detained on Rikers Island alongside selections from its own art collection. Bridging the worlds of art, health care, and the criminal legal system, *Creating Within* invites viewers to reflect on, and to celebrate, the power of creative expression to sustain health and wellness, support self-empowerment, and transcend literal and abstract constraints under even the most challenging conditions.

For New Yorkers living with mental health conditions while incarcerated in the City's jails, constraints defining their reality take manifold forms: physical, temporal, psychological, and social. Those who participate in NYC Health + Hospitals/Correctional Health Services' (CHS) Creative Arts Therapy program on Rikers Island, the oldest and largest jail-based arts therapy program in the nation, explore the emotions these restrictions evoke by creating their own original art, music, and writing. Research on similar programs in carceral settings shows that participation in creative arts therapy can improve patients' self-esteem, emotional stability, and well-being while decreasing their feelings of hopelessness and anger.

*Creating Within* honors the inherent value of the art created in therapy sessions at Rikers and celebrates art as a universal language by displaying these works alongside complementary selections from the NYC Health + Hospitals Arts in Medicine Collection (pages 12, 23, 41, 52, 54, and 55). Paintings and mixed media art from the hospital's collection--by Charles Abramson, Martha Boyden, Cynthia Carlson, Manuel Garcia, William Gatewood, and Lloyd McNeill--similarly challenge the boundaries of form and content to capture personal narratives and unique perspectives.

NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull offers an ideal setting for *Creating Within* as the future site of a secure, clinical unit for CHS patients with serious health conditions. Fittingly, it is also home to a 700-foot-long, three-part mural by Keith Haring, an artist committed to the principles of inclusivity and social justice through his advocacy around HIV/AIDS.

The exhibition continues on the Bloomberg Connects app with an array of additional artwork, songs, and written compositions inspired by CHS patients' experiences and journeys.



### ***About NYC Health + Hospitals/Arts in Medicine***

The Arts in Medicine department at NYC Health + Hospitals seeks to foster the emotional well-being and promote healing and wellness for all patients and their families, employees, and the greater community by utilizing the arts, including literary, visual, and performing arts throughout the health care system. In addition to managing the system's significant visual arts collection, the Arts in Medicine department encourages evidenced based practices and provides technical assistance to all of the system's health care facilities and clinics. This is accomplished by combining artistic innovation and education into a comprehensive health care continuum that supports the healing benefits of the arts. For more information, visit <https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/artsinmedicine/>.

### ***About NYC Health + Hospitals/Correctional Health Services and the Creative Arts Therapy Program***

Correctional Health Services (CHS), a division of NYC Health + Hospitals, is the direct provider of health care in New York City's jails. Creative arts therapy is one of many clinical services CHS offers its patients. Creative arts therapists are licensed mental health practitioners who use different creative practices—arts, music, poetry, and drama—to help meet the psychological and emotional needs of their patients. Providing both individual and group therapy, the therapists are an integral part of the interdisciplinary teams working in mental observation units throughout the jail facilities on Rikers Island.

### ***About NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull***

NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull, part of the NYC Health + Hospitals healthcare system, is the major tertiary care provider in the borough of Brooklyn. It is a premiere health care organization for key specialties, including surgery, cardiology, women's health, pediatrics, rehabilitation medicine, renal services, and behavioral health services. Last year, the hospital received close to 300,000 ambulatory care visits and close to 100,000 emergency room visits. For more information, visit [www.nychealthandhospitals.org](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org) and stay connected on Facebook at @WoodhullHosp.

### ***About the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund***

The Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund is a New York City-based foundation that aims to improve access and opportunity for all New Yorkers and foster healthy and vibrant communities. In 2018, the Illumination Fund launched Arts in Health, a multi-year initiative to support organizations utilizing the arts as a tool for healing and building understanding in communities across New York City. The initiative's areas of focus are stigma, trauma and aging-related diseases as well as supporting organizations addressing mental health in communities disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019 the Illumination Fund supported the creation of NYC Health + Hospitals Arts in Medicine department, expanding programs serving health care staff, patients, and communities in sites across the City. For more information, visit [www.lmtif.org](http://www.lmtif.org) or follow @LMTischFund on Twitter.

**Curated by** Naomi H. (Director of Art Collection, Arts in Medicine, NYC Health + Hospitals), Nicole L. (Director, Communications & Intergovernmental Affairs, CHS), Barbara B. (Director, Creative Arts Therapy Department, CHS), Jeff A. (Creative Arts Therapy Supervisor, CHS), Merrill C. (Creative Arts Therapy Supervisor, CHS), and Danielle W. (Art Therapist, CHS)

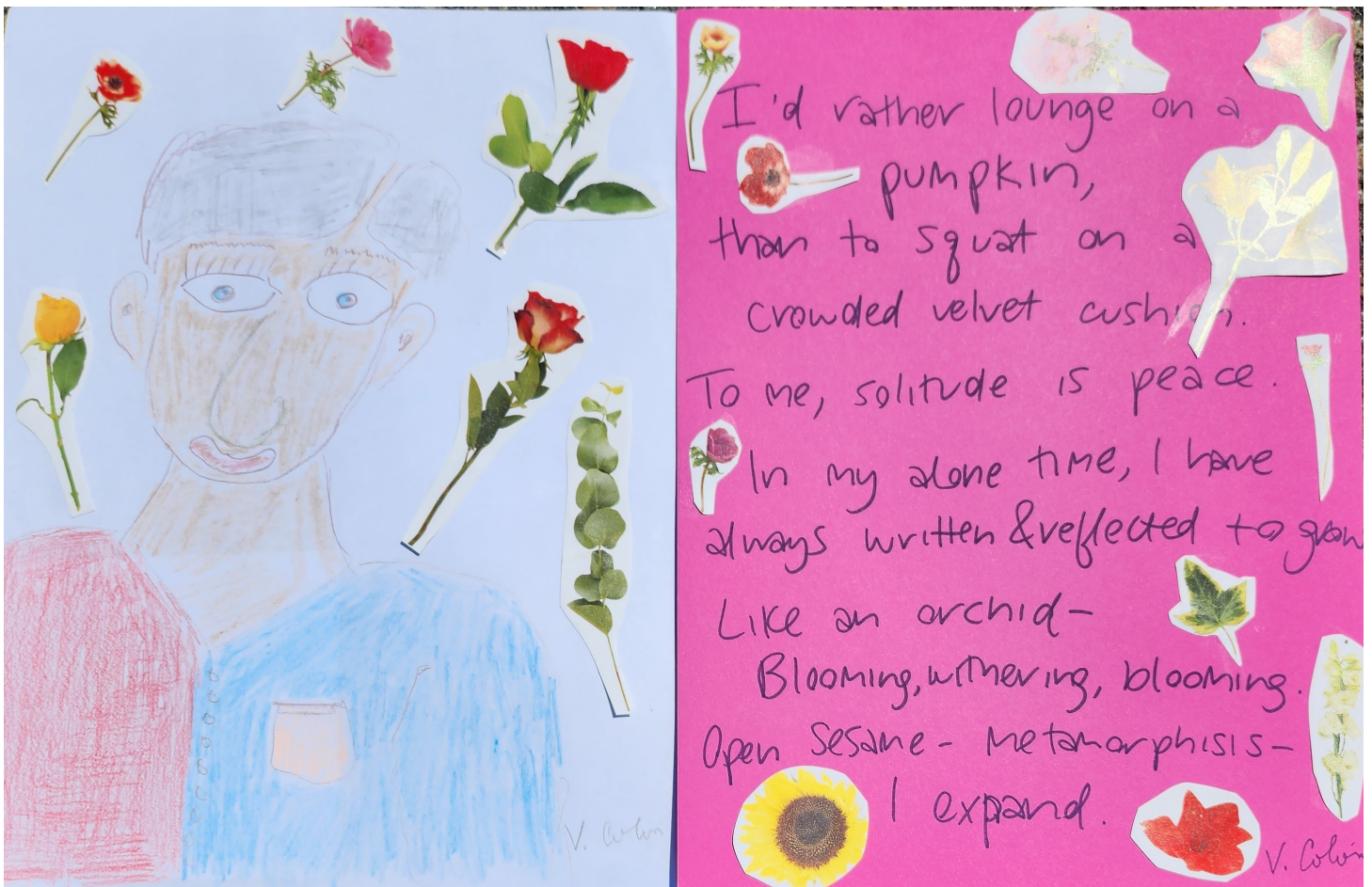
*Continue exploring the exhibition on the Bloomberg Connects app, which includes an expansive digital gallery of additional visual works and an array of immersive songs and poignant written compositions inspired by CHS patients' experiences. Each piece tells its own unique story of creative expression and resilience in the face of adversity.*



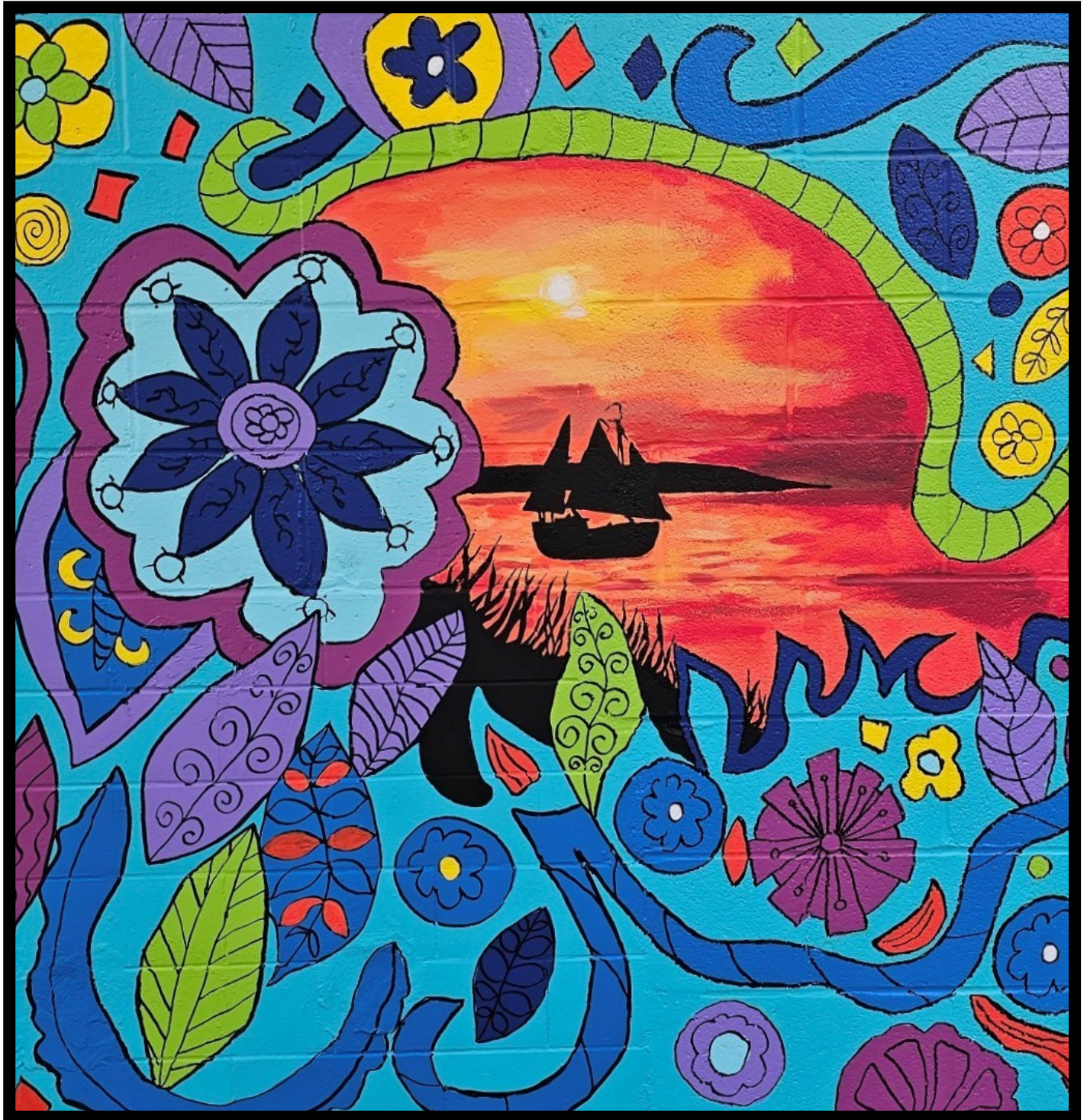


Freedom  
Peacock  
Rayshawn I.

Self Portrait  
Victor C.



CHS patients created this mural over several art therapy sessions. Therapists encouraged them to create a design that would brighten up their environment and help “transport” them visually into a more pleasant space. The patients took turns painting different sections of the mural and sharing space with one another. This project helped them foster healthy interpersonal interactions while improving their emotional regulation and self-esteem. The patients took pride in creating a better environment for themselves.



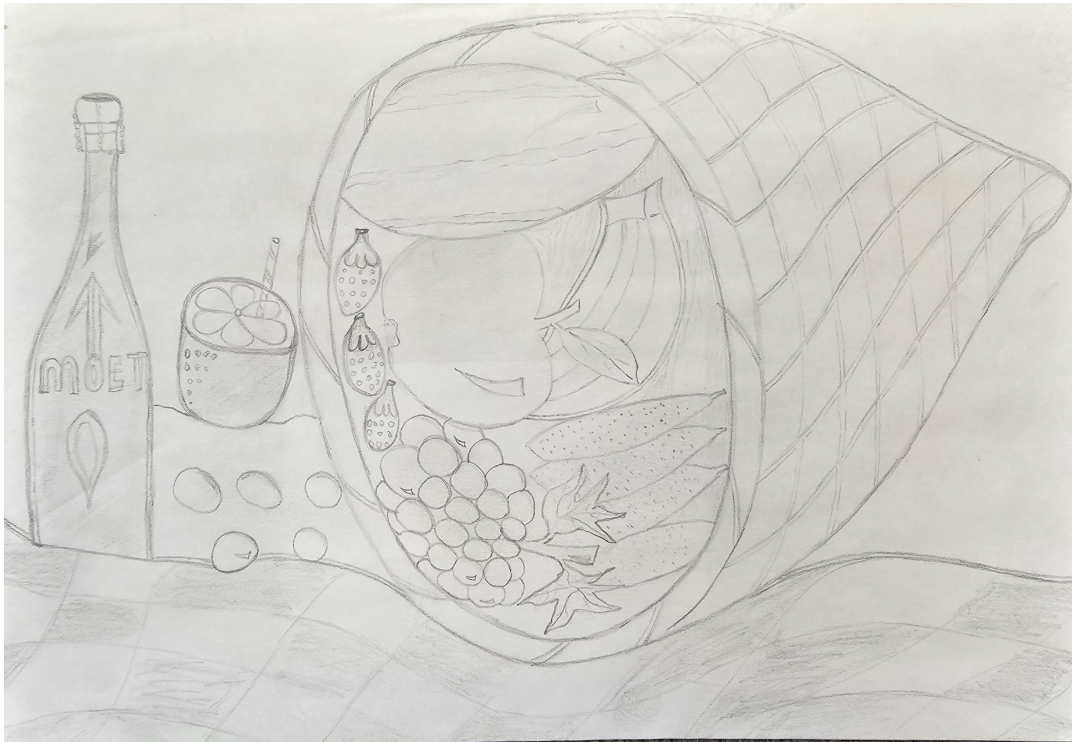
Sunset on the Horizon  
Leroy W., Eduart C., John S., and Alexander B.



The Ice Island  
Rick T.

The Black Doom  
Rick T. and Jamar N.

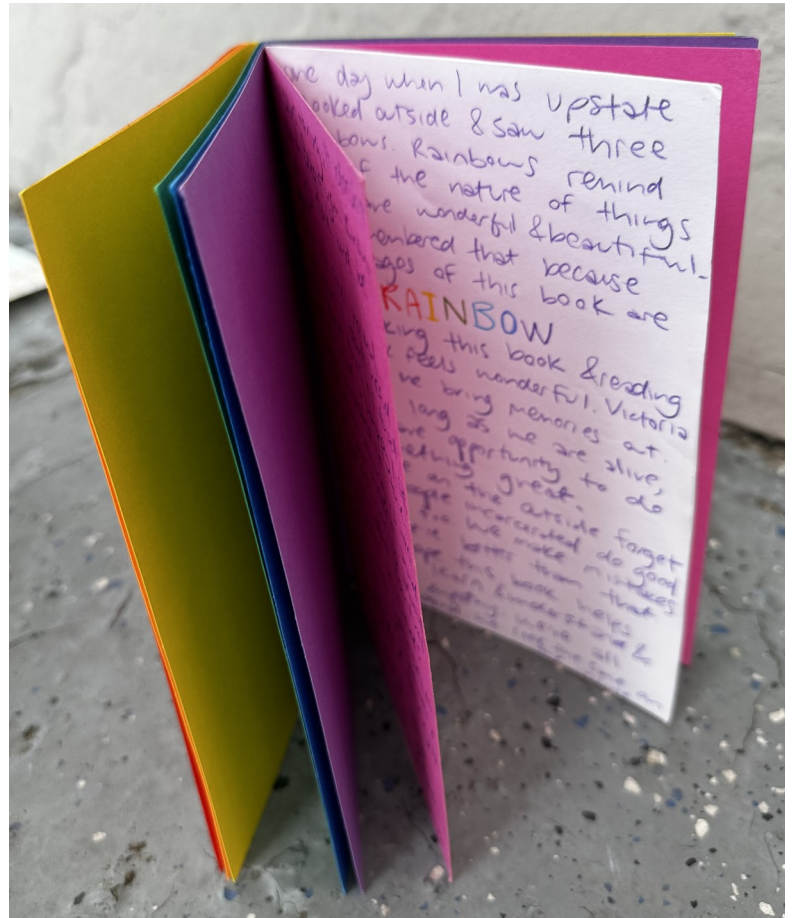
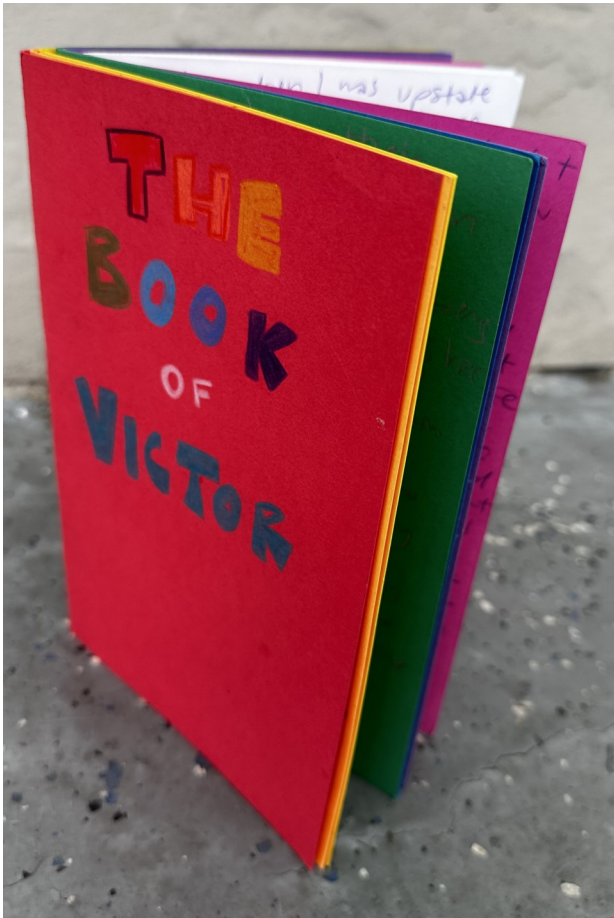




Untitled  
Phillip W.



Dreaming in Chains  
Angel



## The Book of Victor

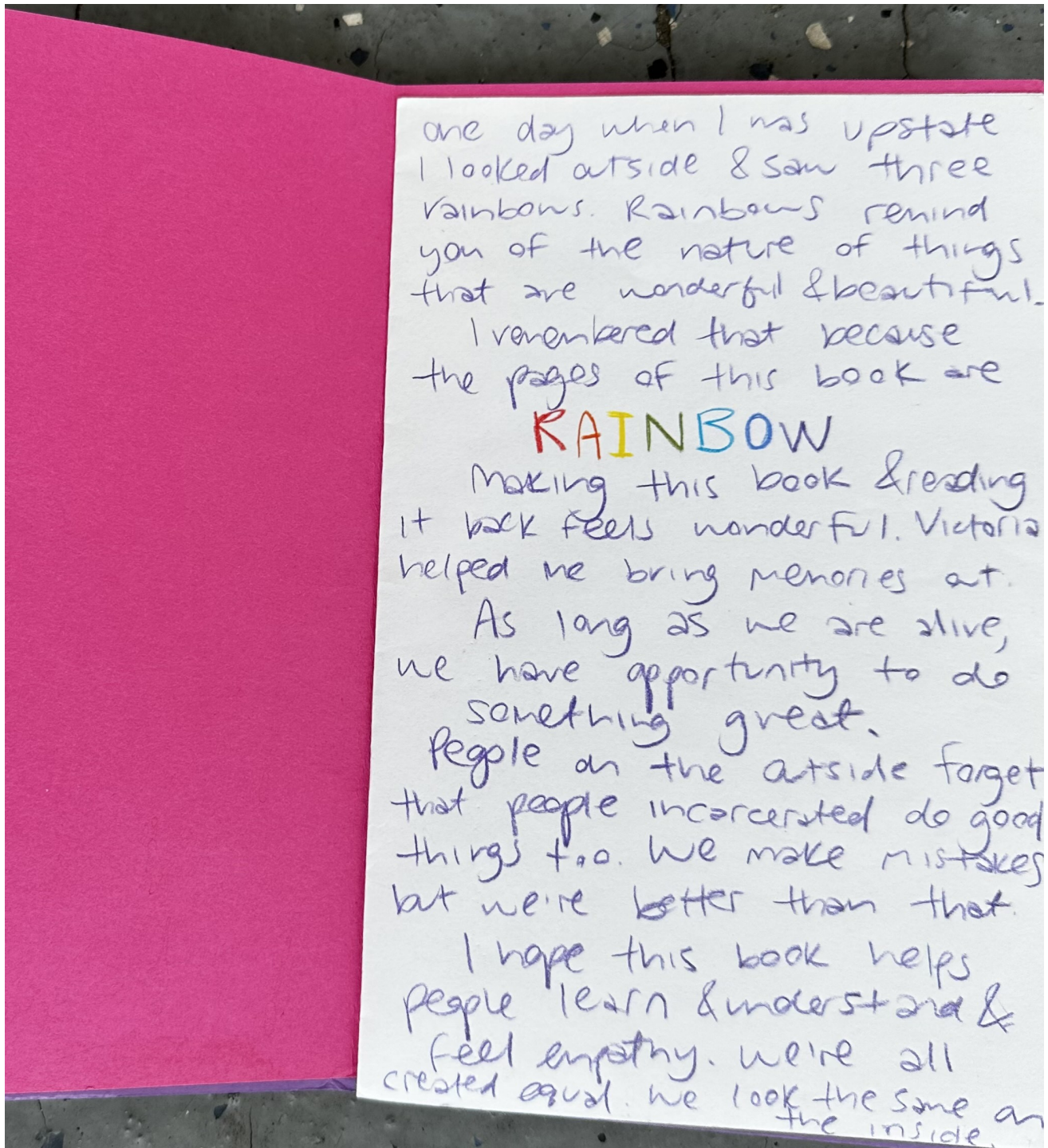
Victor C.

*"I am a Puerto Rican artist from New York City. I graduated with a Master's Degree from New Paltz University, where I had a radio show and many friends. I enjoy singing, dancing, drumming, making art, and bringing joy to those who I meet. I am grateful to share my story, and hope that it helps people learn and gain empathy for those who are incarcerated."*

Listen to the original spoken word audio recording of  
 "The Book of Victor," written and performed by Victor C.  
 on Bloomberg Connects



Victor C. developed his autobiographical work, "The Book of Victor," over several art therapy sessions. During these sessions, therapists encouraged patients to reflect on formative life events, create a narrative that encapsulates them, and then document their stories in handmade paper books and audio recordings. This project aimed to help patients self-reflect, gain insight into their selves, explore past behaviors, and dream of a brighter future. It also provided an opportunity to highlight the stories of those who are incarcerated and emphasize the importance of their journeys.



## Happy Tears (Thank God You're Here)

*Song by DaceNuke and Keith G.*

Ever thought in a million years  
We would overcome our fears  
These are happy tears  
Thank God you're here  
We have innate power  
You're a blooming flower  
We hope you see clear  
Thank god you're here

As all my thoughts pace  
No time to waste  
Cut to the chase  
Sharp like a knife  
Fixin these problems  
In my life  
Tired of a n environment of folks living  
trife  
I'm focus on stayin on the right path  
But my process aint finish, like a rough  
draft  
Remember those days we was  
Young and it felt good to laugh  
Wantin to grow up fast  
Hard times shall past  
The law could trap body  
Not my mind and soul

Keepin my head up in this  
System out of control  
Tryin to overcome adversity with  
Obstacles in the way  
Changin my mindset is the only way  
Until I'm set free one day  
We all learn from our mistakes, we all  
say

Day by day, step by step  
Make good decisions, quite as kept  
People make mistakes, only god can  
judge us  
Even though times are rough, stay  
hopeful as you must  
Life goes on so don't give up yet  
Day by day, step by step

Yesterday  
I made a mistake  
I wish I could crumble it up  
Like a page out of my notebook  
And throw it away  
And start anew  
Today I want to leave my mark  
I pray I don't mess up  
And leave a bad impression  
On eternity

*"Me and a fellow inmate, that also did a spoken word piece, decided to create a song out of poems we wrote. We felt that there was more to say during this difficult time. So this song, 'Happy Tears (Thank God You're Here),' is a message to those who can relate."*

- DaceNuke

*"The hook and chorus in 'Happy Tears' is to uplift those going through any type of problem or dilemma. Life sometimes may be hard, but you're not in this alone. You have the ability to inspire and give hope to others. Working with DaceNuke, he was able to describe in an artistic way the feelings and emotions that so many people go through. His perspective is well admired."*

- Keith G.

Dace Nuke and Keith G. overcame perceived obstacles and limitations during the creation of these collaborative artworks. Both are skilled with words and began their process with poetry. Although they had never considered themselves visual artists, they found inspiration through sharing their written works with one another. In a creative volley, one artist's words inspired the other's—one artist's answer to the challenge to identify imagery and symbolism within their poem inspired the other to do the same. Completing a full circle, both artists came together to write a song using their individual poems and words inspired by their visual creations and their shared experiences. Use the QR code to listen to "Happy Tears, Thank God You're Here" while viewing the artists' corresponding artworks on pages 12-13.





"The colors in the painting symbolizes African American culture. Still to this day black men take up most of the population in prison in the United States, so this poem is to uplift the spirits for those in distress, of any ethnicity, incarcerated or going through life issues."

Untitled  
DaceNuke

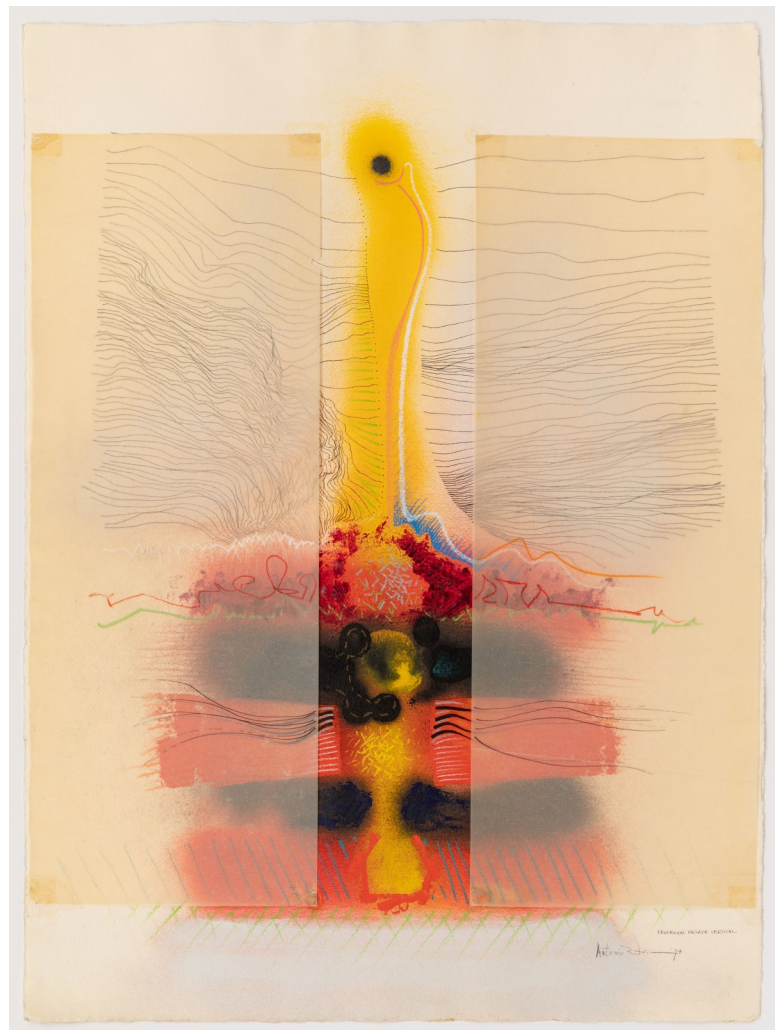
This piece by Antonio Navia, a Puerto Rican conceptual artist, bears striking similarities to the artworks by Keith G and DaceNuke. From the color combinations, to the structure and form, to the layered materials, an undeniable visual conversation emerges. The layered landscapes of all three pieces seem to draw the eye upward in a hopeful manner while inviting the viewer to explore alternative visual direction within the works, a contrast suggesting coexisting truths in differing perspectives. Navia often explores the intersection of art, science, and psychology in his work; the same can be said for those practicing and participating in art therapy. According to Navia, there are "two kinds of artists: those who create new world and those that portray the ones already known—creators and interpreters." In dialogue with each other, all three artists seem to question the direction of their known worlds, envisioning and creating a new world of growth, movement, hope, and alternative perspectives.

Source: Manuel Pérez Lizano, *Arte Contemporáneo en Puerto Rico 1950-1983*, Cerámica, Escultura, Pintura, Universidad Central de Bayamón, Ediciones Cruz Anzota, 1985

## Proyexion Paisaje Vertical

Antonio Navia, 1972

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine



*"Flowers are like people: They're delicate, beautiful, unique.*

*They need to be taken care of. The name of this project is 'Flowers of Hope.' One flower for the beginning of life, one flower for the present, the last flower for the future. The whole collage is made of crumpled paper: mistakes, right turns and left turns. It all comes together in the Bigger Picture called life."*



Flowers of Hope  
Keith G.,  
with assistance from  
Jose C., Leonides L.,  
Tyshe N., and Sakr S.



Untitled  
Mitchell R.

*"After you've proven yourself sometime it better to leave the situation rather than stay and make things worse for what it worth. Art expands the imagination & sets you free. It's a way of expressing yourself. It's good for your health."*

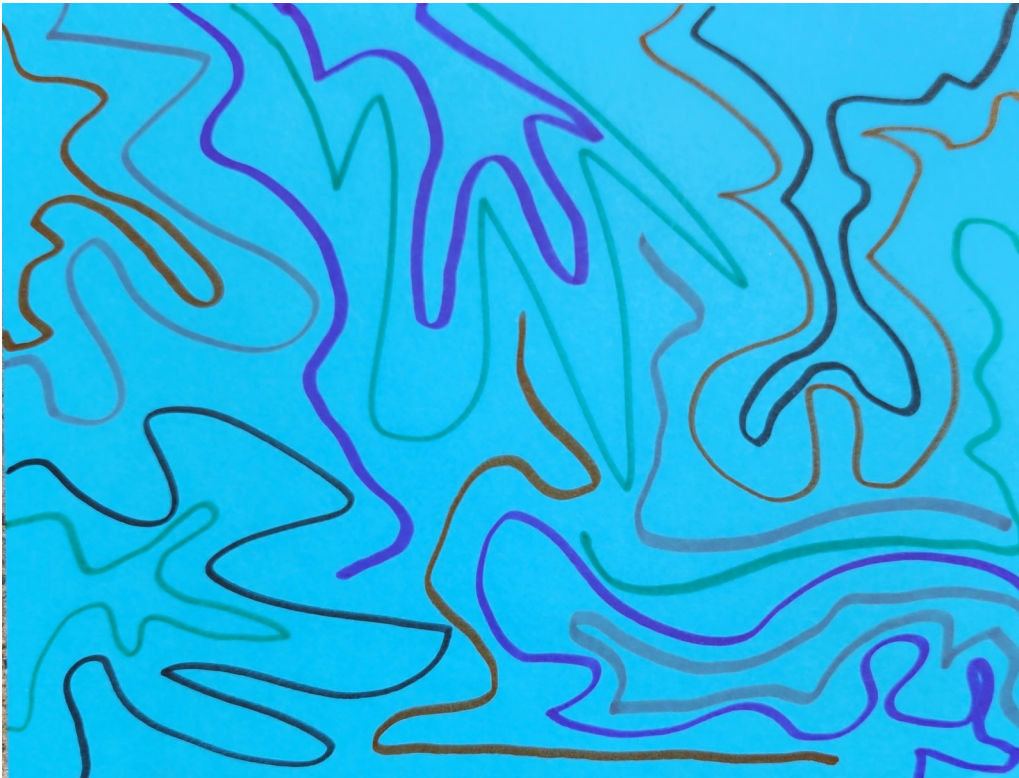


Summer Rain  
Saint Jermaine



Saint Jermaine  
2023 ©

Untitled

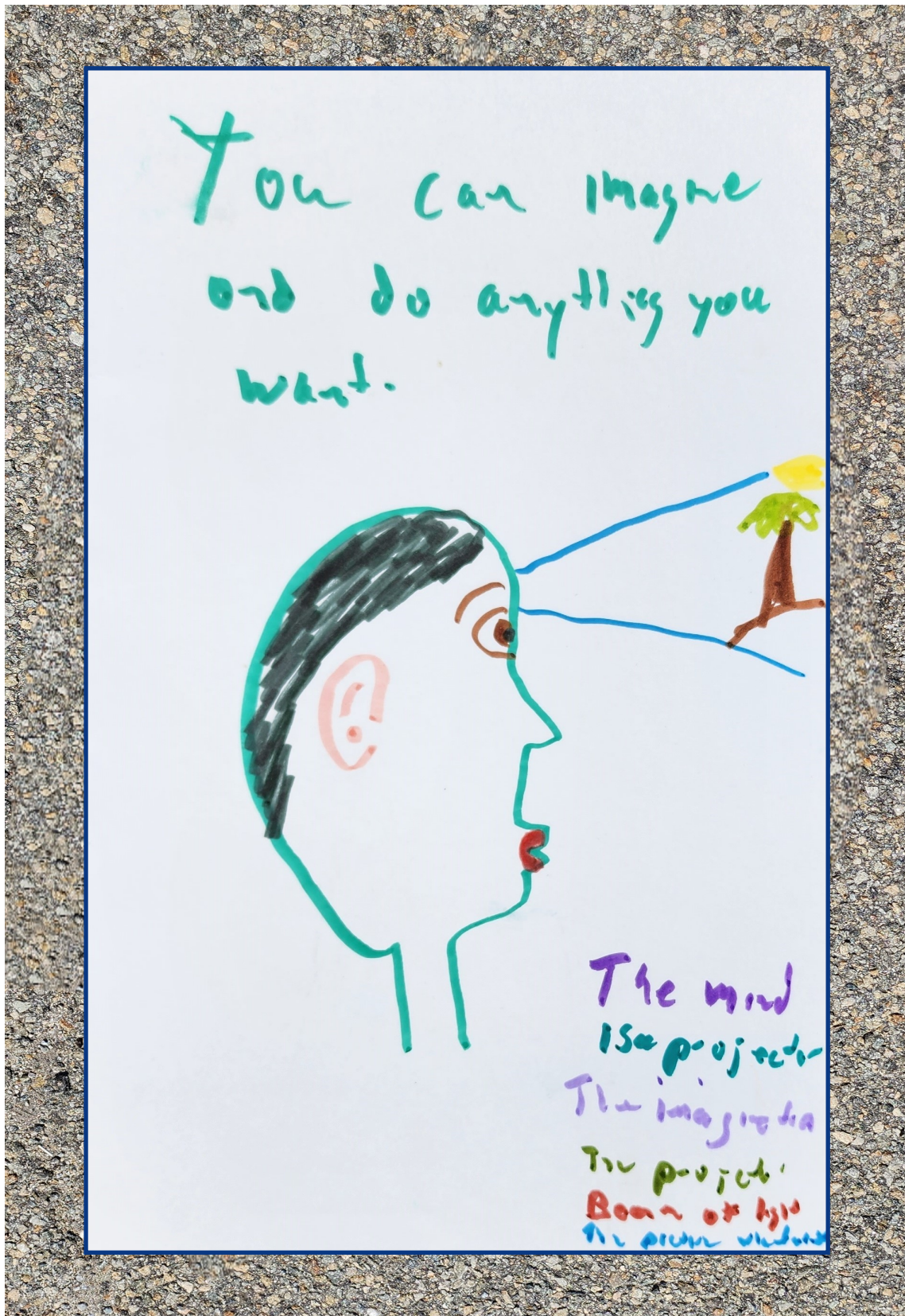


Designful Coloristics  
Rasheem M.

*"This piece is about combining different designs and colors in one picture. This piece is special to me because it helps to recognize the uniqueness of art, colors, and designs."*



Untitled  
Ronald L.



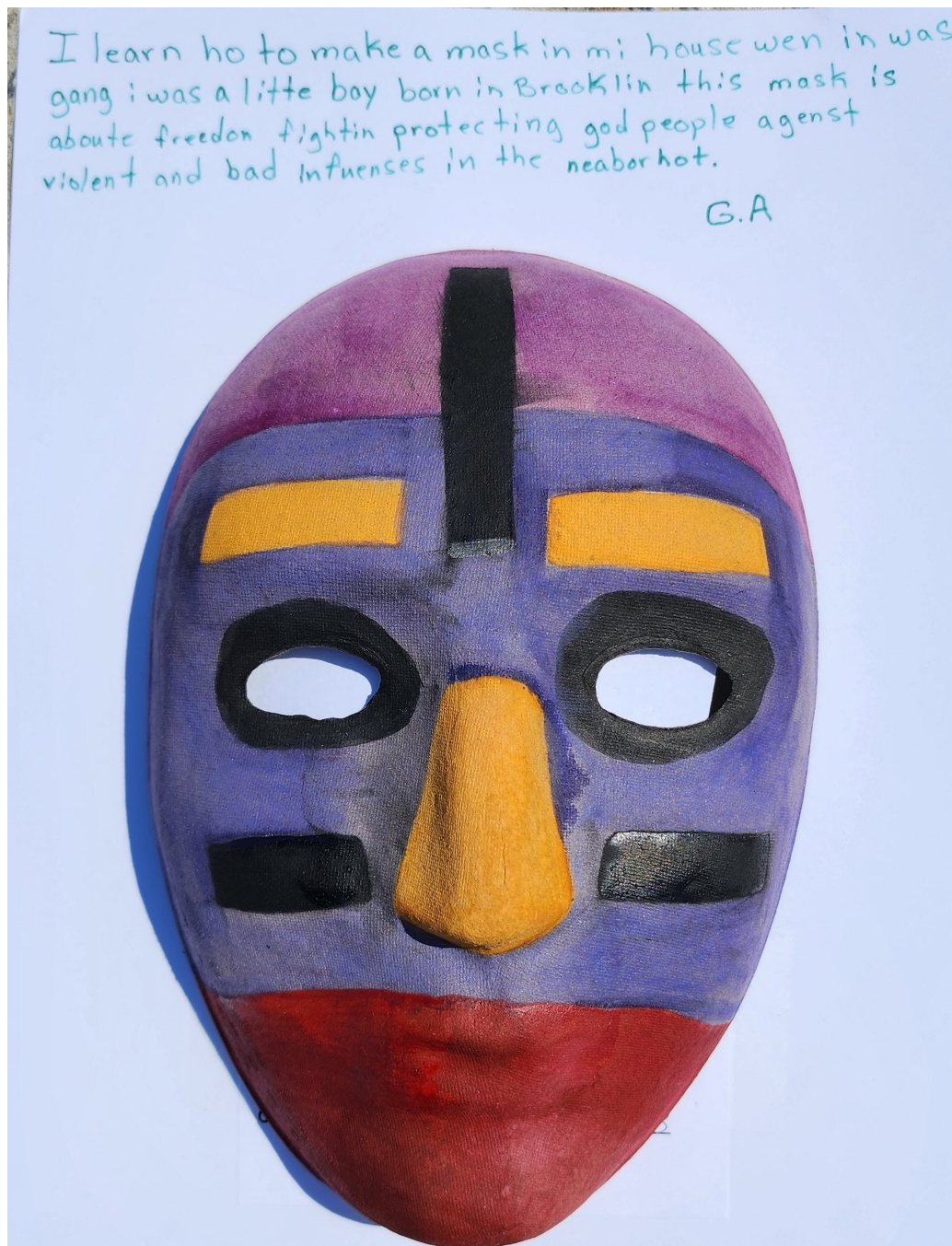
"The mind is a powerful tool for change but it must be exercised to be able to do it easily. Whatever you practice good or evil will pull you in that direction, so think positive good thoughts."

-Jim C.

## Lucid Stranger

In the somnolent vision I  
Can't hold on to myself  
I don't know what I am  
Or who I'm looking for through  
Some great flashing  
Carnival of  
Blue-green  
Funeral light  
That seems to  
Want to wake up so badly  
Terrified of nothingness and  
Whatever I may have un-become and  
With an unexpected breath  
The dream changes again  
My eyeballs multiply  
Sharp gleaming spines divide  
Arm and leg joint as  
Wings sprout out  
And I realize that I am flying  
Following the scent of golden blossoms  
As an insect singing lullabies of  
Some lifetime's worth of sand  
In a bottomless hourglass  
A child of a  
Semi-real oblivion of  
Chronic waves of  
Lucid strangeness

-Daniel V.



**Warrior's Mask**  
Anonymous

Anonymous created "Warrior Mask" during a group art therapy session facilitated by creative art directives under the themes of self-care, emotional safe space, and self-image. While participants expressed different levels of acceptance and readiness based on their unique diagnoses and history of substance use, the session provided them an emotionally safe, therapeutic environment in which they could express themselves.



Nando P., Melbourne G.

This mandala was freely created within a pre-drawn circle. The circular frame helped patients increase their focus and containment while decreasing their stress.

Papermaking is an ancient and sacred practice that has facilitated the dissemination of knowledge throughout history. In papermaking art therapy groups, patients on Rikers Island have made by hand individual sheets of paper from recycled wood pulp and natural dyes, learning a new skill while engaging in this calming sensory process. They have decorated the dried sheets with imagery, poetry, mantras, and other embellishments.

By hand-creating paper that later serves as a blank canvas, patients are involved in the entirety of the artmaking process; this grants them a sense of control, purpose, and self-esteem so often diminished within the carceral system. It also serves to reconnect patients "on the inside" with the natural world, allowing them to touch, smell, and work with organic materials.



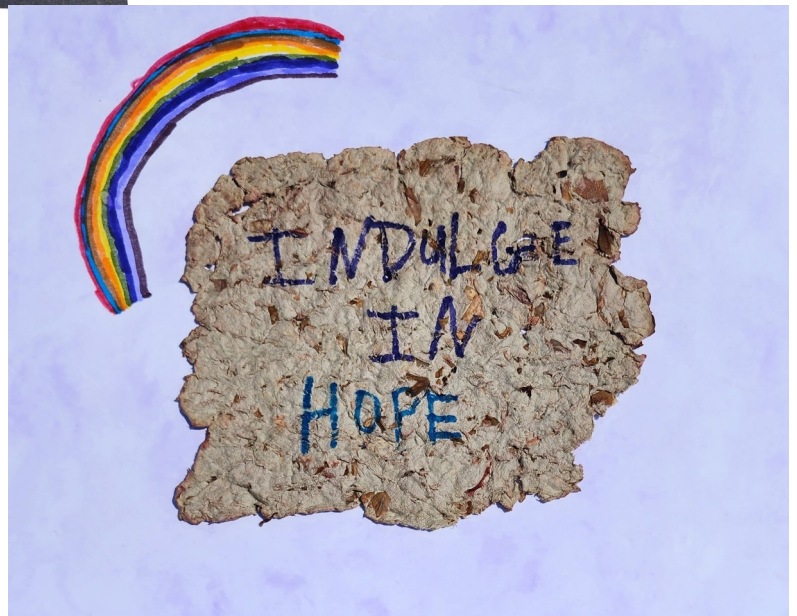
Untitled  
Wayne J.



Untitled  
Stanley

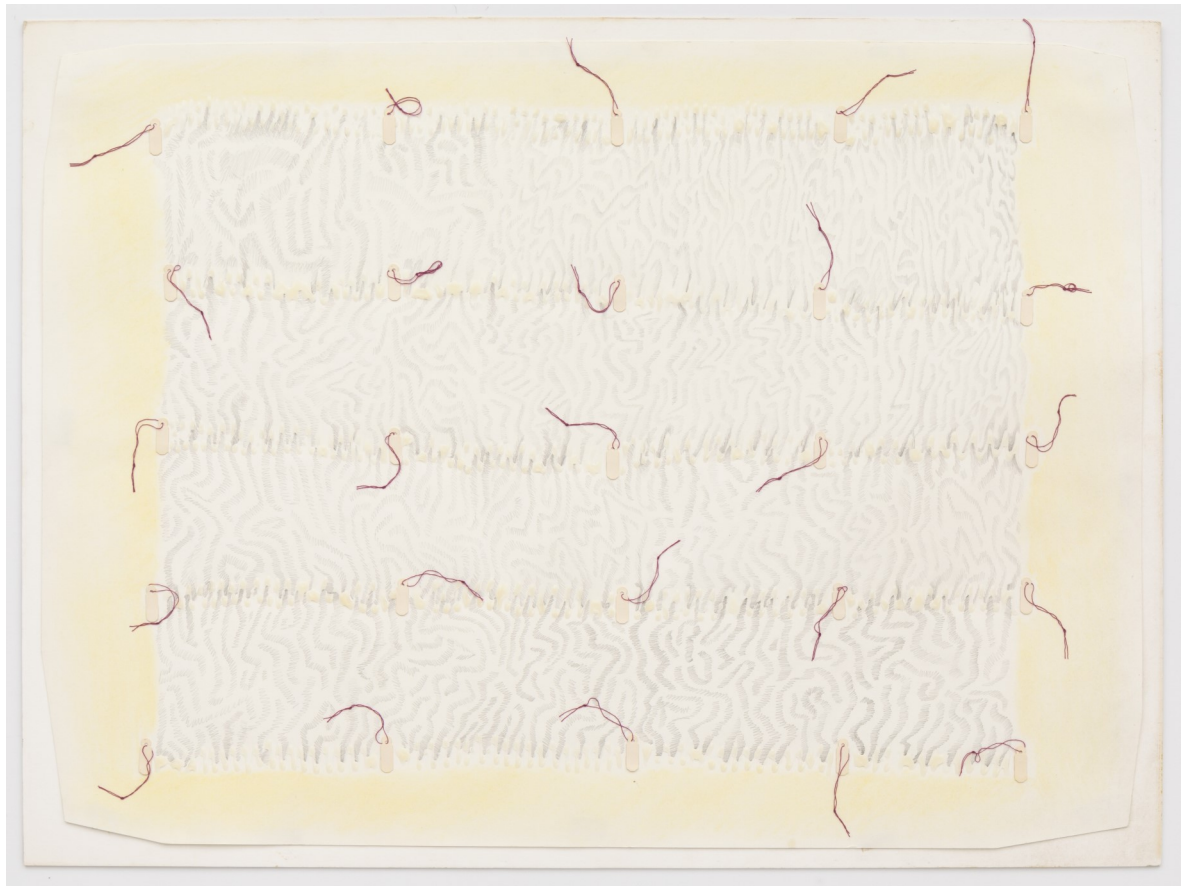


Aurora L.



Stress Free  
Wayne J.

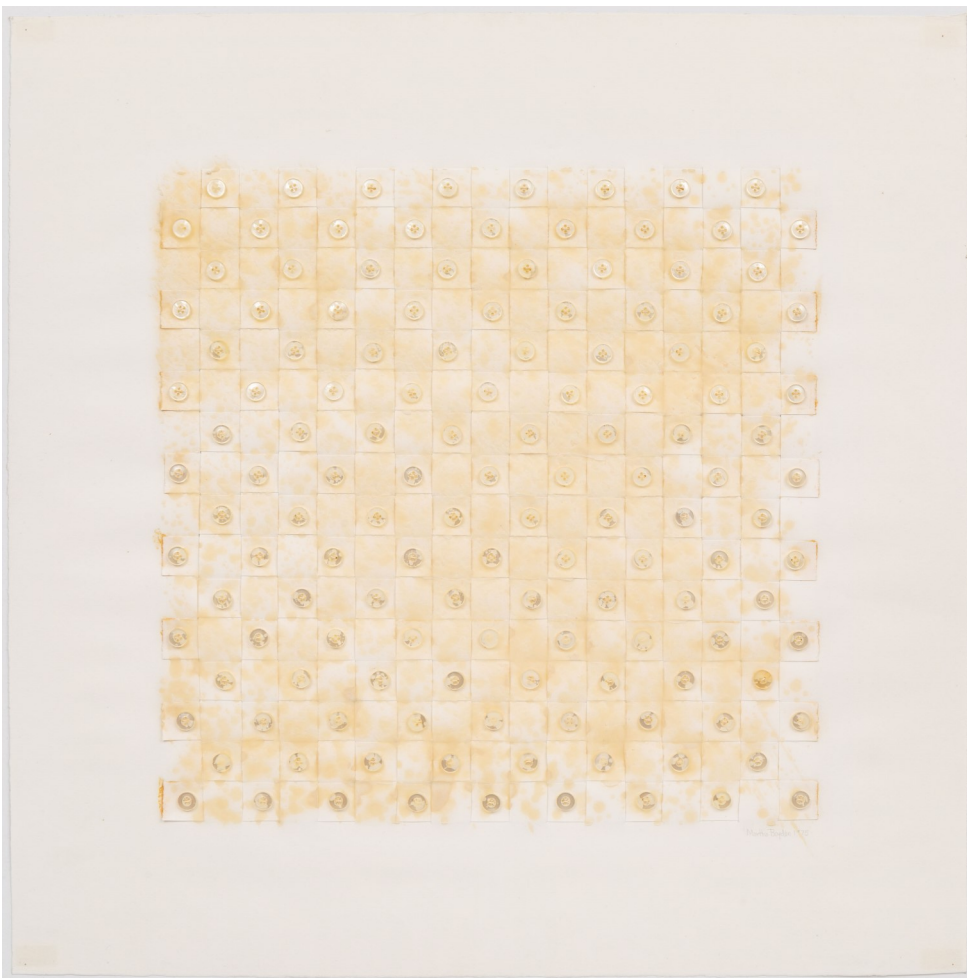
Taylor M.



## Untitled

Cynthia Carlson, n.d.

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals, Arts in Medicine



The applied media artworks of Cynthia Carlson and Martha Boyden are paired with works from Rikers that also use found and recycled materials. Together, the pieces all share a textured, tactile, and repetitively soothing aesthetic.

## Buttons

Martha Boyden, 1975

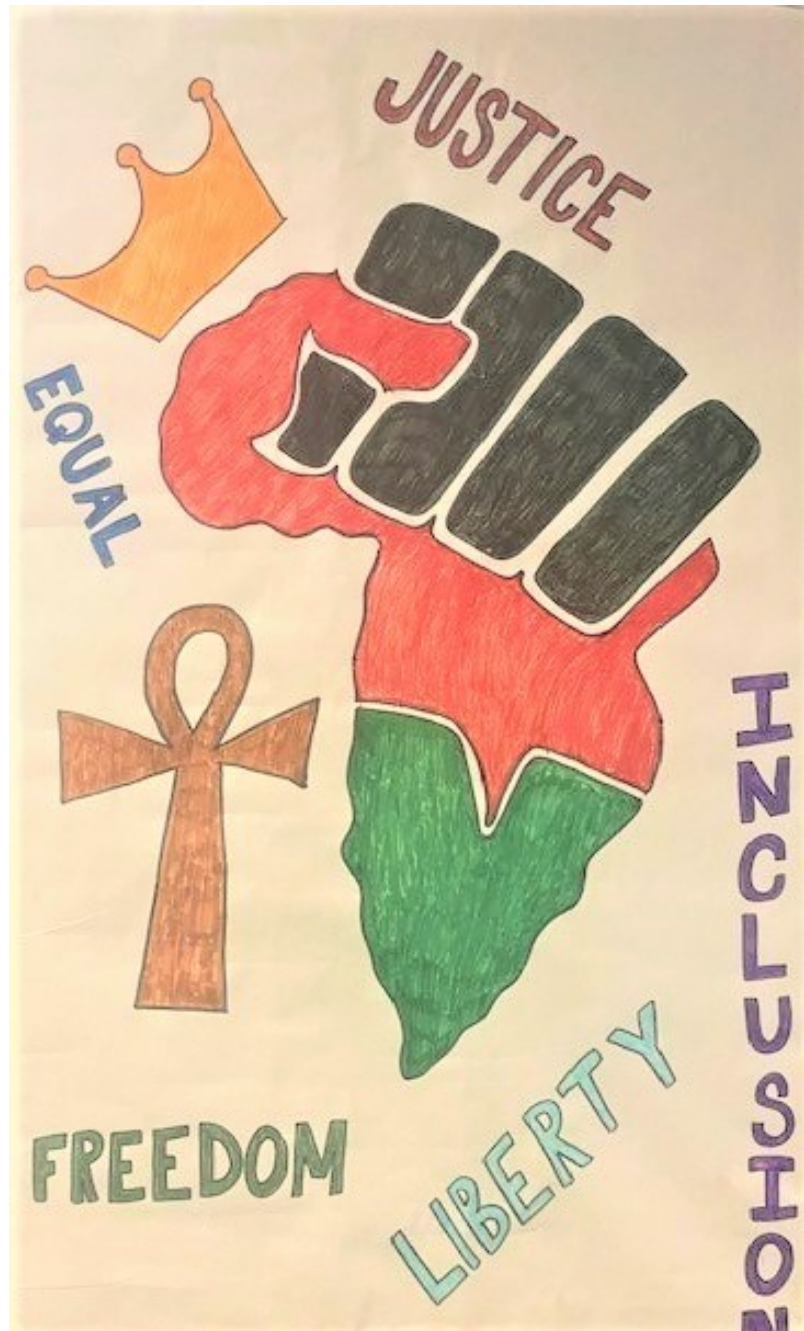
Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals, Arts in Medicine



George V.

For patients, the act of creating art while exploring the role of “the artist” facilitates emotional exploration and regulation, self-expression, visibility, and strengthening of identity and self-esteem. This volcano was a collaborative effort between George V. and his therapist. George has found true comfort, joy, and purpose in creating art and expressed an interest in learning how to create work in a new medium. When he first began building his paper mâché structure, he felt hesitant, discouraged, inadequate and dependent. As the project progressed, George demonstrated greater independence, agency, self-confidence, and pride in the work. Initially dormant, George’s strength-based perception activated and progressed beautifully, erupting in his identity at the end of the project. This piece is on display alongside a multitude of other artworks in a housing unit in a jail facility, where it can be appreciated and act as representation of patients’ lived experiences.

Patients in one housing unit work worked together to decorate the area, thereby boosting morale and supporting a therapeutic milieu. On a monthly basis, they decorated the unit to celebrate upcoming holidays and reflect their own interests. In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black History Month, patients expressed a desire to create a paper mural for the unit that centered their identities from a strength-based lens and reflected themes of culture, justice, and reclaiming the narrative. Collaboration on the mural brought patients a sense of excitement, pride, and collectivism. They ultimately gifted the mural to patients in another housing area, where it could be appreciated.



Brian N. and George V.



Shirt  
Andre A.

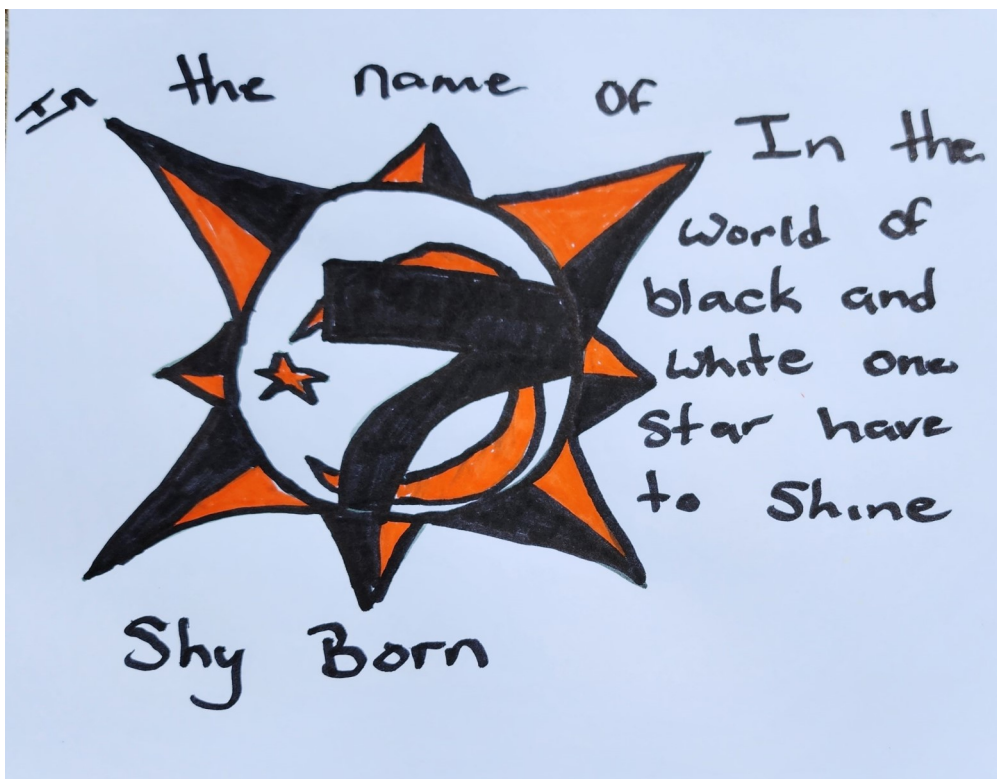
*"Life is a portrait, a total expression, of journey, of viewing experiences and hopes of perspectives of any realms."*





Sunny Day  
Franklin O.

*"This is something peaceful to help you relax."*



Shy Born

*"I help people  
This flag is ours  
My name is Shy born  
I been five precentor  
all my life."*



## Resilience & Struggle

Kimarley G.

"Good affirmations in life go a long way. Follow your dreams and get good goals."

Safe Space  
Joyce P.



Remembrance  
Anonymous



Listen to the author, Carlos R., along with fellow performers Super Teddy and Day Murda, on Bloomberg Connects.

### Feel Alright

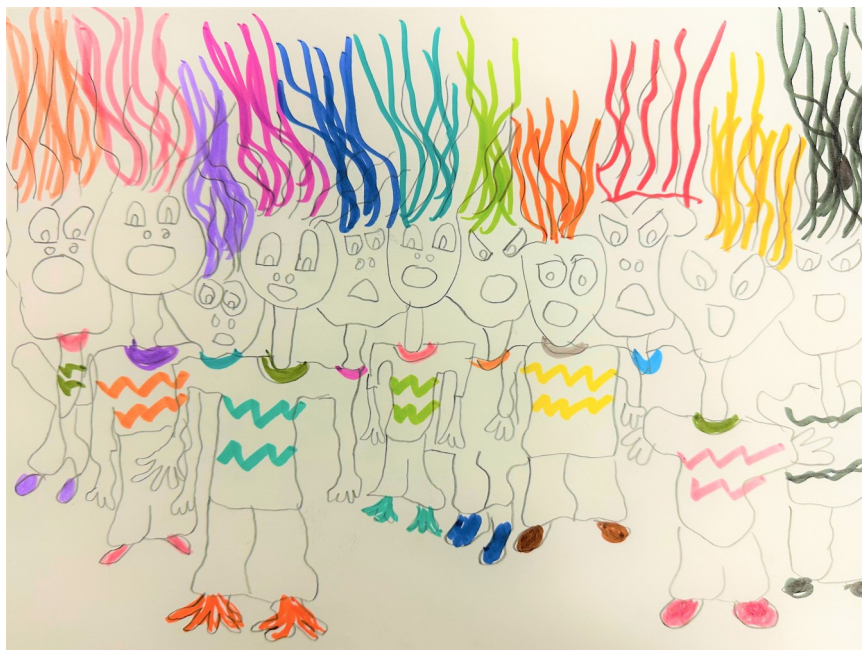
My words is going to be resonating so hard -  
Devastating as I'm detonating my bars,  
Is like a nuclear bomb that's charge -  
With an arsenal so harsh,  
It splits and rips apart even the stars -  
A savage clashing leviathan,  
My bites harm cause damage a rampage leaving scars,  
Riots -  
Establish my classic empire relinquish the fire,  
Poisonous white charm,  
First stare at my entire flare  
Delinquent thoughts eloquently get scared off  
Deficiency ain't efficiently any more  
Extinguish in angst anguish my linguistic;  
Is a worst threat nightmare temptation.  
But following this vindicates my death,  
No escape & I fall.  
I found myself in hate and a hole,  
Overwhelmed by the call of a different realm,  
Hell's road,  
I admit I can't overpower this at all,  
Tell Law that I quit -  
Roller coaster slaughter depowering me my wits  
Oh Lord stuck in luck but I'm just hovering over will power,  
Looking forward to the power periodically -  
I'm on a flower looking dungeon chaotically.  
Sunk in until my knees turn pink burnt crisp drastically -  
My skin's limbs torn in between one string hung in bone thing.  
I'm dead my mind, body, and in my head,

I bled thoughts consciously tyrannical,  
Non-admirable,  
Till Christ got me through out my despair, soul in tears –  
Past is tear –  
Speculate...  
Separate my words I dare –  
Elevate doors and chairs,  
Levitate your hairs.  
If constant fear  
Just pray to God.

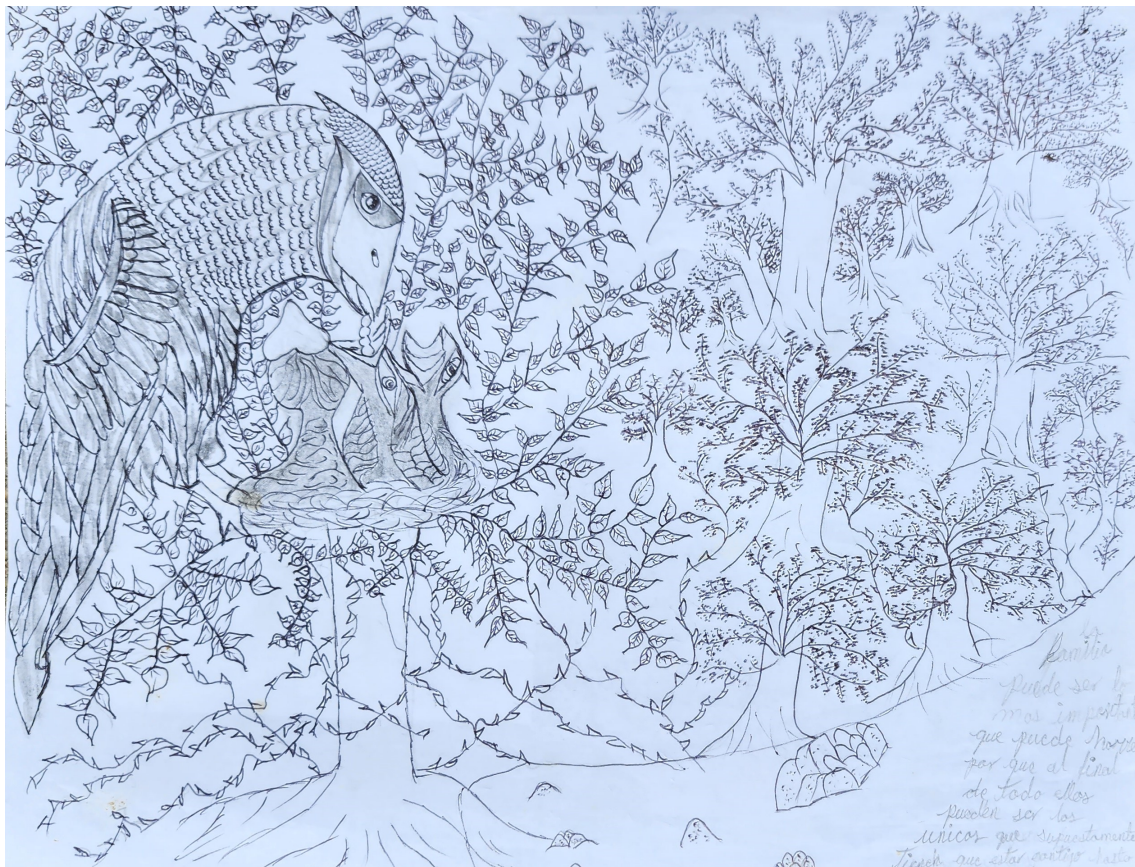
- Written and performed by Super Teddy, Carlos R., and Day Murda

*"It was a fun experience. I had so much fun as many of us started to sing and rap. My first feeling was anxiety, then I felt a bit nervous, butterflies in my stomach, soon I was overwhelmed with excitement. I would love to do this over again and again and again."*

-Carlos R



Untitled  
Almond L.



"The power/ability of drawing helps me to express a little of what I feel. Of the loss I've had due to the mistakes I've committed and learning to value more the little that I had."

-Audencio N.





The 90's  
Israel F.

### Mitigated Applications

Void where prohibited  
 The loss of paradise  
 Whose mortal taste begot  
 Some short sweet  
 Taste of sunrise  
 And it would seem  
 These days that we've  
 Forgotten the meaning  
 Forgotten the fragile grace  
 And traded our beautiful faces  
 For a like on a Facebook page.

-Daniel V.



Story Tree concept sketch  
Anthony W.

## Story Trees - The Forest

This collaborative project grew out of an Expressive Therapies Summit workshop on Celtic Wisdom that incorporated indigenous practice into psychotherapy and included working with images of trees. Inspired by this workshop, the image of a stained-glass tree was discussed and explored by the drama therapist with the art therapist. The concept was actualized using a small 8.5" x 11" prototype of a tree to see how patients would respond to the intervention of incorporating their family roots, their story, and aspirations for the future into the tree. The large story tree (30" x 40") is a replication of the concept tree and was implemented in a housing area where both the drama therapist and art therapist were assigned to work. The large graffiti tree (30" x 40"), implemented in a second housing area, sought to capture more spontaneous expressions of grounding and positive affirmations for the future to generate hope.



Story Tree concept sketch for scale



Story Tree  
See pages 38-39



Graffiti Tree  
See pages 40-41



Story Tree  
Anonymous, John S., Roy D., Tobey W.,  
Paul D., Ricardo S., Omar G., Victor C., Louis L.

I am from Staten Island, NY. I live the lifestyle of a comfortable family, living alone most of my life with my elderly mother. This is my biggest goal is to do something for me every day.

John S.

Today is a nice day like a tree to life, to not be barked up-on like bark.

Ricardo S.

My name is Tobey W. I'm from the Bronx Edenwald Projects that's where I grew up. Playing basketball there give me the spirit to go anywhere I can so I really enjoyed playing there.

Tobey W.

This story begins on March 22, 1957 at Bellevue Hospital. Things took a turn when I got caught up unnecessarily because I got greedy and wanted \$40,000 in 1999. I dream of freedom. May God bless the world for the rest of Eternity. Thank you.

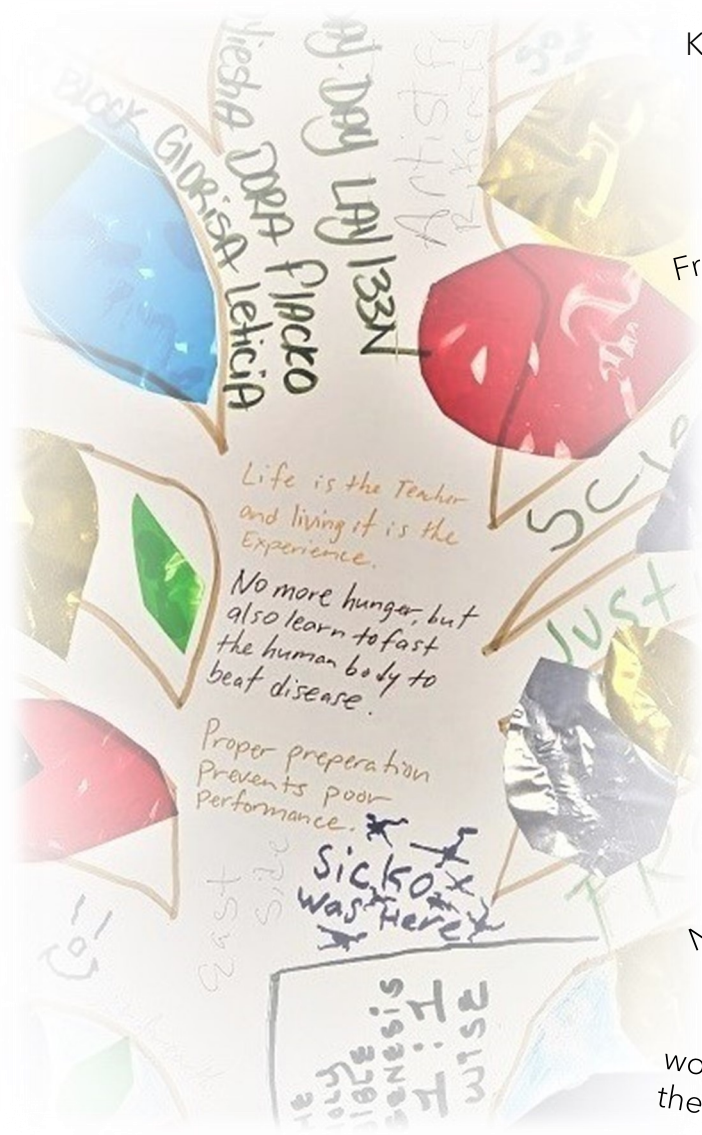
Victor C.

I was born in Brooklyn best borough in the world. What brought me here was money, drugs, and friends. We all believe in somebody I believe in God.

Paul D.

I was born in British Guyana in the year of 1972 November 28 on a Tuesday. I grew up in Bedford Stuyvesant Brooklyn. I was too embarrassed to go back to the same drug program. I wanted to stop using and there is no better place to stop than here. A love life a significant other.

Roy D.



Keep hope live

People Magic

Justice

Freedom

Teach children certain survival skills like how to swim and fire campfire with certain rocks and twigs.

Happy birthday to everybody

Artist from Rikers Island

The Holy Bible  
Genesis 1:1  
Wise

No more hunger but also learn to fast the human body to beat disease

I am Browning color book

Proper preparation prevents poor performance

No more hunger

In Brooklyn East

Daly Ave B.X.

Tonight would be bright if the sun came out

Sicko was here

Burrell Millicent  
9-11-01

West Side Story Tony

New York thing to come, brotherly love, god, long life, good life

The mind, body & soul

The ghost of NY from Crown Heights Brooklyn

A human being with human rights, no race, no color, no creed,  
The love I have for different subjects in life,  
The first element in life which is air (wind),  
Also the second element in life which I love so much is water

Love, peace & hair grease

That the whole world will come under one agreement, work on legalizing prostitution to use those revenues to build a better America. All leaders to come to one agreement for earth.



Can't stop with you and I, crack is whack, is it not that?



**Graffiti Tree**  
 Angel S., Duwayne B., Stanley C., Haim F., David E., Gino C.,  
 Tyrone T., Franz C., Jeffrey S., Wilmer C., Alex F., Richard T.

Almond L..



Andre A.



CHS' creative arts therapy program offers both open studio-based art therapy sessions and directive-based groups, with open-studio sessions focusing on self-expression, decision-making, and emotional regulation. Always bursting with creativity, Andre found some peace of mind in open studio-style sessions. Andre's artwork often embeds a deeper meaning within its playful imagery. He was always using his environment as inspiration for his creations, taking, for example, a coffee-stained sheet of paper and turning it into a masterpiece.

The imagery in "Ain't Never Gonna Grow Old" and displayed works by Almond L., Andre A., and Gemini is complex and full of hidden meaning upon a deeper look—like life itself. These images illustrate some of the things we hold on to as we age but never quite "grow up."



4/20 "ain't never gonna grow old"

C Abramson

## Ain't Never Gonna Grow Old

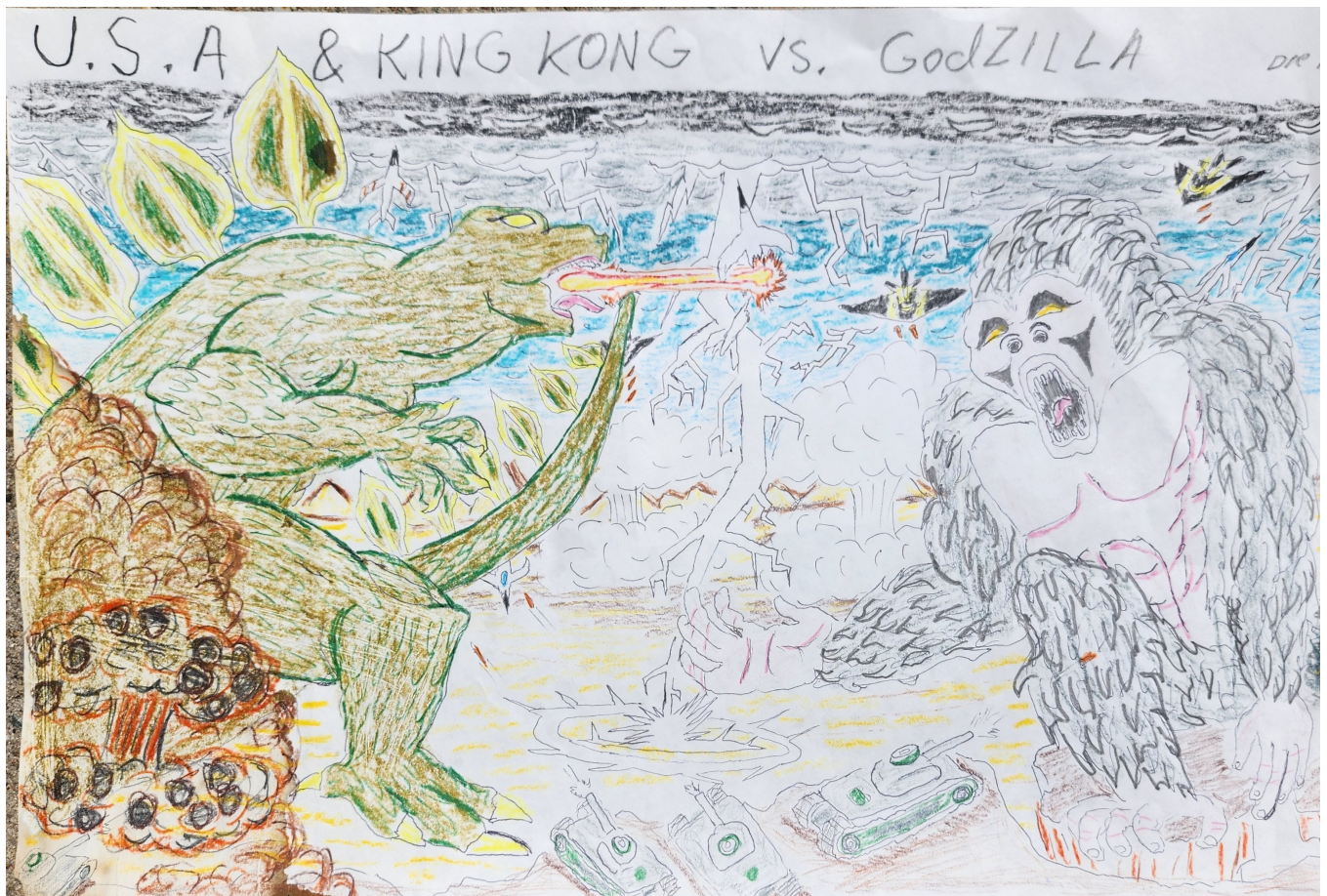
Charles Abramson, n.d.

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine



Gemini

*"My artwork is a reflection of who I am as a person; diversified and multi-faceted. For more than 30 years, I've taken my artwork so seriously, however it is only through my current incarceration that I realized that ART is my whole and 1000 percent reason of living."*



Andre A.



Andre A.



Listen to the author, Angel S., narrate his play with fellow performers Anthony B. and Duwayne B. on Bloomberg Connects.

## 23 Years Later Angel S.

*"This scene takes place in Irvington, NJ. I'm on a bus leaving Columbia, South Carolina to spend a day and a half in Irvington, N.J. with a woman I haven't seen for 23 years. My last memory of her was us both in Seward Park High School together leaving school riding the 4 train together. I would get off on 125th street in Manhattan and she would get off on Mount Eden train stop in the Bronx. I was 16 years old at the time me and Stacy were in high school and she was 17 years old. I was in 10th grade and she was in 11th grade."*

*(Manhattan, NY. Stacy is waiting to pick up Angel in her car to drive to her home in Irvington, N.J. Place of pick-up is Canal Street. The year is 2017, month of February.)*

**Angel:** You finally made it after an hour and half wait.

**Stacy:** I was nervous and deciding was I making the wrong choice.

**Angel:** I'm happy you made the right choice after I waited over an hour for you, but I would have waited a day just to see you physically one more time. And even if you didn't want me to come over to your house I would of went for a café for us to have some coffee sit down and talk.

*(The car door closes and they drive away.)*

**Stacy:** So how you've been all these years Angel.

**Angel:** I've been great my life is not the same as others, but I appreciate my journey brought me close to you after thinking about you for years. I left school in 1994 and I lost concentration on what was important to me.

**Stacy:** And what was important to you Angel?

**Angel:** You was important to me Stacy.

**Stacy:** How so? Hold off on that answer look on my left Seward Park High School. Let's get out and take a picture of me in front of the school.

*(Stacy poses in front of the school while Angel takes her phone and takes a picture of her. They get back in the car. The car door slams and Stacy and Angel are driving back on the road to Stacy's home.)*

Stacy: *(aggressively)* So how was I so important to you Angel?

Angel: All I wanted was to play basketball and always have you watch me in the stands play and when you performed your modern dance on stage I wanted to always be in the audience watching you.

Stacy: Are you serious?

Angel: Yes and why are you so aggressive towards me?

Stacy: Hold on -

*(Stacy puts her phone on loud speaker while she calls her girlfriend.)*

Michelle: Hello Stacy

Stacy: Hey Michelle I have a question to ask.

Michelle: Go ahead.

Stacy: Do I seem aggressive at times?

Michelle: Yes Stacy you can be aggressive at times. What's going on? Why do you ask?

Stacy: I'm talking to a friend I didn't see in years and that's what he told me.

Michelle: *(laughing)* You'll be okay Stacy.

Stacy: *(laughing)* Thanks I'll talk to you later. Bye Michelle.

Michelle: Bye Stacy.

Angel: I'm not here to prove anything to you, but I respect how you feel.

Stacy: Same here, so before we get to my place we are stopping at Walmart to get the food you wanted to cook for me.

Angel: Sure I am still up for the challenge.

Stacy: Here goes Walmart on the right hand side. When we get out it's only a five minute drive to my house.

Angel: Cool Stacy I can show you my cooking skills. Since you said you like Spanish food and I am Puerto Rican. I'll show you how to make this dish I'm going to make.

*(They shop at Walmart and drive to Stacey's home in NJ. We drive into the garage Angel get out grabs the groceries and they walk up the stairs to her house. She opens the door with her key.)*

Angel: This is a beautiful place you have it reminds me of a bachelorette home.

Stacy: You funny Angel you have jokes. I have a son that's 9 years old. He's with his father for the weekend.

*(Angel is putting the groceries on the kitchen table.)*

**Angel:** I know you have a son. We talked about him. I didn't forget and that he likes football. What amazes me is how his father broke up with an amazing woman.

**Stacy:** You find me amazing Angel, WOW! All these years not near each other I thank you for that.

**Angel:** You're welcome my love.

**Stacy:** Settle in Angel. Have a seat. Would you like a shot of Grey Goose vodka with me?

**Angel:** Yes please.

**Stacy:** How do you like it?

**Angel:** Only ice please.

*(Stacy is making the drinks and walks towards the living room where Angel is.)*

**Stacy:** Here you go Angel.

**Angel:** Thank you. You are so kind.

**Stacy:** While I was in college Angel I had a breakdown over a relationship and I was put in a psych ward for 14 days. That relationship really crushed me. I had to get a letter from the mental health doctors to give to my school why I had missed those days in class. It was hard for the school to excuse me, but I was able to make it happen. My diagnosis is Bipolar depressive mood.

**Angel:** I let you go for you to come back to me, and two men so far let down my princess.

**Stacy:** You are so lovable Angel.

**Angel:** Thank you. Stacy: In the year 1999 is when I graduated from college with my bachelors. Shortly after that I had a job in Manhattan where I met your brother one day going home and I told him I said hello to you and I asked about you.

**Angel:** Yes I do remember that my brother had seen you in 2000 and he did give me that message. I was into so much at that time that it didn't dawn on me to get with you for a conversation.

**Stacy:** Everyone walks their path and eventually two will meet up. I'm happy as well we met up and I'm not ashamed of you.

**Angel:** You know how to make me blush. I'm 39 years old and you make me feel like a teenager. Years have gone and you still beautiful to me.

**Stacy:** Oh I'm so fat Angel I don't weigh the same and I like to eat.

**Angel:** I'm not judging you, but your imperfection is perfect to me. You have a little belly and more thick in the hips since high school. I don't see nothing wrong with you. Let me use the bathroom and put this drink down and start this meal I have for you.

**Stacy:** Sounds good. I am waiting.

**Angel:** If you want Stacy you can put the ground turkey in a pan for me with a teaspoon of oil while I use the bathroom.

**Stacy:** Sure Angel.

*(Angel returns from the bathroom.)*

**Angel:** Thank you for setting up the ground turkey for me Stacy.

**Stacy:** *(laughing)* Not a problem Angel, but you lost two points out of 100% because I had to set it up.

**Angel:** *(laughing)* Wow! I'm not mad at you. What I'm more mad about Stacy is how I lost focus on you and basketball in high school. I remember I had your phone number and I wanted to take you out. I had no money at 16 years old and I didn't know how to talk to my father about women because we never had conversations about that. So I was kind of shy and embarrassed to ask my father for money.

**Stacy:** So what things you did talk to your father about?

**Angel:** Me and my father talked about TV shows, baseball because that's the sport he liked and we talked about God and the Bible.

**Stacy:** My father left out of my life when I was 10 years old.

**Angel:** I'm sorry to hear that my love. Just because I had a father in my life doesn't mean that he was present mentally or physically when I needed him the most.

**Stacy:** Why do you say that Angel?

**Angel:** Part of me leaving Seward Park High School after the 10th grade was because I made it to the last out in the basketball varsity tryout and I wasn't put on the team, but my physical handicap brother who was in the 11th grade made the team. I was embarrassed. Not only that I was and still am in love with you and I didn't know how to ask my father for money. So I never came back to Seward Park for 11th

grade and I sold crack-cocaine in my neighborhood with plans to take you out and I got caught up in the money and the rest of the ladies that was around at that time giving me attention. I needed my father to mentally tell my brother that he wasn't going to the NBA and to let your younger brother get that spot on the varsity team.

**Stacy:** I remember your brother on the basketball team in Seward Park. I never thought nothing of it, but I do remember that game in high school when it was the Hispanics against the Varsity team and you was on the Hispanic team and won the game.

**Angel:** *(laughing)* You remember that? That was a good game. Anthony Walker that played for the varsity team lives in my neighborhood. When he found out I left school and was selling drugs he came up to me and was upset at me. I remember how much it crushed me and embarrassed me about my brother on the varsity team. But how I got over it all these years was brain storming and I came up with the idea that maybe the coach was building his self-esteem that you can do anything you put your mind to and look at my brother now married with 3 children. Maybe it worked for my brother and that's what made me forget about the varsity team all those years

*(Angel takes the pan with the ground meat and pours it into a bowl for later use.)*

**Angel:** You know Stacy if I didn't get lost in the world of selling drugs and not being hurt about the varsity team and playing junior varsity until next year I could of spent more time with you and maybe the love of my life would not experience a mental illness or a psyche ward. And I still love you Stacy for everything you've been through and endured.

**Stacy:** You are loving and have great qualities about yourself Angel. Thank you for your compliments and great choice of words

*(Angel gives her a spoon of the seasoned ground turkey.)*

**Stacy:** Whoa! Tastes great. What are you making with this Angel?

**Angel:** I'm making empanadas. It's a Spanish beef patty.

**Stacy:** I can't wait to try it.

**Angel:** Yes we are going to have that with salad made out of romaine lettuce. You are going to like it. But not only are you going to like it, I'm going to show you how to put the patty together known as empanada. Have you even had a cheese Jamaican beef patty?

**Stacy:** Okay we are going to add cheese to do the turkey ground meat empanada. Is this enough cheese Angel?

**Angel:** Yes.

**Stacy:** I'm sorry to hear about your ordeal with the varsity team. Know I understand what you meant when you said you can have a father in your life and not be present physically or mentally there.

**Angel:** You know what else. I played for outside teams and my father never came once to any of my basketball games. Now as I became older, mature and wise it doesn't matter about his support. He kept us from being homeless, but I learned that if I had a child I would be present more, physically and mentally.

**Stacy:** Wise words Angel. One day I'll let you meet my son.

**Angel:** Wonderful that would be nice. Maybe he can teach me about football because I don't watch it.

**Stacy:** What do you want me to do with this I fixed already - made round dough?

**Angel:** You are going to take one spoon or two spoons of ground meat and put it in the center of the round dough and break half of a slice of cheese and put it in the middle as well. Fold the dough in half and then press on the edges of the dough with a fork to close the patty.

**Stacy:** Like this Angel ?

*(Angel comes over to her from the stove to the counter. As soon as Angel walks up to her Stacy gives him a kiss.)*

**Angel:** I wasn't expecting that from you but that was nice. I can go for a hundred of your kisses. Before I lose focus you pressed on the dough the right way, perfect.

**Stacy:** I haven't heard good words from a man in a long time and I never had a man cook for me and show me how to cook what he's making. I feel really special at the moment that's why I gave you a kiss and there's many more where that came from.

*(Now Angel reaches over to her gives her a kiss with his eyes closed.)*

**Angel:** I have many more where that came from as well Stacy

**Stacy:** (blushing, smiling) I'll pour us another shot of vodka.

**Angel:** Thank you babe.

**Angel states the following:**

*In loving memory of Stacy Humphrey. She passed away of an asthma attack on April 11, 2022. She was a dance teacher in an elementary school in Newark, New Jersey and lived in New Jersey as well. In my life time up until 23 years later when I saw Stacy she was the only woman that made me feel like we was together for years, a feeling of Eternity.*

Improvisation is a drama therapy process that leads to a focus on revealing some aspect of our patients' lives. During drama therapy group closure, Angel S. responded that he'd like to write a scene from his life and was encouraged to do so. Each day, he would produce pages of his play and, when the typed pages were returned to him, the content was discussed. He wrote about his girlfriend's mental health difficulties, and he was encouraged to talk about his own problems in the dialogue. Once the play was complete, patients were invited to read the script, and the play was cast and recorded. Patients that were not involved in the performance were the observers, and they helped to minimize the traffic in and out of the dayroom during recording. The final step was to have a performance on the housing area so that others could hear the play. The playwright's response was: "If I knew that my voice sounded that good, I would have gone into radio!"

*"This was very sensitive for me because she was the last person that I wanted to give my all to. This scene plays over and over in my head. It wasn't hard to write because 90 percent of this is actual life words, it was easy. I remembered everything."*

- Angel S.



George V.



The Sun  
Timothy T.

*"The sun explains the representation of glare that shines bright through anything possible in life's experiences. When it blazes the light makes us see things much better in any which way possible. Using the sunlight as our vitamin D and medication that helps shape our feelings each day through the week. We use our bright star every day as a space explorer shines through the rest of the planets. How that has helped make orange and apple juice taste the way it does. Seven days out of the week, shine bright like a diamond gives off warm temperatures that make our weather today."*

The color palettes of Gatewood and Audencio N.'s works dance with one another to create visual harmony. Both artists push the material boundaries of traditional artwork on paper or canvas, instead using less traditional surfaces, such as fabric and panels. Side by side, their artwork stands strong in a display of beauty, healing, and experimentation.



## October Kimono

William Gatewood, 1987

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine



Audencio developed his artwork over time in a mostly self-taught way. He used open-studio style sessions to practice his skills and techniques. Audencio advocated for what he wanted to learn, then used his free time to practice, filling many sketchbooks. Audencio's peers recognized and supported his talents, often wearing his designs around the unit. Audencio gained confidence as an artist and as a person through his work in CHS' art therapy groups.



Audencio N., 2023  
Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine

A tried and true subject matter, the human face provides a platform for expressing the human condition. Whether considering the inward and outward nature of a mask, or simply projecting one's gaze and thoughts upon a facial representation, we find opportunity to relate to and experience others in a special and intimate way. The masks created by the individuals at Rikers are paired here with two examples of facial study by local artist and musician Lloyd McNeill, who lived and worked for many years here in Brooklyn. This collection of faces is rounded out with the work of Manuel Garcia, who playfully, yet thoughtfully, depicts culture and identity by combining simple shapes and dichromatic palette. The collection as a whole captures a timeless series of expressions and allow the viewer to reflect on relationships, representation, inward and outward struggles, and coping within.



Naranja

*"Representa a la cultura del Nuevo mundo debido a muchos tipos de pensamientos y el intercambio cultural que vivi dentro de Rikers."*



Mr. Leo Lyon

Manuel Garcia, 1972

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine



Erick F.

*"I created this picture of a sign of a ending of my drug abuse. Struggling throughout my lifetime has been difficult with drugs. Difficult with coping, along with my family and friends."*



Elvin N.

*"From prehistoric to modern, and future, the key to all minds is communication. We are the reflection you see in all mirrors or not? You are just like me. The mind is the difference, the action is the outcome."*



Who Am I?  
Carlos R.

*"Inspired by what's in my heart. It is a passionate evolution from within the deepest parts of my inward being."*



Untitled

Lloyd McNeill, n.d.

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine



Untitled

Lloyd McNeill, n.d.

Collection of NYC Health + Hospitals,  
Arts in Medicine

In exploration of the phrase "Creating Within," group members collaborated to identify via group discussion some recent thoughts, emotions, events, or aspects of their identity that had been taking up a lot of space in their minds. Participants then created masks to explore their relationship to the aforementioned and to demonstrate how those elements taking up space resonate within them and perform externally.



Untitled  
Jamar N.



Untitled  
Ramon R.

*"It reminds me of my ancestral background of Taíno Indians."*



*"The White represents purity almost child-like.  
The Horn represents desire & how blinding it is.  
The Black represents the sin tainting what it touches.  
The Red is passion and how passion has no bounds."*

**An Ode to Lust**  
Colbert



**Faces of Stars in Our Universe**  
Dyashawn W.

*"Which 1 Am I*

*Why did I choose this picture*

*I like 2 know about different stars in our solar system, so I put 1 in art form of an evil demon spirit 'cause stars have faces."*

## The Same Dark Glass

Been drifting beyond the indigo veil  
Lamenting the loss of some identity or another  
And thinking of the vast chasm of astral perception  
Flowing in and out of focus like a fathomless sea  
Of turbulent, mental cosmos, where i  
Come to know a momentary meaning for  
A handful of seemingly - significant visions glimpsed  
So painfully often  
Through the same dark glass  
Time and distance share the stage with music  
In a song about the way I've always sought to feel;  
And know, within a fateful instant how  
So soundly I remembered everything the ever  
Happened in the life which I had dreamt of  
Since the situation that was mother's milk to me  
So long before my present soul's inception, and  
It screams this passionate greeting.  
I'm so powerless on this account,  
I can not help but need it with  
Each ever more alertly yearning fiber of  
At best, admittedly, a questionable being  
Humbled  
Haunted, yet  
Amorous; you see  
The beauty of it all is that  
I finally believe it.

- Daniel V.



Vive Haute  
Benedict W.



Me, Myself & Eye  
Benedict W.



Listen to a collection of patients' songs and spoken word poems on Bloomberg Connects.

These recordings represent a body of patient-directed music written specifically for the *Creating Within* exhibit or within a general music therapy group context, and they were all created during patient detainment on Rikers Island. The songs address multiple themes: family, redemption, compassion, and romance. The patients found that participating in music therapy offered opportunities to collaborate with peers, form a community, and cultivate joy in a space where such experiences are few and far between.

#### **Do It**

Written and Performed by Kay Dollars, Johnny G., and BEZA

*"It was an honor doing it. I enjoyed collaborating with everyone."* - Beza

#### **Life as a Dream**

Written and Performed by Dominique T.

#### **You (I Don't Know)**

Written and Performed by Isaiah A., Isaiah R. and Jordan F.

#### **In My Dreams**

Written and Performed by Jamol and Radio

*"It's a natural feeling  
Circumstances in my life  
More than a dream, God is everything  
Feel the power with my frankincense and myrrh  
God's Love is steady, God's Love is sure  
Focus on your Spirit coming from God  
Just a thread of Spirit makes my journey smooth  
I have some praise: God is good."*

- Jamol

### **Cupid's Arrow**

Written and performed by Keith G.

### **Fly Me to the Moon** (Song remake of "Fly Me to the Moon" by Bart Howard)

Performed by Saint J.E. and Radio

### **Lowkeymystery**

Written and performed by Radio

*"Art is a good reflection of how life is great. Getting a chance to be in the art show is giving me a chance to show people how I see life."*

-Radio

### **FrEnemy**

Written and performed by Super Teddy

### **O-o-h Child (Rikers Version)**

*Song remake of "O-o-h Child," written by Stan Vincent and initially made famous by The Five Stairsteps*

CHS staff were inspired to collectively sing a song of hope to uplift our spirits and remember those we lost during the initial phase of the COVID pandemic in 2020. We chose to remake the timeless "O-o-h Child." This is an example of using creative arts therapy for staff care.

### **Performed by**

Jeff A. (LCAT, CHS) - *Acoustic guitars, Bass, Keyboard, Drum/Percussion programming, vocals*

Dante H. - *Lead vocals*

Barbara B. (CAT Director, CHS) - *Spoken word/ rap, Vocals*

Barbara B. (DT) (LCAT, CHS) - *Vocals*

Hyujin K. (LCAT, CHS) - *Vocals*

Emily H. (former LCAT, CHS) - *Vocals*

Jennie T. - *Vocals*

Eric C. - *Electric guitars*



Andre A.

I CREATED THIS DRAWING BECAUSE MENTAL HEALTH IS IN THE MEDICAL FIELD, AND FOR AGES THE WORLD HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR A MIRACLE CURE TO ALL ILLNESSES. THE MIND IS THE PILOT OF THE BRAIN + BODY. BY GIVING THE MIND "HOPE" IT WILL ACTIVATE CHEMICALS TO HEAL ITSELF WITH MEDICATIONS "THIS IS A UNIVERSAL CURE FOR ALL NATIONS TO FIND WORLD PEACE"

ALL WE NEED IS A DROP OF



All We Need is a Drop of "Hope"  
Keith A.

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Arts in Medicine's invaluable partnership has helped shine a light on the excellence of CHS patients' creative vision, elevated their diverse voices to an equitable status, and fostered a dialogue between patients and the public that expands far beyond the walls that they are creating within. We want to especially thank Laurie Tisch, Rick Luftglass, Kira Pritchard, Emelyn Arias, and Jan Rothschild of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund for their assistance with this program, and express our appreciation for the generous support of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund that underwrites the Arts in Medicine program, including *Creating Within* at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull.

