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Breast Cancer Awareness



RAISING BREAST CANCER AWARENESS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE VISUAL ARTS

The Somerset Art Association (SAA) will host "Image Early," a one-person exhibit by artist Marion Behr from October 4 - 31 to raise breast cancer awareness through the power of the visual arts.

The Alpha Cradles

The exhibit will showcase over 21 works by Behr who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007. She was inspired during her treatment by the Alpha Cradles, which meld to a woman's torso keeping the body still during radiation. Using these forms, she created sculptural totems expressive of the myriad of emotions felt by cancer patients during their journey of treatment, hope and survival.

The artist explains, "The radiation cradles were lined up on the shelves, one on top of another, shelf after shelf. I was lying on top of one of them on a sort of bed, waiting for my first treatment. Initially there was some anxiety but then my focus kept going back to the cradles and to all of the women who bravely laid here before me. 'What were their feelings during their cancer treatments?' In my mind the cradles took the form of sculptures representing other patients and their emotions, as well as mine. It was then that I decided to turn these blue plastic flat forms



Photos by Thomas Heller

"Friendship," far left, "Reconstruction," middle, and "Jumping for Joy," far right, are some of the pieces in the exhibit "Image Early," a one-person show by artist Marion Behr, at the Somerset Art Association in Bedminster Township during the month of October.

into abstract figures that would encourage others to get an early mammogram the same way my kids encouraged me."

The Alpha Cradles are bent and reshaped by Behr to form semi-abstract forms to which she then adds different textures, color and collage elements.

Each sculpture stands on a plinth raising the height of the work to that of an averaged sized visitor making interaction with the pieces personal and direct.

Some of the forms will be grouped together as if in conversation inviting the viewer

into their visual discourse while others will stand apart in fiery defiance or silent meditation.

Intended to evoke feelings, the sculptures' titles are significant. In "Jumping for Joy," the work's unpainted paper mache surface and playful pose are reminiscent of childhood innocence and the

purity of gleeful emotion. In the work "Pre-reconstruction," the figure's breast is replaced with a rusted plumbing pipe while nails stitched together end to end form jagged pathways which scratch across the surface like fingernails against a chalk board. The image is disturbing,

yet upon closer inspection, the vibrant blue fabric underpinning of the cradle peers through as if filling the pipe's circular cavity with a pool of 'water' — a source of life and healing.

Behr's work is intended to comfort, startle, celebrate, educate and ultimately encourage visitors to 'image early' in the battle against breast cancer through early detection, sound medical practices, compassionate physicians and necessary re-

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About Marion Behr

Behr is a resident of North Branch Station. She earned both a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Masters of Fine Arts from Syracuse University in New York. With her husband Marc Behr, she patented a new acid free, environmentally safe graphic etching process, which was listed as the Patent of the Week by the New York Times, May 2, 1992.

Together they have traveled extensively throughout the United States and countries abroad including Morocco, Canada and New Zealand lecturing about this break-through process.

Her award-winning graphic work is in the collections of the Newark Public Library, United States Embassy in Germany, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Royal Thai Collection, Bangkok, Thailand and the Jane Voorhies Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick, among others.

The "Image Early" exhibit is one of three events being hosted by the Somerset Art Association in October, during nationally recognized Breast Cancer Awareness month, to raise awareness about the disease, which strikes 182,460 women in the United States each year.

On Thursday, Oct. 8, from 6 - 8 p.m., SAA will present Surviving Breast Cancer: Decades of Hope, a panel discussion comprised of medical professionals and women diagnosed with breast cancer during different stages of life.

Additionally, on Friday, Oct. 23, a benefit will be held at SAA from 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. to raise funds for the art center with a percentage of the proceeds benefiting the Susan G. Komen For The Cure Foundation.

About SAA

Over 3,000 individuals and families visit the Somerset Art Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the awareness and understanding of and participation in the visual arts through year-round educational studio classes and workshops for children, teens and adults, gallery exhibits, bus tours to tri-state area museums, lectures, artist's demonstrations, children's birthday parties, summer art camps and community outreach partnership projects.

For additional information, visit www.somersetart.org or call the SAA office at (908) 234-2345.