

“Brushes With Cancer”: Art Inspired by Cancer Survivors [VIDEO]

The nonprofit Twist Out Cancer celebrates 10 years with a Brushes With Cancer exhibition and gala. [VIDEO.]

November 23, 2022 By Laura Schmidt

To celebrate its 10-year anniversary, Twist Out Cancer, a [nonprofit](#) that offers psychosocial support to people touched by cancer through creative arts programming, recently hosted the [2022 Midwest Brushes With Cancer](#) art exhibition and gala at [WNDR Museum](#) in Chicago.

The Brushes With Cancer initiative pairs artists with [cancer survivors](#), who, over a four-month period, serve as muses (or “inspirations”) for [artworks](#) to be exhibited and auctioned off at a gala event. This year’s exhibition included 31 pieces by 31 artists featuring 31 muses spanning 17 states. Guided by Twist Out Cancer mentors, the artists and their muses met virtually over four months to collaborate on the artworks.

Just one example: The painting below, which is oil on dibond, is titled “Mary Angel Warrior.” Painted by Kate Van Doren, who lives in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, it is inspired by Mary Jenkins of Columbus, Ohio, who is a two time breast cancer survivor.

“My experience with Twist Out Cancer has been wonderful,” Jenkins writes on the website. “My artist, Kate Van Doren, has been amazing. Going in, I didn’t have any expectations. I wanted to embrace the full moment of having someone else learn about me, hear my story, and share it through an artist medium. I want everyone to step into having their own experience with Twist Out Cancer. As a result of being a part [of the Brushes With Cancer initiative], I gained a sister-friend for life!”

You can view all of the artworks and read the stories behind them on [TwistOutCancer.org](#). They’re also part of a virtual gallery you can view in the video at the top of this article as well as [on YouTube](#).

[Chicago](#) native Jenna Benn Shersher founded [Twist Out Cancer](#) 10 years ago at age 29 after battling and surviving grey zone lymphoma, a rare form of blood cancer. While isolated because of her compromised immune system, Shersher, who loves dancing, created a video of herself doing the twist and asked her friends to join her virtually. Soon, hundreds of well-wishers sent their own

videos, fostering a sense of community and connection that inspired Shersher to launch Twist Out Cancer, an organization focused on people affected by cancer that provides emotional support beyond treatment. Today, Twist Out Cancer is an international organization that has touched the lives of over 200,000 people.

“I found that community was super important,” Shersher said in a [Twist Out Cancer podcast](#). “And having a space to be able to share my story and reflect on what I was experiencing was really helpful.”

Brushes With Cancer offers people with cancer a safe space not only to create personal art but also to talk about and process their experiences. “And by being able to see their journey through someone else’s eyes, through the work of art, they then are able to take something different away from their experience,” Shersher said.

The Brushes With Cancer exhibition will be on display at the WNDR Museum until the end of November.



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