

# Art with a Healing Touch

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by Carolyn Edlund

**Art can soothe, create feelings of well-being, and effect healing. These artists create diverse works that inspire and promote wellness.**



Artist [Elise Okrend](#) creates serene pastels, inspired by the landscape near her home in Asheville, North Carolina. She says, "I believe my creativity heals myself and others. My pastel paintings are observations of the natural world, using light, clouds, mountains, lakes and sacred places. My intent is to transcend the ordinary into a work of vibrant beauty with a healing presence."

Her work has attracted the attention of North Carolina hospitals and healing centers, and has been exhibited at Mission Women's Care in Sylva, Duke Raleigh, UNC Health Care and Duke Hospital in

Durham.

Okrend's art is included in the permanent art collection at Duke Raleigh Hospital, and she explains that the placement of her paintings in the Pre-Op area was intentional. "They serve to create a calming, nurturing environment for patients, their families and the busy doctors and nurses preparing for surgery," she says. "My purpose is to create art to soothe the soul." We think you'll agree that she does.



Award-winning Arizona photographer [Jennifer S. Beavers](#) specializes in macro photography that features floral and botanical themes. By capturing her subjects close-up, viewers experience and savor the astonishing intricacies found in nature.

"Nature is my creative muse and motivation," says Beavers. "It organically has healing properties and the power to renew. These qualities are infused into my photography."

Her photos are fresh and lovely, providing a calming influence in any setting. She shares, "Included in my extensive body of work are images titled 'Fragrant Beauty', 'Spring Dance', and 'Field of Flowers' that illustrate meditative shades of purple, peaceful greens, tranquil blues, and serene imagery. It's gratifying when viewers tell me how my photographs evoke feelings of optimism and well-being."



The quiet but powerful portfolio of artist [Judy Hintz Cox](#) reflects her personal journey and experience of creativity as a healing force.

“Suffering is part of life,” she says. “While painting I am detached from my ego, which alleviates suffering. Visual art is subjective. One person may find pleasure observing a particular piece of art while another may be annoyed.”

Cox found that her studio practice helped to release fear, and is liberating. She explains, “There is no right nor wrong in abstract art. Any meaning a viewer finds in my paintings belongs to the observer. If a viewer loses him/herself while silently contemplating my work, I have succeeded as an artist.”

Art as a spiritual force is a primary interest for artist [Amy Hughes](#). She creates images with a soft and diffuse palette that seem to hover in another realm. She talks about her work, saying “The ultimate healing, in my experience, comes from the conscious uniting of Spirit and Matter. Art making is a healing act because it allows communication with the deepest and wildest part of my soul that honors this knowing. I believe art can radiate the energy of intention that propels it’s creation.”

With a background as a massage therapist as well as in art, she has a deep interest in wellness on different levels. “My intention is to create an authentic, heartfelt connection with the viewer and foster a sense of inter-connectedness between the spiritual and sensual,” she explains. “People tell me they feel grounded and transcendent at the same time when viewing my work, which tells me I am on the right path.”





Painter [Helen Kagan](#) produces artwork with an uplifting energy that makes each piece seem to dance with joy. Growing up in a communist state where oppression and control were a daily reality, she has been inspired to overcome that mindset through art, and reaches out to others as well. A holistic therapist and artist, she's been developing her unique technique and style as "Healing Arts" that reflects her own deep introspective view on life, a desire to bridge realities and heal the past.

She shares, "I believe that my art is a powerful form of self-expression and becomes a vehicle for emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being in a viewer, and thus can enhance healing to those in need. I believe in mind-body-spirit connection, and 'Healing Arts' is a statement of this."



Julie Mader's approach to healing through art centers on the depiction of plants used in medicines that fight cancer. This pursuit has led to a project called "The Power Within", a traveling exhibit shown in numerous healthcare venues. Her interest is based on personal experience.

"Nearly fifteen years ago I was witness to the intense love and support offered by family members to my neighbor Beth during her battle with cancer," Mader tells us. "I found myself nagged by the overwhelming urge to do something to acknowledge the experience, and in 2013 was able to create artwork to fulfill that calling."

Her artwork resonates strongly with the public, and she explains the reaction. "I have been told by exhibit-goers that The Power Within gives a 'face' to cancer medicine and that the display gives them a valued connection between nature and the fight against cancer, offering a visual talisman for the battle faced by friends and family."



Artist [Sheryl Brown](#) creates flowing, effervescent designs on canvas and as wearable art. Her focus comes from her professional background as a caregiver. “As an artist, coach and marriage & family therapist, it is true that I practice art in more ways than one, but all come down to healing,” she says. “A strong sense of humor pervades my work.”

She became aware of the impact of her artwork through social media. “When I began sharing my artwork (mostly acrylics) on Facebook, I repeatedly heard very touching and poetic expressions on how my paintings impacted folks, healing places they hadn’t known needed it. Now I’ve expanded to offer silk scarves, and prints on paper and canvas.”



[Courtney Mealy](#)'s work began more as a literal scientific look at cancer cells but changed into hopeful, colorful patterns and designs; she has changed cancer, and so can we. Her approach is empowering.

Mealy shares the evolution of her studio work. "My work has progressed from painting realistic microscopic slides of cancer cells to a more abstract style focusing on color and form, while still referencing the general characteristics of molecular patterns and shapes," she says. "I found myself creating very dark and ominous paintings, and focusing on the negative attributes of these cells, which was not my initial intention. Therefore, I transformed my work into bold, colorful paintings that help stimulate the mind and the emotions promoting healing and well-being."

"These biomorphic paintings are created in the moment and expose interplay/juxtaposition between the forms created by color and linear shapes. Color plays a vital role in my work as I am interested in the relationships colors have between each other and with the viewer."

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