

## PAIN AVOIDANCE

Writing while in the bath is relaxing and not at all painful. My pain is caused by drugs, inflammation in the spine, lack of fitness and strength. I thought no-one wanted to see what cancer pain feels like, after one gallery operator told me no-one in Australia would show my paintings because they are too emotional. However my nurse invited me to put a painting in to the World Conference on Pain Management. I am exhibiting paintings now in "*Sugar and Spice*" the exhibition by Breast Screen Tasmania, publicizing ovarian cancer. The exhibition is beautiful, passionate, detailed, tells stories, and has some abstract cool images and depicts what you would give the special woman in your life.

Last week my son, the video maker/photographer filmed "*A Day in My Life*" painting at my boatshed down the coast, followed by scenes from my weekly hospital treatment. I paint wherever I am, write stories and poetry, sing songs and have a good time. My friends with or without cancer tell me that my art, stories, songs and experience have helped them feel positive. I would hope so! Talking of having fun, I have been without hair for four years now, but have enjoyed changing personalities along with wigs-blond, honey, pink beaded, sophisticated claret and long black. People relate to me very differently with wigs or with scarves and hats.

This year after years of shock, drugs and pain, I find heartening community groups working in the arts and healing. I suggested the theme, "*Living and Dying*" to Playback Theatre who recently put on a show. The audience told their stories and actors and musician played back the essence of each to make moving and profound plays. I had enough energy to invite friends to potluck meal last Friday. We shared food, singing, drumming, piano and guitar. It always turns out surprisingly well- considering that I do not know what each person will bring. Sue, recently returned from Tibet says, "Give me a singalong, I love 'em!" We sang "*Spirit of the wind carry me*" "*White Buffalo Woman*" "*Rainbow Woman Blues*" "*Mother I feel you under my feet*" and "*I will walk the Rainbow Trail*", helped by my selection of Indian drum and tambourine, Balinese brass bells, African drums, Japanese guitar, English piano, home-made Meringue rice shaker and a kazoo. We made a groovy rhythmical racket!

I minimize my back pain by sharing with friends, joining community arts, making music, exercising, sleeping arvos, painting and Art Therapy. On my last hospital visit I told staff "You are now my social life." We all laughed. Part of the pain is in remembering that I am ill. I hope to forget it at least once or twice a day. I am alone with time to consider my impending death. But really, I am like you. We will all inevitably die. So the discipline is in doing what I love each day. "Go and have a good time" they now tell me.

I am starting my Ph. D. in Education and Art Therapy, using my life and work as the subject. I am using "*A Day in the Life of*" video, my five song CDs, two CD Rom of 180 images and text, my published magazines and paintings, three anthologies, many exhibitions and book readings. I reckon if anyone is going to have fun, then it better be me! I will show my work at Off Centre Gallery, Salamanca Place on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.05 – 18<sup>th</sup>. where I have a whole room for twenty five colourful seascapes, forest views, and art therapy symbols. I will perform my songs and I'll read my poetry at the opening.

ANATA have a national conference here in November, 05, about arts psychotherapy, where I will show some work alongside many other artists and therapists.

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