



Women supporting women with cancer

Counterpart makes it

15 years of supporting
women's creativity



We thank our Counterpart volunteer Greta for inspiring us all with her dedication to creativity and its positive impact on healing after a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

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Counterpart (formerly BreaCan) has always provided opportunities for women with breast or a gynaecological cancer to take part in creative activities to respond to their diagnosis or assist in their wellbeing.

Creativity can bring many positive effects, from the simple pleasure of doing it through to evoking personal growth and transformation. At Counterpart, we have been providing creative sessions for the past 15 years. These have included art therapy, sashiko, doll making, drumming, photography, music and creative writing.

Women who have participated in these sessions have told us they were beneficial: for having some fun; for not thinking about the cancer awhile; and processing and making meaning out of their experience of cancer.

To celebrate 15 years of our service, we invited women to share their creations at our end of year morning tea on 11 December 2018. These are some of those works.







Rachelle Austin, *Cone biopsy*



Rachelle Austin, *Ghost follicle*



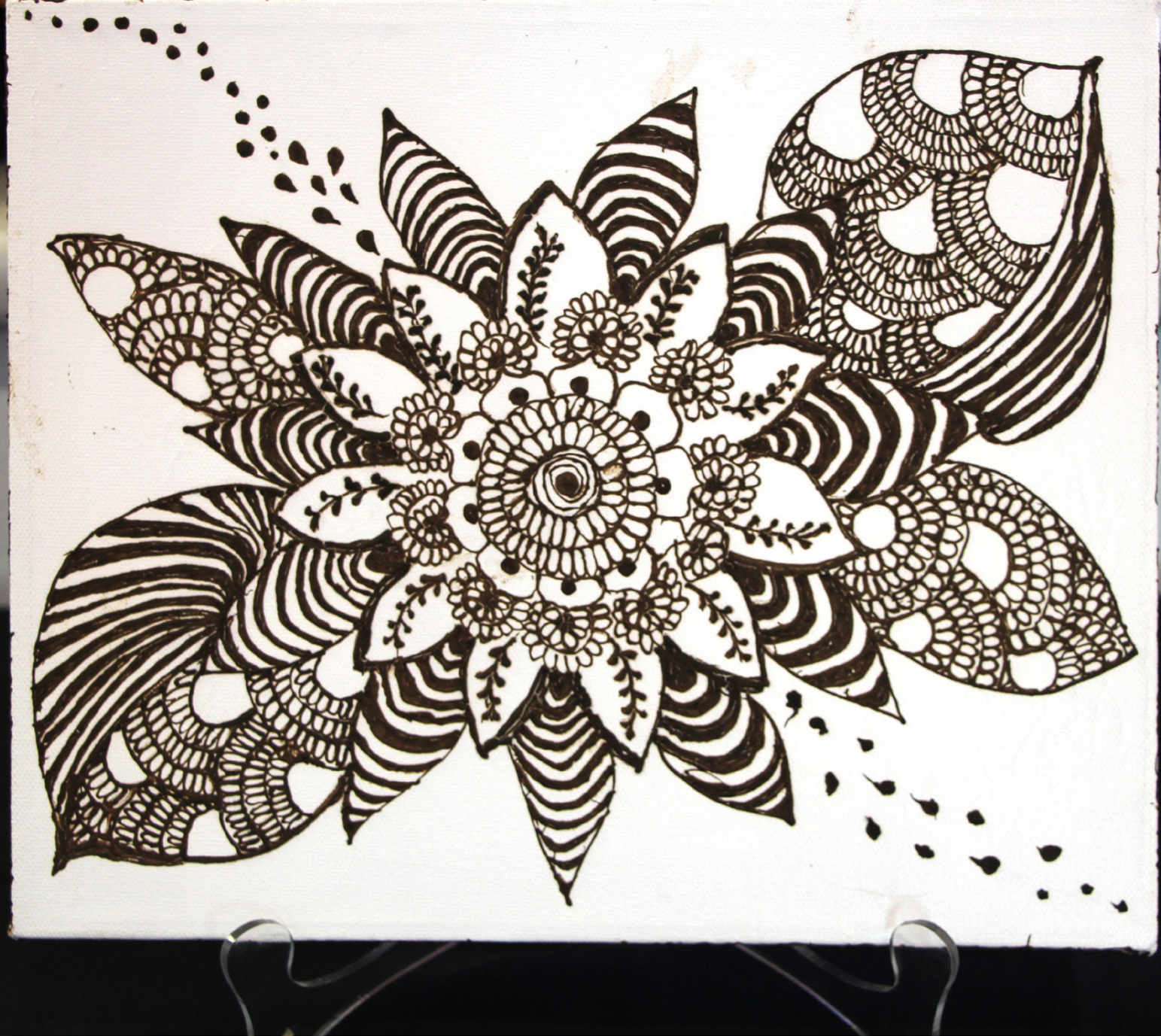
My cancer diagnosis, infertility due to cancer treatment, and fertility preservation experiences have changed my self for the better. I am the same person, but I am uniquely different.

My experience and learnings allow me to observe life and death through the observation of conflict, surrender and time. My ceramic abstract sculptural work continues to help manage my post-treatment anxiety by uniting the conscious and unconscious minds. This unity allows me to obtain purity of moments through the making of simple abstract forms directly related to my astounding medical procedures and acceptance of change. I aim to share with the audience (if viewed for long enough) slow motion time in the third dimension, allowing the mind a meditative truth to surrender to.

Rachelle Austin







Mithila Babbar

Mithila was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 30 years old. She hopes other young women affected by cancer know they are not alone.



Margaret Barbara, *African dikdik*



After going through the cancer 'process' I realised that I had not previously pursued areas of interest as I had been too busy. Cancer was the catalyst to changing my life and taking more time for myself. I started art classes this year and this was my first drawing.

Margaret Barbara







Elizabeth Brown

The Difficult



...done daily



The Impossible



... performed
overnight

BUT...
Miracles



are by
Appointment
only.





I simply enjoy the pastime of sewing and the creation of my pieces which are so varied.

Elizabeth Brown





Margaret Cope, *Hats*



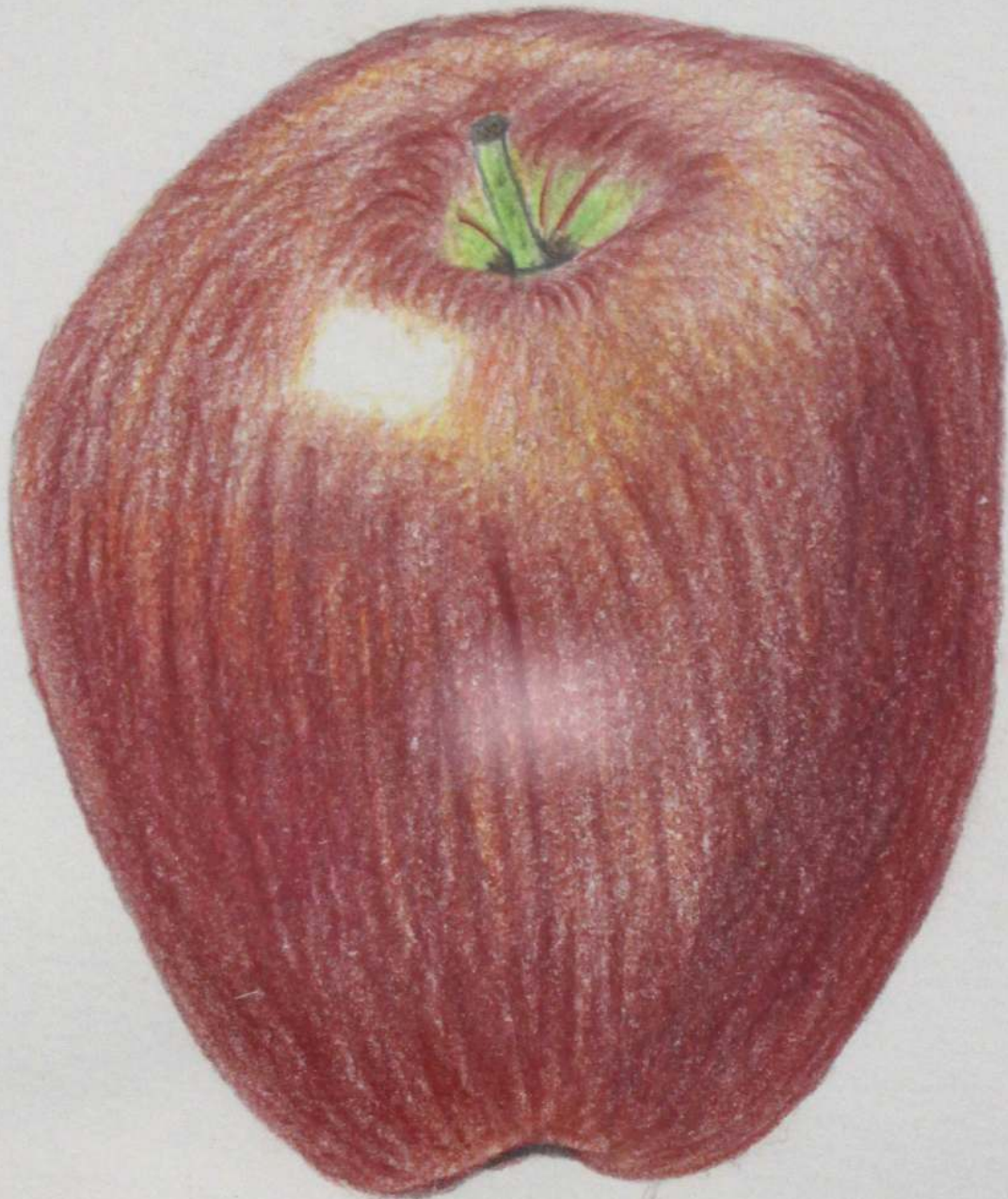
Hairloss is a very devastating part of chemo treatment. Making these attractive, lightweight, comfortable hats for myself made me feel much brighter and more confident.

I now get satisfaction/pleasure from making them for other women who are seeing a lift in their spirits too. The smile on their faces says it all.

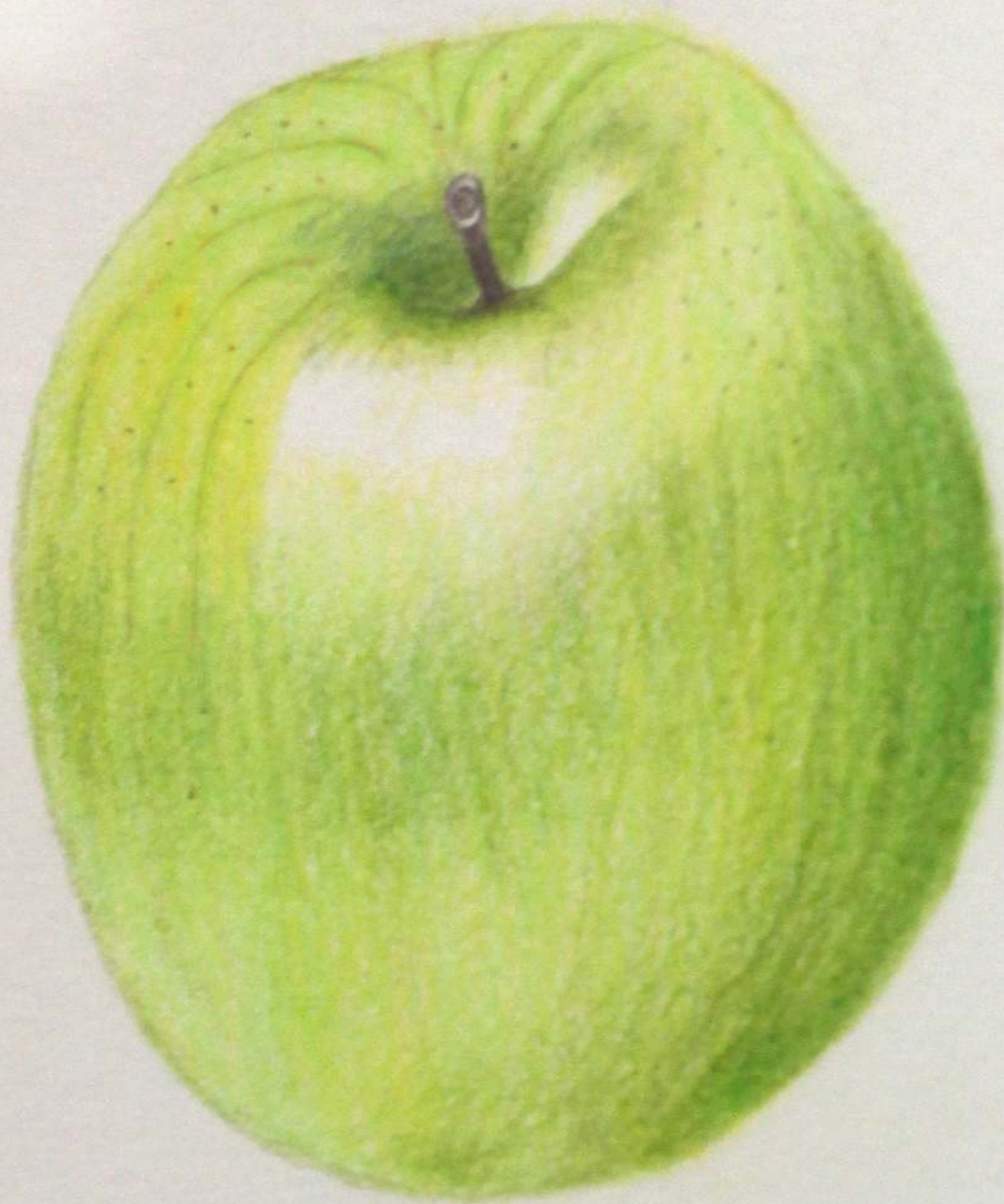
Margaret Cope







Nikki Davis, *Delicious... red and green*



Nikki Davis, *Delicious... red and green*



These drawings were created towards the end of my treatment in 2003, around about the time that Counterpart (then BreaCan) was opening its doors for the first time. Fifteen years on, they are a permanent reminder of the calm that botanical illustration brought to me as I observed flowers and fruits and the effects of light and shade on them, in order to mindfully work my coloured pencils over the paper.

Nikki Davis





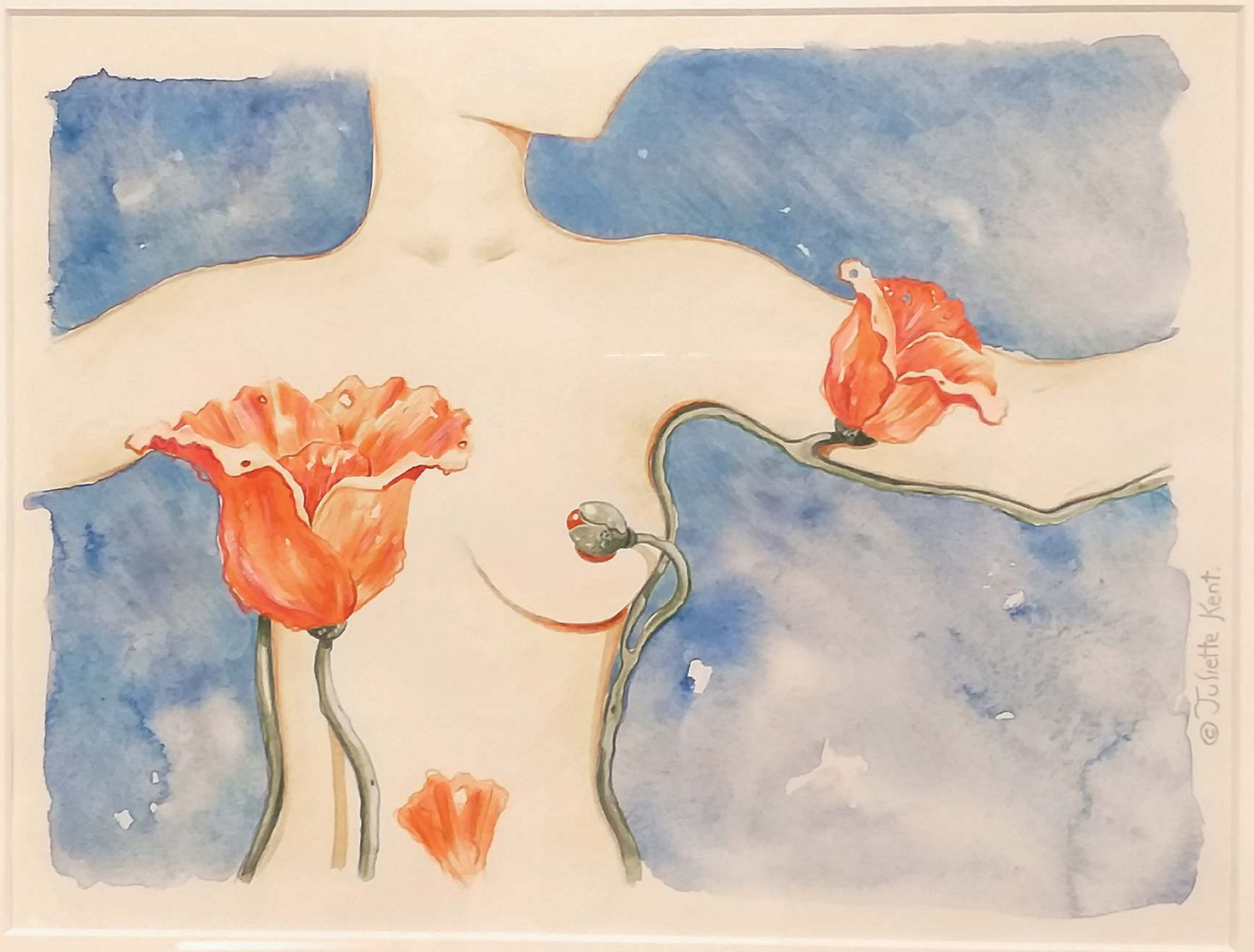
Penny Duncan, *Alura, Queen of the Desert*



Doll making at Counterpart was a very calming and meditative activity. It helped me focus my emotions around having breast cancer. Alura represented my experience of cancer 34 years ago. At that time it felt like an emotional desert with very little support. A feeling of being buffeted by the process of getting better and finally getting to an oasis of calm. The camel represents the support I did get from family and friends. There was very little information at that time. I realised my strength and endurance when making this doll, and the need to ground myself and move forward.

Penny Duncan



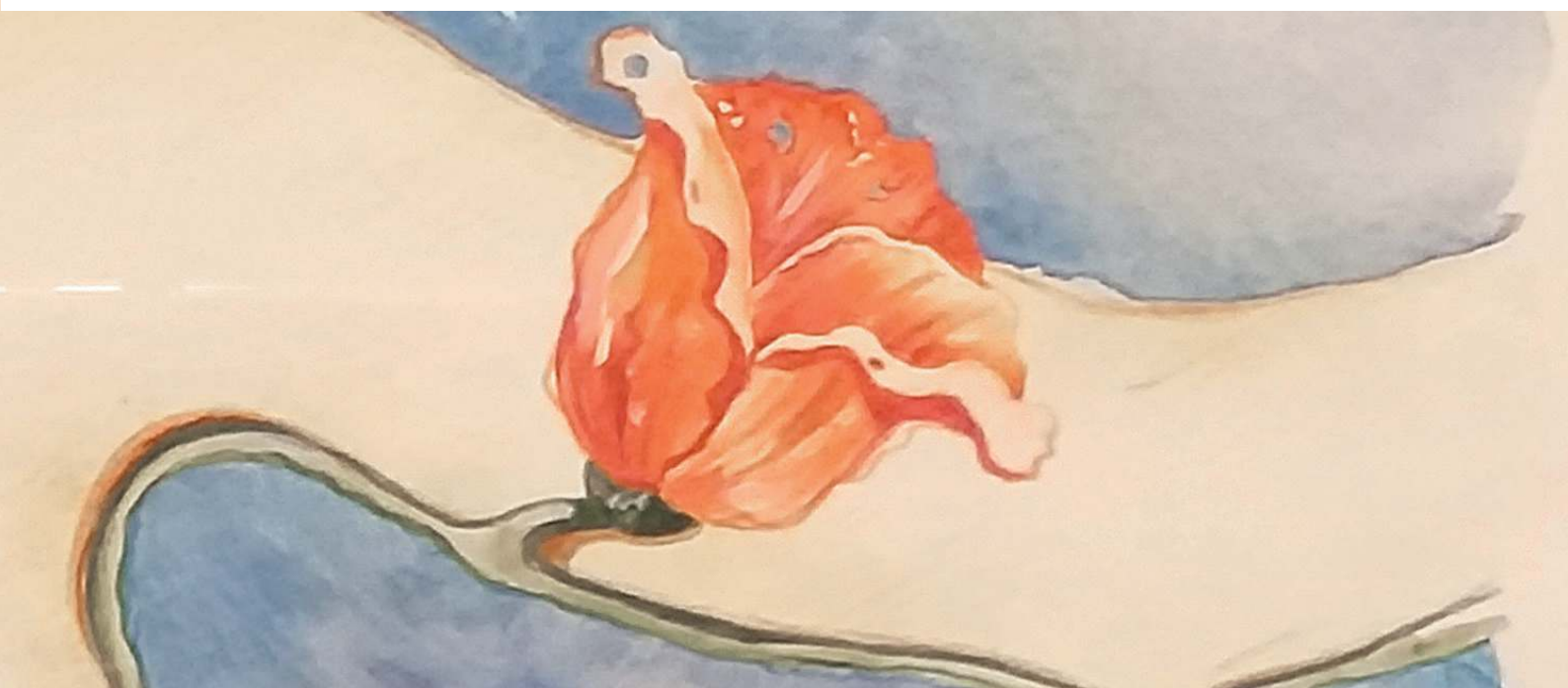


Juliette Kent, *Bud and flourish*

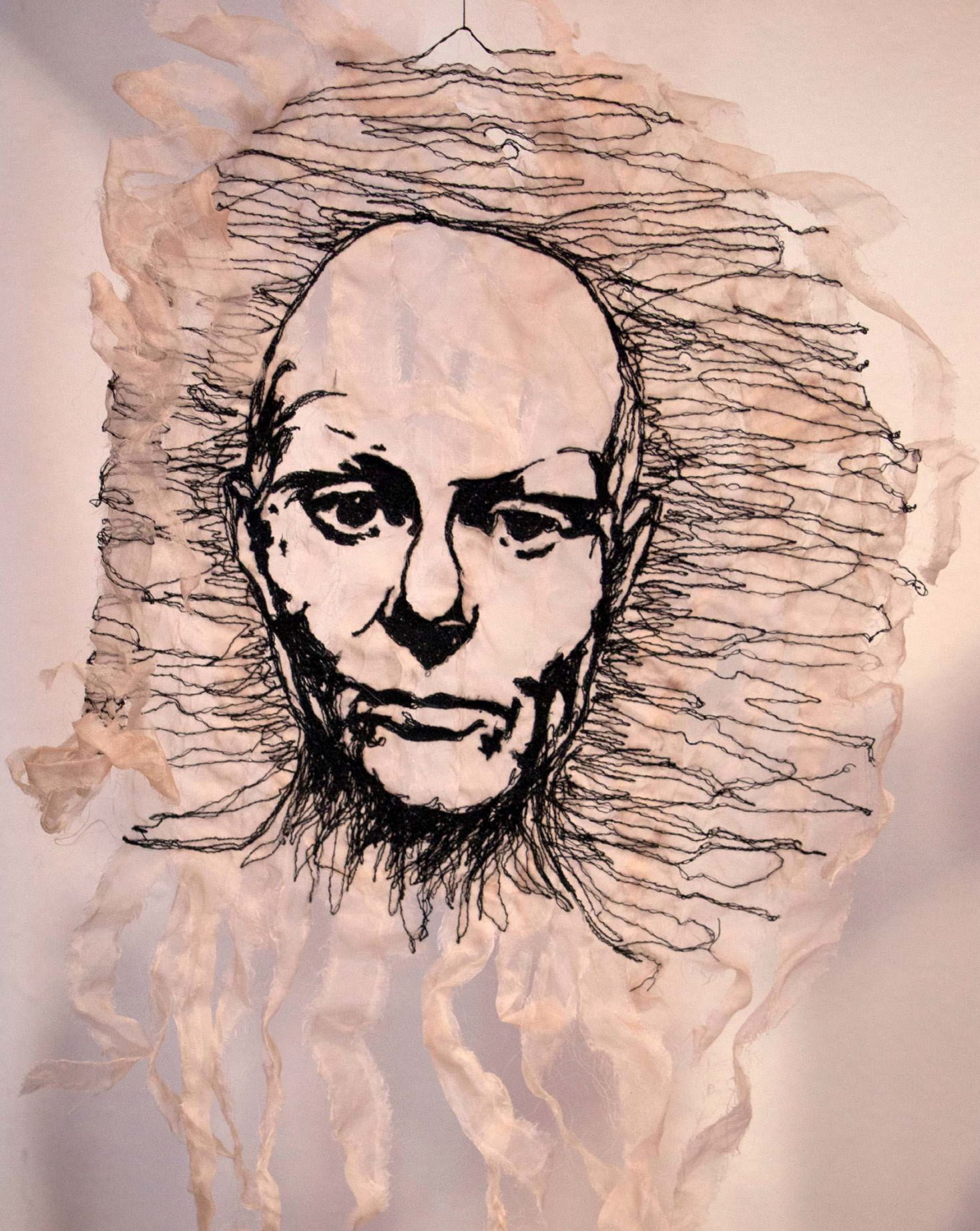


I enjoyed painting this as I wanted to express myself and others going forward after treatment. That new things can bud in your life, new growth. The storm clouds behind us, looking for beauty. To flourish and encourage.

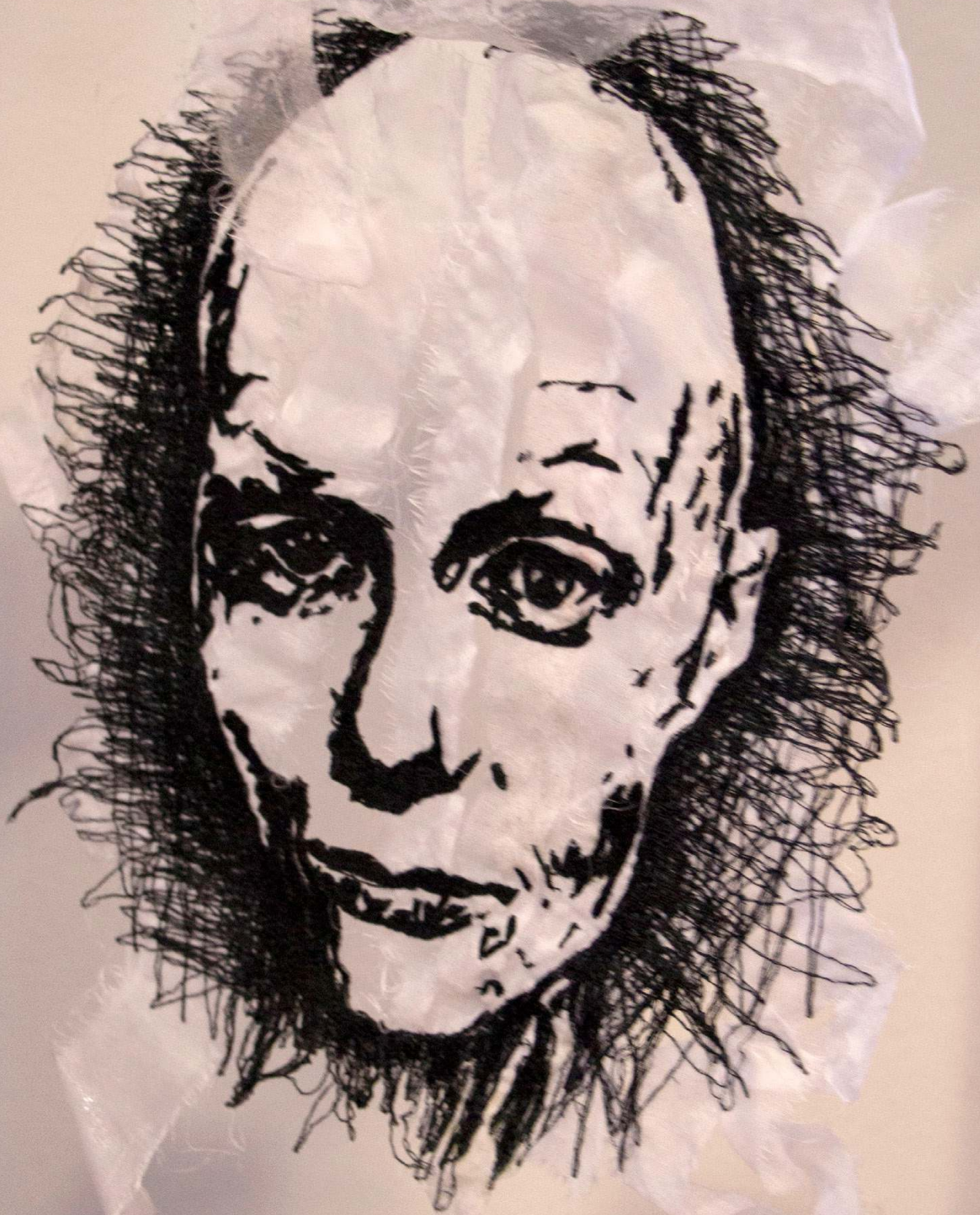
Juliette Kent







Nicole Mallalieu, *Stripped away/shredded*



Nicole Mallalieu, *Stripped away/shredded*



During chemo, I had a sense of a shedding of layers. The surface and the interior self fell away, and every day before I looked in the mirror and tried to reconcile the face I saw with the person I knew before. It made sense to me to use stitch as a medium for expressing the one constant part of me — a love and understanding of textiles. I began stitching self-portraits on sheer fabric to ‘stitch out the darkness’ and capture my feelings as those layers were stripped back, to the point where I was raw, worn down and feeling ‘shredded’ by the experience. I still feel a compulsion to work through ideas with this work as I recover from the experience. These experiments are part of a journey that is not complete yet.

Nicole Mallalieu







Theresa Neal, *We stand together*



Granddaughter Bella and Grandma Theresa —
made it together.

Theresa Neal



Chris Oxley, *Dollhouse miniatures*



During my almost 19 years on the breast cancer journey, I have been part of a group of dollhouse miniature enthusiasts. We meet every 4–6 weeks for workshops, mostly women, sitting together making small objects or larger projects. There is nothing like sitting around a table concentrating on a project to facilitate openness in conversations, lots of sharing and encouragement.

Chris Oxley



COUNTER PART

Women supporting women with cancer

Counterpart connects, supports and informs women with breast or a gynaecological cancer to live well.



Counterpart is a service of Women's Health Victoria and is supported by the Victorian Government.