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Rio Hondo Gallery Exhibit Chronicles Artist's Battle with Cancer

WHITTIER – A new exhibit featuring 10 still-life paintings by Crystal Maes at the Rio Hondo Gallery chronicles the artist's journey as she battled cancer.

Maes, who works daily with color, design and typography as a professional graphic artist, created the exhibit after her 2013 diagnosis with breast cancer. As she underwent chemotherapy and radiation treatment, she decided to tell her story through still-life paintings.

The exhibit is titled DETOUR: Ten Paintings Descriptive of a Battle with Cancer. Maes invites her audience to follow each step of her emotional and physical challenges as she pursued different procedures and treatment stages.

"This is an extraordinary exploration of an amazing woman's challenges that can inspire all of us with her strength and her resiliency," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "The Rio Hondo Gallery is the perfect venue for such an eye-opening exhibit."

A reception with the artist will be held for the exhibit from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 7 at the gallery.

Maes, who works for Rio Hondo College's marketing and communications department, holds a Bachelor of Arts in art and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration and graphic design. She brings to her work more than 30 years of quilting and textile experience.

For these paintings, she adapted the tradition of still-life paintings of the Dutch Golden Age, with each work exploding with illusory flavors, glints of light, dazzling reflections and the vivid scent of lemons – her enduring theme throughout the images.

Unlike those 17th century memento mori paintings, which contain symbols designed to remind viewers of their own mortality, Maes' paintings are memento vivere: reminders of life.

MORE

Rio Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

“I found this show so emotional and powerful. Like many of us, my family has been touched by cancer and I found inspiration and comfort in these 10 paintings,” said Grant Linsell, dean of arts and cultural programs.

The exhibit aligns with National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Maes creates a close, intimate space within each skillfully arranged composition, allowing the objects to communicate directly with the viewer, according to gallery officials. Through the works, the painter tells of how while trying to cope with the loss of part of her body, she trusted the mastery of her craft to keep herself whole and to be a gift to others.

The 10 paintings are entitled:

- Bowl of Lemons
- Highs and Lows
- Under the Knife
- Cocktails
- Zested
- Hot Spot
- Bitter Pills to Swallow
- Side Effects
- Facsimile
- Pink Lemonade

“Artists like Crystal Maes remind us that our world is bigger than we imagine; they give us insight into the journeys of our peers, and we are all the richer for it,” Board of Trustees President Norma Edith Garcia said. “I think Rio Hondo College is especially fortunate that such a talented artist shares her unique perspective with us as part of our Rio Hondo College team.”

PHOTOS

RHC_MAES_1: Artist Crystal Maes chronicles her battle with breast cancer through 10 still-life paintings on display at the Rio Hondo College Gallery. Each work touches on a different challenge, and all are thematically linked through the use of lemons.

RHC_MAES_2: Titled Cocktails, this painting is part of a sequence of 10 still-life paintings by Crystal Maes that chronicle her battle with breast cancer. The series is on display at the Rio Hondo College Gallery.

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