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CONTACT: Ruthie Retana
(562) 463-3145

Rio Hondo Gallery Extends Exhibit on Artist's Battle with Cancer

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College's Art Gallery has extended an exhibit chronicling artist Crystal Maes' battle with cancer through Oct. 27 in recognition of its impact on the campus community.

Maes, a graphic artist for the College's marketing and communications team, created the exhibit after her 2013 diagnosis with breast cancer. In 10 still-life paintings, she chronicles her journey from diagnosis, chemotherapy and radiation treatment through to recovery.

The exhibit aligns with National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

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.

"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."

Maes, who holds a Bachelor of Arts in art and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration and graphic design, brings to her work more than 30 years of quilting and textile experience.

Rio Hondo College art and art history professor Sheila Lynch said the paintings evoke 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."

But, unlike the 17th century memento mori paintings, which contain symbols designed to remind viewers of their own mortality, Maes' paintings are memento vivere: reminders of life, Lynch said.

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.

“They are a reminder of an abiding will to live and to conquer a deadly disease by meeting it head-on with honesty, courage, and a strong dose of humor,” Lynch said. “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 show has captured the attention of the campus community.

An Oct. 7 reception for the artist drew more than 150 students, faculty and staff. Rio Hondo College classes are scheduling visits to the gallery as part of their instructional programs.

“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 10 paintings are titled:

- 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 through Oct. 27. 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 through Oct. 27.

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