

Artist Statement

As an artist, educator, and curator, I believe that art is not just a way to visually express ourselves. It is also a process of care, connection, and healing. Over the past three years, I've had the honor of working with many strong and inspiring people through Emerge Gallery's Outreach Program, Art is Good Medicine. I've seen how creating art can bring comfort and light during some of the most difficult moments in life.

The exhibition I created through my Signature Honors Project is more than just a display of creative work. It is a story told through beautiful works of art. They show off courage, resilience, joy, and community. Each piece, whether it was created at the hospital or at Hope Lodge, represents a moment of being present. These artworks capture joy, reflection, healing, and a sense of connection, even during treatment or recovery.

Each artwork was shown alongside a photograph of the artist who created it. This was an important part of the show's design. I wanted each artist to be seen and celebrated. Even if they could not be at the exhibition in person, their presence was felt. The photos helped guests connect faces to artwork, making it feel more personal. The overall effect was a deeply emotional and meaningful space, filled with visual stories from individuals who might not have previously thought of themselves as artists.

As the curator, I carefully planned how every piece would be displayed. I built each of the art display walls by hand, which allowed me to shape the layout of the room with intention. I wanted every visitor to feel like they were entering a real gallery space, one that showed respect for the artists and their work. Creating the layout, installing the artwork, and placing the photos

and titles was all part of creating a special experience for everyone. This process reminded me how much the presentation of art matters, especially when the art carries so much personal meaning.

This exhibition reflects not only the creativity of the artists, but also the community that made this program possible. Through this project, I hope others can see that art is more than just something to look at. It is a way to understand our emotions, share our experiences, and find connection during times when we need it most.

Project Overview

Over the past three years, I have worked as a teaching artist for Emerge Gallery's Outreach Program, Art is Good Medicine. This program has allowed me to bring art into the lives of adult and pediatric patients at ECU Health. I've worked in the Cancer Center, the Pediatric Department, and with residents of the Hope McConnell Lodge in Greenville, North Carolina.

My Signature Honors Project, also titled Art is Good Medicine, was a public exhibition that highlighted the art created by patients in the program. The show took place at the Hope Lodge in March 2025 and featured a range of works made over the previous year.

Alongside the patients' work, I included one of my own paintings. It was a self-portrait that explores the emotional and symbolic phases we all go through in life. Creating that piece helped me reflect on my own growth as an artist and educator while also honoring the lessons I've learned from those I've worked with. Two of my fellow teaching artists who are also part of

the program contributed their own pieces and written reflections as well. Including our voices helped offer context and show the impact of the program on everyone involved.

I wanted the entire exhibition to feel welcoming, thoughtful, and inspiring. To make that possible, I hand built all of the wooden display walls used in the show. This allowed me to create a flexible layout that adapted to the space at Hope Lodge while also elevating each piece. The walls were painted and finished to resemble those found in a professional gallery. This helped make the space feel more formal and respectful without losing its warmth.

Thanks to scholarship funding and support from Emerge Gallery and ECU Health, I was able to add professional touches that made the show even more special. We had printed signage, custom framing, and refreshments for guests. We also had live music playing throughout the event, which added to the atmosphere. One of my favorite parts of the evening was the interactive art activity we provided for guests. Visitors of all ages were invited to create their own mini artwork to take home.

The event was filled with smiles, conversations, hugs, and a sense of pride from the artists and their families. Caregivers and staff also attended, many of whom had seen the patients creating their work. This made the exhibition feel even more full-circle and meaningful. People took their time walking through the space, reading, and viewing the photos. It was clear that the show touched hearts and opened minds.