

Art Narratives by Susan B. Trachman

1. "Order (1, 2 & 3)"

Bottles arranged in deliberate, well thought out, controlled patterns. "Order 1" is comprised of the Copaxone amber bottles. "Order 2" is a mixture of the clear Saline Solution bottles and the Copaxone amber bottles and "Order 3" is made up of the clear Saline Solution bottles. Since I could not control my disease and the symptoms that it caused, I wanted to create order where I could find it.

2. "Chaos"

This is a bookend to the "Order (1,2, & 3)" Series. Having had MS for over 24 years, I now know that there are many aspects of my body I can't control and my day-to-day symptoms can be chaotic. Instead of becoming depressed and withdrawn, I use my art to manipulate the chaos. The bottles are "chaotically" tossed around without any rhyme or reason like my symptomatic exacerbations. The two 9" x 9" resin planes are embedded in an uneven resin base, further symbolizing the lack of control and stability of the course of my MS.

3. "Balance"

This is my second piece, which is comprised of pieces and parts of the recycled Copaxone and Saline Solution bottles and parts of the boxes they came in, tethered together with fishing line. It is a constant struggle to find balance in my body and my life as the MS affects my strength, stability and energy. At times I feel like I am teetering on an unstable edge, but I still find my balance.

4. "Flowers"

This piece (actually 5 individual pieces laminated together) was done in Photoshop and evolved over a seven-year period. I chose to create an eye-catching piece of art, which, from a distance, looks like colorful flowers with "Color Form" like leaves, positioned randomly on a black patterned background. But, when one gets up close one can see that the flowers are made from the syringes that caused my daily pain. My focus continues to be seeing beyond the fatigue and discomfort and finding the beauty in life.

5. "Living Color (1, 2, 3, 4)"

"Living Color 1" is a collage of two unaltered MRI images of the artists' brain with arrows pointing to the white spots indicating plaque. The MRI images in "Living Color 2, 3, 4" have been digitally colored by the Artist. Yes, I see the plaque. It's in black and white, but I also see bright vibrant colors. I see beauty. I see life. I see me.

6. "Java Chip" (Sharpes)

*Wall sculpture utilizes a commonly seen object used for the disposal of syringes. The 120 Sharpes Containers are configured in nine repetitive segments representing the number of containers used for the by-product of the daily injections of the medication. **12 years, 624 weeks, 4,380 nightly shots of Copaxone.** After my injection I rewarded myself with a bowl of creamy delicious "Starbucks" Java Chip ice cream (hence the name Java Chip!) ...Something to look forward to.*

7. “Fluid Treatment”

My interpretation of Leslie Tarlow’s work at the USC Multiple Sclerosis Comprehensive Care Center, wherein she guides patients through their individualized treatment regimen, utilizing my saline bottles from my Copaxone treatment, and injecting my journey with MS into the piece.

The bottles are filled with brightly colored liquid, arranged in two “S” curves one on top of the other. The color and the quantity of the liquid in each bottle represent the various types and amounts of treatment utilized by each patient. The shape of the two “S” curves and the order in which the liquid filled bottles are arranged is unique as is each person’s experience with the disease.

The options within each service/treatment area are numerous and can be overwhelming. Ms. Tarlow and the USC Comprehensive Care Team evaluate each patient’s diagnosis and symptoms, discussing the choices with the patient to provide the best available approach. Like the “S” curves, treatment is fluid and continues to evolve as does each patient’s’ journey with MS.

8. “Kaleidoscope”

The Kaleidoscope Mobile Sculpture, continues the theme of how I try to live my life; be positive, create and grow.

The dangling images were created utilizing computer technology to generate bright and colorful kaleidoscopic images of one of my daily tools, pill boxes, filled with pills, capsules and liquigels. The eighteen little missiles, which I take in three daily increments, morning, noon and night, are an annoyance for sure, but they also assist in my treatment by targeting my various symptoms. In this piece, the pill boxes serve as the fertile ground in which the sculptural tree is sustained, and in creating the environment where the light can shine through.

The beauty of the dangling mobile of pill shaped objects represent my intent to see through the frustration and discomfort of my MS and thrive in my constantly changing and unpredictable life with this illness.

In the end, what matters most is how I choose to look at things, both in the course of my illness and my life as a whole.

9. “Kaleidoscope Pendants”

The patterns from the “Kaleidoscope” pills were colorful, beautiful and unique so, I created pendants with the images. Looking at them gives me great pleasure and joy...and I’m able to share them with others.