

AWARENESS

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

~ by Susan Alvarez

In our continued efforts to help spread awareness on the importance of early breast cancer screenings, on October 29, Borinquen Medical Center of Miami-Dade is collaborating with the YWCA Greater Miami Wellness Program and the City of North Miami Beach in sponsoring a Breast Health Prevention and Education Event. The YWCA will be conducting the actual presentation and Borinquen's Outreach Mobile Van will be on site at 13621 NE 21st Avenue by 10AM to provide "check-ups" for the Highland Village Community. For more information, please call: Rasha Cameau, CRA/City Coordinator, City of North Miami Beach at 305-787-6053.

STILL BEAUTIFUL

Breast cancer is so personal to so many of us. We feel the need to make an impact, express the hurt, pain, sadness and even loneliness felt when battling this horrific disease. Sometimes the best way to do just that is through art, creating it, being a part of it in some way or simply, just viewing it. And have we mentioned that the arts are an essential component to health, healing and well-being, recently? So to stand in solidarity with those that are fighting or have fought this battle themselves or have sat along side helplessly watching a family member or a friend suffer, we would like to share a couple of those stories here with you.

Please introduce yourself: My name is Niki Lopez and I am a multi-media visual artist, independent graphic designer, and mom. Proud of my Panamanian, Jamaican, & Cuban heritage and born in New York, in other words - a true Floridian. I live in a art community and have been exhibiting my art since 2008. I also produce a yearly month long art event that combines art, performance and community outreach.

What can you tell us about your art piece/ how would you describe it? "Still Beautiful" this painting was originally created for, and juried selected into Soffer Art Collective's annual poster fundraiser - that was showcased in South Florida and New York. The poster show's silent auction benefited a breast cancer awareness group. Even though the theme was opened, I choose to do a painting that not only showed a graphic presentation of breast cancer, but also symbolizes the beauty, power and strength that still exist in the women that have gone through cancer and our families that have been affected. The choice to paint the woman female in this painting as pink is because breast cancer affects all races. The responses I get from showing the scar so boldly has been mixed. Some feel it may be too graphic, and others, ironically other women who have had cancer or have had a love one go through it has felt more drawn to the image because of it. For me, I didn't want to cover it. I didn't want it to be shameful. One of my favorite quotes always comes to mind when I think of the painting: "Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars."



Artist, Niki Lopez

I wanted to do something with this image to get it out to the public, and didn't know where to start. I created small posters of the painting. For a short time, I did a partnership with the Susan G Komen foundation where I would contribute and donate a portion of the sales to the foundation. Since then I have been a feature artists in many breast cancer awareness and fundraising events with local non profit organizations. I've donated prints to be used for fundraising efforts, and have exhibited the painting along with offering the prints for sale. My commitment is to always donate towards local communities that are support for women with breast cancer as well as well as locals fundraising for a cure.

I also launched a Facebook page dedicated to the piece <https://www.facebook.com/stillbeautiful> to connect and share with other women and families. On this page I share a variety of things from powerful quotes by women and women with breast cancer, success photos I find on the net and social media of cancer survivors of people wanting support or a prayer, as well as share health tips and alternative medicine articles of staying healthy and food to eat to help with cancer, lower the risk, and just better health. I also share great finds from other breast cancer pages as well as give some of the posters away there. Though the poster art is for sale, the focus is being a support and sharing information and smiles. It's always great to get emails from many people around the globe that has somehow come in contact with my painting and compelled to share their story or how they relate to the painting with me. Over the years, a few people have asked me have I personally gone through the ordeal. I have not. I do have some family members who has battled with cancer and breast cancer, but for me it's something that has evolved and each time a stranger contacts me and share their story with me, I feel compelled to keep the page up and share more. It's the little things at times that can mean so much.

What are you trying to communicate with your art? My art is not confined to a single body of work. My work tends to be creative self-expressions and explore stories, symbols and concepts from ancient cultures and ideologies, as well as provoke thought as to the beliefs in other dimensions, and universes. Some of my work is abstract and me just exploring my canvas.



Niki Lopez, *Still Beautiful*, 2009
Acrylic on canvas, Dimensions: 20"x34"

-Kahlil Gibran

Spiritual Interpretive Fine Artist

As told by German Artist, Uta Nichts.

Born in Ediger-Eller Germany, Uta began showing an interest in the arts as early as Kindergarten where she showed an affinity for sculpture and painting. Like many a great artist before her, Uta felt compelled to create. She followed her passion into her teen years where she began to explore other facets of expression involving doll making and puppetry; this foré resulted in several juried prizes.

Uta went on to win many other contests in Germany displaying her full array of talents but then decided to take a spiritual break from the physical aspects of art to seek other forms of expression.

Uta then came to the United States in 1987 to discover an entirely new culture. During this time period Uta exhibited her work in various Galleries. Uta is an ever evolving spirit who sees art as a pathway to the soul. Uta Nichts resides in Miami Florida.

That's how my Bio read before 2009.

To make a long story short and not so boring I start with a wonderful evening on the

Brooklyn Bridge end of June 2009

Perfect light, pink colors in the sky, just before the sun sets for the night. Accompanied by a great friend, a friend I had to promise after my return to Miami to get my breast checked. I was feeling discomforted and pain in my left breast for some time. So I did, again long story short, Mammogram and off to a biopsy on July 16 2009, July 17 2009 all hell broke loose. The Pathology report 7 pages long, Invasive ductal carcinoma, Grade III, Estrogen receptor: negative, Progesterone receptor: negative, HER2 (Hercept test): negative.

In other words: triple negative, no hormone receptor involved, very little studies done on this kind of cancer. Only 10% of women with breast cancer are diagnosed with triple negative, therefore I decided to undergo a double mastectomy and Chemo. I choose to approach this cancer growing in my breast with aggressive western medicine tools, even though my heart and gut where directing me to the holistic, natural healing kind of method. **Anyway...** From July 17 2009 to end of April 2010 I only operated on survival mode. I was busy making decisions for getting the operation scheduled, doing research on a good reliable plastic surgeon, finding a suitable Oncologist, creating my support team for the new chapter in my life. **Check ✓ check ✓ check ✓ and done !**

Forwarding to the now 2013 and at this moment I'm cancer free. So much I would do different now after the fact...WOW, what a journey! I call it "the good the bad and the ugly" (Favorite movie of my friend who had urged me to see a doctor) Let's start **with the good:** I'm cancer free for the moment and I do my best to stay that way. I changed so much in my life since then. Anything and everything I can do to keep a healthy lifestyle!!! Is my priority. **The bad:** All the pain I had to endure, but all this is in the past now, time heals all wounds, just be patient and take it one day at the time! **The ugly:** WOW! Now you get me started, but because it is in the past and we can't change the past I choose NOW not dwell on it anymore! **Instead:** I want to address some pointers to put on your checklist if you ever have to go through any illness or obstacles in your life. Stay calm and take a deep breath as many as you need, go inward and listen to your inner voice, seek as much information as you can, we are fortunate in this time and era to have the internet and hotlines, please take advantage of that great tool.

Don't be shy or insecure to ask questions, tape all your conversations with doctors or healthcare providers, so nothing will get lost and you can go back and listen to what was said again, because you will be overwhelmed by all what is said and mentioned. Belief in yourself as your higher power, only you can make the decisions for yourself, nobody else will or wants to take that burden on their shoulders, not even your family or closes friends. Don't feel disappointed by that, they don't know better and they shouldn't, because it is your business to take care of yourself. And please know there is always a light at the end of the tunnel!!! Here's a Poem I wrote during my walk through the tunnel.

**Dark shadows and darkness came over me
the sparkling light has gone?
Until recently, the sun was shining in my world!
And now I'm falling into a deep hole,
what awaits me down there?
Hopefully something that heals my wounds
Do not give up I say to myself
Is anyone else here...**

I'm also happy to announce, I became an Wellness Ambassador and Cancer Warrior. I teach workshops. Some of my favorite workshops are called Uta's Trust and Take Care of Yourself program Healing Beauty from the inside out and many more. Uta continues to work promoting the Breast Cancer Awareness Body Painting Project, A Fine Art & Photography Essay of Survivors showing September 7 through November 9, 2013 at Coral Springs Museum of Art and Pink Party October 24, 2013. Info www.csmart.org 954-340-5000.



CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

~ by Ashley Desamours

Cervical Cancer occurs when abnormal cells in the cervix grow out of control. All women are at risk for developing cervical cancer (especially those over 30 years of age). Cervical cancer screening can help detect and prevent cervical cancer. Women should begin cervical cancer screening at age 21. Cervical cancer screening should be done every year. The human papillomavirus (HPV) is the main cause of cervical cancer. You can get HPV by having sexual contact with someone who has HPV. To find out more about cervical cancer screening visit our Women's Health Department on the 4th floor or call (305) 576-6611 ext. 1411. You may be eligible for free cervical cancer screening.



Uta Nichts Breast Cancer Awareness
Body Painting Project 9-16-2012