

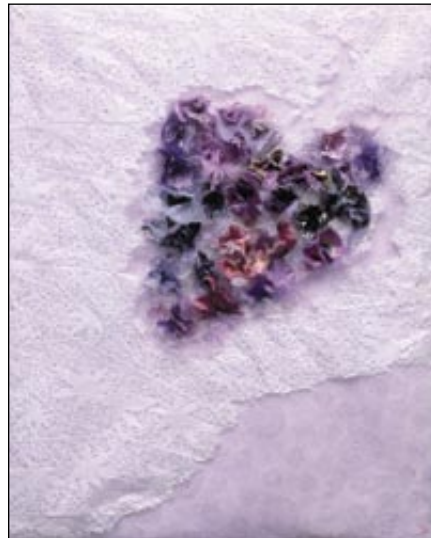
Hospice of Santa Barbara

Fragile Tissues of the Heart

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

TO EXPLORE THE RESILIENT, YET FRAGILE, NATURE OF THE HEART, artist Angela Valente creates beautiful yet powerful pieces of art using only paper, glue, and canvas. Her first solo show *Fragile Tissues of the Heart* is currently on display at Hospice of Santa Barbara through March 31st.

“One spring day my brother’s heart stopped beating and he died at his son’s



Fragile Tissues of the Heart by Angela Valente

Little League game. At the same time I was grieving the loss of my marriage and learning to live with a chronic illness,” wrote Valente in her artist’s statement. “Creating this exhibition was my way to explore how our hearts break and how we find our way to wholeness again.”

Fragile Tissues of the Heart is the Hospice of Santa Barbara’s inaugural exhibition, with plans to feature artists like Valente who explore their personal journey through grief or a life-threatening illness. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds from the art sales will benefit Hospice of Santa Barbara.

Eleven of Valente’s emotional pieces line the walls of Hospice of Santa Barbara’s Leigh Block Room, with an open invitation from the artist to touch the artwork. “In grief, we often become wordless. By touching something, it becomes real,” said Valente, who told a story about how the night before the opening, Valerie Moore, an art therapist, brought the children’s grief group at Hospice of Santa Barbara in to see the exhibition. The children were given a paper heart of their own with a hole cut into the middle. After decorating their

hearts, they placed a votive candle in the hole and observed a moment of silence for their loved ones.

Valente became an artist only five years ago, when she felt inspired to express herself through art. “When I arrived at the art store, I realized I didn’t know anything about paint,” she said. “I grew up sewing and loved working with textiles and color, so when I saw

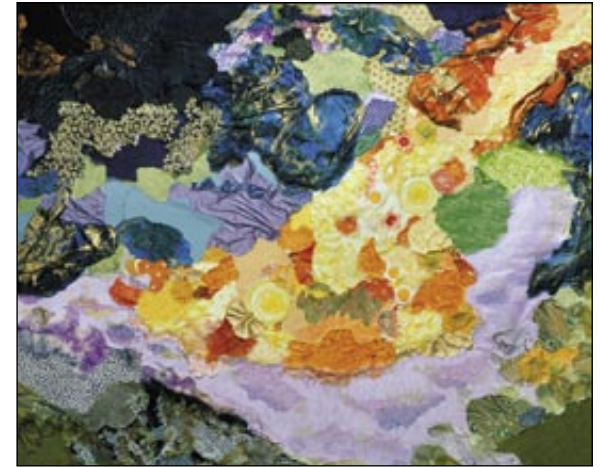
this beautiful paper, I thought I could use it like paint.”

Using handmade paper from as far as Thailand and Nepal, as well as France and Vermont, Valente layers and molds the paper into deeply textured works of art. “I love the feel of each paper under my fingers and the vibrant colors,” said Valente. “It’s the first time I’ve created something and haven’t needed the approval or confirmation of someone else. I’m satisfied when a piece is complete, and I’m delighted to share it with others.”

Valente came to Santa Barbara seeking wellness and the chance for a new life. As a recently tenured Professor of English as a Second Language at Pacific Union College, Valente was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. “I had to stop working, because I was so sick,” said Valente. “I knew if I



Angela Valente



Wonder and Step Back Into It by Angela Valente

stayed in the same environment that I would stay sick. I’ve been here for 14 years, and I’m well.”

Now, Valente works as an Educational Therapist and runs a private practice where she specializes in working with bright children who have learning differences – which leaves plenty of time to create art.

“I hope that in my journey through grief, people experience a moment of beauty and well-being in the world and come away with the idea that we are both fragile and resilient,” said Valente.

Hospice of Santa Barbara is located at 2050 Alameda Padre Serra, Suite #100. Hours are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. For more information, call 563-8820.