

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

A touching exhibition

"Fragile Tissues of the Heart" art on display at Hospice of Santa Barbara

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"Fragile Tissues of the Heart"
COURTESY PHOTOS



"Dying Son," which has a 2-foot-hole in the center, are two pieces of Angela Valente's art work that will be on display in

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Local artist Angela Valente hopes that those who view her exhibition "Fragile Tissues of the Heart" will disregard the admonition "Look, but don't touch."

"I want them to touch the pieces to feel how durable they are," said Ms. Valente, who's featuring paper on canvas. "When we lose something meaningful in our lives, we feel very fragile, but then we discover that we are quite resilient and strong."

Ms. Valente, 45, whose work will be shown from Thursday through March 31 in the Leigh Block Room at Hospice of Santa Barbara, speaks from experience.

During a three-month period in 2001, her brother died from an undiagnosed heart condition, she was going through a divorce and she was learning to live with a chronic illness.

"'Fragile Tissues of the Heart' is an expression of my transformative passage through grief," said Ms. Valente, who had to leave her position in 1986 as a professor of English as a Second Language at Pacific Union College in Napa Valley when she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. "I had to stop working because I was so sick," she said.

Ms. Valente will donate 25 percent of all proceeds from her art sales to Hospice of Santa Barbara. She is the first artist to be featured in a solo art exhibition in the Leigh Block Room as an art gallery space. An opening reception will be held from 4:30 p.m. Thursday. Wine, donated by Jordano's Inc., and cheese will be served. There will also be live music. Angel Tolentino, a Peruvian flutist/guitarist, will perform.

Ms. Valente said she learned from a cardiologist that hearts are quite resilient.

"You can cut into a heart, and it can recover, according to the doctor. I think this resilience is both emotional and biological. Creating this exhibition was my way to explore how our hearts can break, and we can find our way to wholeness again," she said.

A resident of Santa Barbara since 2000, Ms. Valente now has a private practice as an educational therapist.

Five years ago, she began creating works of art by gluing all sorts of paper from around the world on canvas.

"Some of the paper is made from cotton, some from silk, some from the lokta bush in the Himalayas and some from a mulberry and fig bush in Mexico," said Ms. Valente, who also buys

the exhibition "Fragile Tissues of the Heart" at Hospice of Santa Barbara.



Posing with "Wonder and Stepping Back Into It" is artist Angela Valente.

locally from Art Essentials.

"Anytime I see interesting paper in a store window I dash in and try to buy it," she laughed.

The exhibition is laid out in two adjoining spirals: The first loop, with four large canvases, explores the initial stunning and numbing stages of grief. The second loop displays much smaller canvases, gradually increasing in size, representing how a person hesitantly takes steps back into life.

Some of the canvases are as large as 4 by 5 feet.

"You do not end the exhibition where you began because after deep grief you are located in a different place emotionally," she said.

For more information about the exhibit, call 563-8820 or go to www.hospiceofsantabarbara.org.

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IF YOU GO

"Fragile Tissues of the Heart," an exhibition of work by local artist Angela Valente, will be on display Thursday through March 31 in the Leigh Block Room at Hospice of Santa Barbara, 2050 Alameda Padre Serra. There will be an opening reception from 4:30 p.m. Thursday. Admission is free. Twenty-five percent of proceeds from art sales benefits Hospice. Hospice hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call 563-8820 or go to www.hospiceofsantabarbara.org.