ART BY PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES
Ray Paul, artist and patient

My name is Ray Paul, an artist, musician, biologist, and sarcoma patient receiving care at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida. My sarcoma journey began in the spring of 2011, when I noticed a rapidly enlarging lump protruding from my left flank. When I received “The Call” to tell me that I had a sarcoma, shock and confusion rushed in, but curiously was followed by a sense of calm resolve and numb determination. Fear was thankfully suppressed. By pure, sublime serendipity, my next-door neighbor and friend, Dr. Jacob Scott, happened to be a resident in the radiation department at Moffitt. Through him, I have enjoyed a deep well of knowledge, compassion, honesty, and inspiration. For that I am eternally grateful.

I was admitted to Moffitt for treatment in September 2011. I enthusiastically and gratefully took part in a phase II clinical trial using a combination of high dose radiation therapy with intratumoral dendritic cells. I also contributed to the Moffitt Total Cancer Care protocol with lifetime prospective follow-up. After undergoing surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy, I am now in remission.

This life-consuming ordeal has taught me a lot. I have placed my complete faith and trust in my team at Moffitt and in my physical and spiritual ability to heal. I am supported by friends, family, and my steadfast partner, Missie. I made the decision to go public with my battle, posting my progress on Facebook. The outpouring of love and support has been overwhelming and has provided me with a warm blanket of peace and strength.

I am currently embarking on a collaborative endeavor entitled, “The Sarcoma Project.” By combining painting, photographic images of my tumor cells, printmaking, video, and music, I strive to create an exhibit that illuminates my experience as an artist and cancer patient. My pathologist at Moffitt, Dr. Marilyn M. Bui, has graciously shown me my pathology slides and provided me with digital images of the tumor histology. She has stepped out of the shadows of the lab and made me realize that pathologists are an integral part of the team and are vital to patient care.

Through Dr. Bui’s vision of creating The Healing Art of Pathology, she has helped me begin my journey from a cancer patient back to an artist. All my experiences as a biologist, artist, and cancer patient seem to be coalescing in this project. Hazy memories of biology experiments involving plasmid mobilization and bacterial resistance, forms and shapes that have evolved in my paintings over the past 10 years, and the inspiration I have gleaned from my time at Moffitt have all come into focus and have given my work direction and resolution. This revelation has led me to a deep understanding and appreciation of my life and work. I envision my art to be a persistent, visual manifestation of the battle raging within and a powerful testament to the beauty of hope.

About the artist

Ray Paul began drawing and painting as a young boy, so art has always been a part of his life. Animals and images from National Geographic magazine were his early subjects. Growing up in Ohio, dreams of Florida and all things tropical helped him survive the dreary winters and infused his palette with saturated hues. This, and a fascination with science, led him to Florida State University, where he received a BS in biology in 1986. Returning to his first love, art, Ray earned his MFA in painting from the University of Cincinnati in 1991.

Ray currently resides in Tampa, where he maintains a studio. His work is a synthesis of life experiences and a desire to illuminate the subconscious. Elements of abstract expressionism, surrealism, pop art, biology, and psychedelic music all combine and intertwine, creating a unique style of abstract painting. Each work is an experiment, as different paints mix and swirl, with meticulous layering providing the final touch. More of his information can be found at raypaulart.com and 19karen.com.au.
Ray Paul
*My Sarcoma #2, 2013*
Acrylic, latex, and enamel on canvas printed with a photographic image of the metastatic sarcoma to my lung, 26 × 36 in
This piece is my attempt to face my cancer head-on through my artwork. I am throwing all of my paint, energy, and soul into this battle.

Ray Paul
*My Sarcoma #3, 2013*
Acrylic, latex, and enamel on canvas printed with a photographic image of the metastatic sarcoma to my lung, 26 × 36 in
This piece is in homage to Dr. Marilyn Bui and her pathology team, as well as all the wonderful doctors and staff at Moffitt. I am eternally grateful and will fight on!

Ray Paul
*Dendritic Swarm, 2013*
Acrylic, latex, and enamel on canvas printed with a photographic image of the metastatic sarcoma to my lung, 26 × 36 in
This piece is a visual manifestation of the dendritic cell trial.
Ray Paul

*Tour*, 2010
Acrylic, latex, and enamel on canvas, 48 × 48 in

The title of this piece is a reference to the Tour de France.
The abstract imagery evokes my love of the sport.
The fitness gained by cycling has provided me with strength to fight this cancer.
Artist’s statement

I believe the creative process must be preceded by some primordial urge, some instinctive need. This is followed by the desire to reach a state of child-like innocence, and thus the condition of the primal shaman. In this uninhibited emotional realm, the seed of a work of art is created. This seed is fertilized by the subconscious and brought to the embryonic level. Here, the conscious attains control, nurturing and developing the embryo into maturation. The result of this process is a work of art. The artist must be in tune with his/her true self, the subconscious, contemporary society, the vast history of art and civilization, and the wonderful complexities of the paint itself. Thus, a work of art can be viewed as a visual distillation of life experience, knowledge, and instinct. However, a work of art is not complete until it reaches an audience, until it finds that secret realm of shared humanity.

Ray Paul

Flowers for Phoebe, 2010
Acrylic, latex, and enamel on canvas,
48 × 48 in

Ray Paul

Dark Shadows, 2010
Acrylic, latex, and enamel on canvas,
30 × 30 in
Courtesy of 19 Karen Contemporary Artspace,
Mermaid Beach, Australia

In the midst of darkness and struggle, life springs eternal, as represented by the blooming daisies.