

Emerging Hope in the Face of Bioterrorism: Affirming Life at a Time of Fear

Paintings as a Medium to Convey Hope



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Jenny Sage, Age 18

In this first painting a boy cares for his dog during a bioterrorist attack. Hope and strength are communicated in the images of the boy and his dog. The boy is protecting and caring for his dog, making certain that his dog has a mask. He comforts and calms his dog during the attack. The boy and dog are on equal ground during this difficult time. They look at each other eye to eye with serious

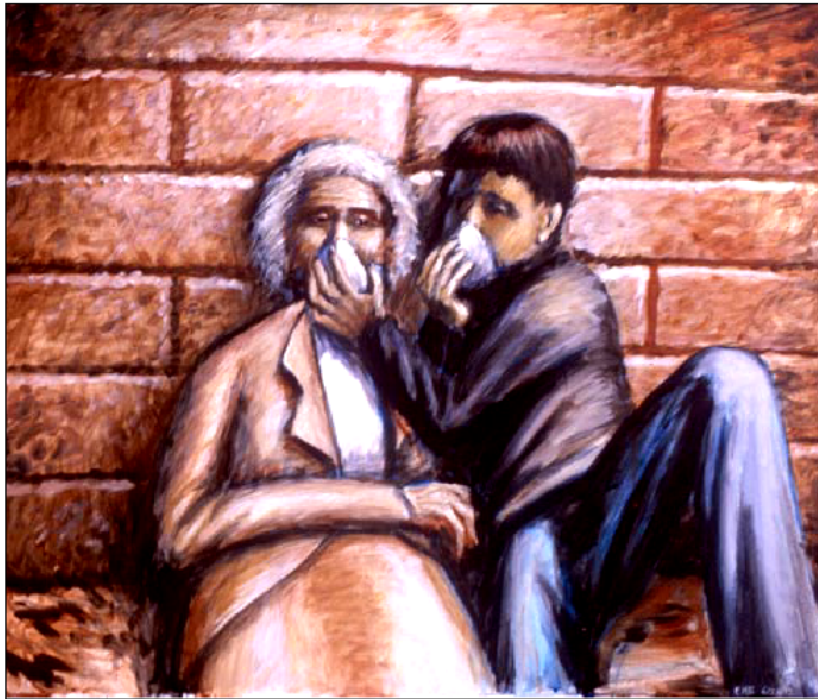
but calm gazes. Between them stands a male figure. He has just emerged from an area of darkness suggestive of an attack. He is flanked by two additional biohazard workers. The contrast between the black of the background and the bright yellow areas on the workers' uniforms suggests a sense of hope shining through from the darkness of an attack.



Natasha Lewondroski, Age 17

Here we see action: a father receiving a vaccination to prevent disease and provide protection. He is a strong and powerful figure in the central position of the painting. He endures some pain while being comforted by his child. The message on the wall communicates action. There are things we can do to protect ourselves before, during and after an attack. The intense light coming in from the window and spreading across the painting creates a strong aura of hope.





Edmund Earle, Age 16

A child is offering support to an elderly woman who appears somewhat frail and demoralized as seen in her slouching position and the distant look in her eyes. The young boy appears strong. His helping hand and arm, holding her mask, are carefully and precisely rendered. The contrast in colors of the boy's darker arm against the woman's lighter clothing heightens the sense of the boy's strength. Additionally, the three dimensional rendering of the boy's arm seen in the crevices of the folds of the fabric are contrasted against the rather flat rendering of the woman's figure. This detail also adds power and strength to the boy. The setting is somber, a brick wall with nowhere to turn. Despite the fears they are facing, the expectation of recovery and survival appears ever so subtly in the almost halo-like image of light surrounding the figures' heads.

Elizabeth Fisher, Age 17

In this painting hope is evidenced by the bright green grass, the bright blue sky, the brighter colors of the child's clothing, and the ray of light that surrounds the child. The child has emerged from an area marked by the biohazard symbol on the fence. The fence has parted for him to emerge. Symbolic of his strength is his central position in the painting. The firemen are painted in gray silhouette. These figures strongly but quietly surround and protect the fenced area. Their tools are positioned like an archway framing the area where the boy emerges safely. The boy, however, is not sure that he is safe. His puffed cheeks suggest that he has been holding his breath, afraid to breathe.





Heather Dwyer, Age 17

Superimposed on the word “Bioterrorism” in this painting are figures of a man and a woman helping and supporting each other. They emerge from a fairly dark background and are seen as bright translucent figures floating above the word bioterrorism, thereby transcending it. The figures are repetitive images that move across the surface of the canvas in varying sizes. The use of repetitive images enhances and heightens the idea that mutual support can help one move beyond moments of terror. The message of support in the images of the figures is given additional strength through the use of complementary colors. The orange of the figures against the blue of the background intensifies this message.



Ryan Smith, Age 18

The words in this painting point to the importance of educating the public about bioterrorism, as well as the importance of groups working together at the time of a bioterrorist attack. The painting depicts a policeman and a Red Cross worker aiding citizens with information they can use to protect themselves. The dominant figure, the policeman, points his finger in the direction of help and safety, suggesting power and energy. The contrast of light and shadow on all of the figures suggests strength, while the closeness of the figures conveys a sense of unity during a difficult time.

Gabriel Abrantes, Age 17

A young man is emerging from an area that has flooded. We can see the sandbags in the background. His image is powerful and strong, as seen in his musculature. Compositionally he dominates the canvas. He is in the center of the painting and in the center of the action. He is strong and will prevail. His central position portrays heroism and leadership. The bright whiteness of the sky portrays hope. It is future oriented: a new day is coming. There are still lingering gray clouds, symbolic of the horror that has passed. The boy's facial expression is not fearful but thoughtful. He is a young hero.





Gabriel Abrantes, Age 17

The firefighter is a universal heroic image of strength, help, hope, support and recovery. In this painting, he is emerging from a disaster area that could be anywhere. His image goes beyond the frame of the painting. His helmet is not completely seen. Part of it is outside of the picture plane, as are his legs and feet. The firefighter is keeping the community safe by preventing anyone from entering the area. He is strong in his stance, protecting his community during a bioterrorist attack.

Gabriel Abrantes, Age 17

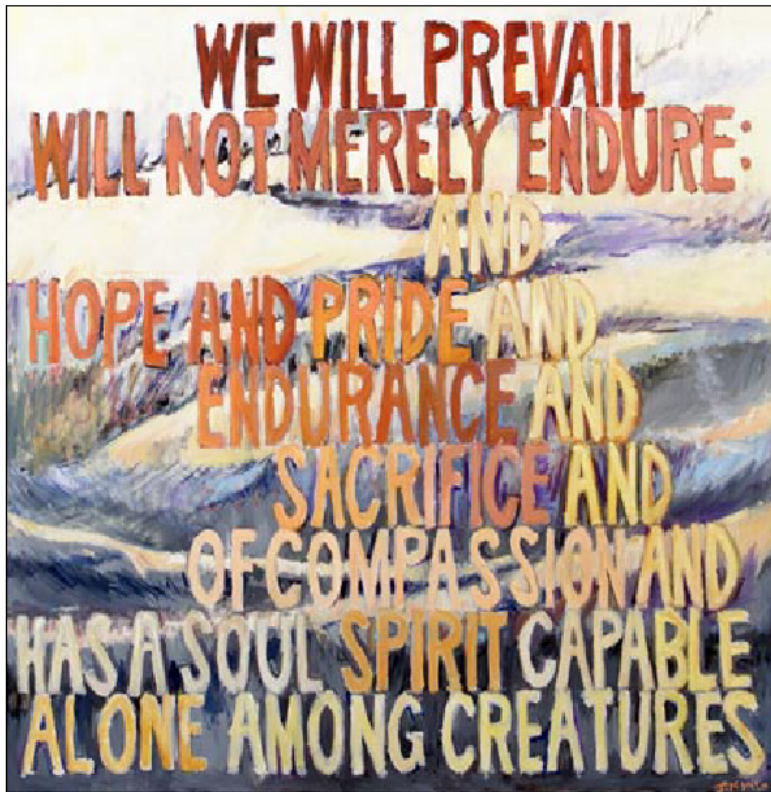
In a toxic environment, a worker wearing protective gear is also heroic. His protective face covering allows him to breathe freely and in doing so suggests that we will recover and rebuild. Standing in front of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., he symbolizes freedom and the recovery of a nation.





Johnny Chang, Age 17

A young man is leading a group to safety after an attack. Ordinary citizens can be heroes even if they are afraid. The central figure of the young man emerges from a contaminated area. The darkness of the smoke has lifted. It is gray rather than black. The young man has removed his gas mask; it is safe to do so. Some of the people behind him are still wearing their masks, not quite sure whether it is yet safe to be without them. The boy has a serious and thoughtful look. He does not look afraid but clearly understands the gravity of what has occurred. He dominates the painting as a leader of those behind him. Next to him is a small girl. Her hope is seen in the flower on her shirt and the ribbons in her hair. Her hands are raised in relief. The painting is done in somber tones of grays and blacks. It is reminiscent of drawings created by Henry Moore of the underground tube stations in London during World War II. Moore's drawings depicted people who slept in the stations during the bombing attacks. His drawings were also rendered in grays and blacks: tones that are more serious and neutral, calming because there are none of the jarring effects that colors can create.



Jacob King, Age 18

This painting uses Faulkner's words, reading from bottom to top, to portray that hope will prevail despite adversity. The artist relies on words as graphic images to communicate his message. The words appear on a background that is ambiguous but suggests terrain. The colors in the words become more intense as the message moves upwards culminating in the brightness of "We will prevail." The intensity of the colors strengthens the message and the expectation of overcoming a bioterrorist attack.



Rodrico Brown, Age 13

This painting illustrates people singing in church, turning to faith based communities for strength and meaning. The people are engaged in daily living, hopeful in a time of fear. The figures are standing close to one another, even touching, suggesting togetherness, cohesion and strength. The strong colors of the painting enhance the sense of unity and hope.

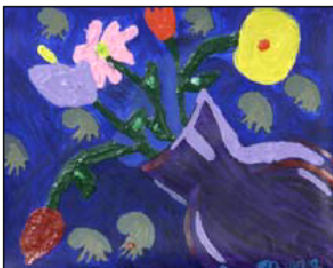


Olivia Croxton, Age 12

This painting depicts floral shapes. At a time of fear and confusion, flowers bring light to our eyes, a smile to our face and a reminder of spring, a time of renewal and hope. A round shape of yellow and green on the right side of the painting suggests the sun with its rays reaching towards the growing flower. The mood is calm, hopeful and affirming of the life around us.

Amy Milikan, Age 13

Amy painted two paintings that focus on natural and floral forms. The first painting is dominated by two large flowers. Additional round floral-like shapes appear in the painting. The many green leaves suggest growth and renewal of the spring and summer seasons. This painting, similar to the previous painting, is reminiscent of the expectation of a new and hopeful life.



The second painting created by Amy is also filled with floral shapes of red, yellow and lavender colors. They are placed in a vase and are contrasted against a darker blue and purple background heightening the boldness of the image. Again, the flowers symbolize new growth and hope for the future. The boldness of the image conveys the power and strength of moving forward and entering a new season of the year and of our lives.



Ashley Johnson, Age 12

In this painting members of a family are seated together on a couch in their living room watching television and drawing strength from one another. The colors used in the painting are intense blues, bright yellow and red. The brightness of the colors affirms life at a time when the message on the television might be fearful. Additionally, being indoors with one's family doing familiar tasks conveys a feeling of security, comfort, and hope.

Toura Perkins, Age 13

This painting shows an interior school scene. School is a part of the normal everyday life of children. Being in school brings routine, friends and familiar tasks, all of which return life to its usual events and timing. We see books in the background and two shapes that appear to be lockers on the right side of the painting. Again, the colors are bright and vibrant blues, yellow and red, colors that are hopeful and affirming in their intensity. There are also windows filled with bright yellow suggesting sunshine and a new day.





Maryam Mohensi, Age 17

This vertical floral painting filled with bright and intense colors portrays the possibilities of beauty and growth even after a bioterrorist attack. While yellow bacteria linger on the orange background, the flowers are a reminder that we will “get well.” This message is, in fact, written inside the three dimensional card attached to the painting.

Cecile Berberat, Age 17

This painting depicts universal themes of hope for the future. The books suggest that there will be an opportunity for more learning and for future mankind to experience peace. The roundness of the carpet mirrors the roundness of the globe on the bookcase, images symbolic of the world. They seem to communicate a joining together in global peace. The mother is protective of the child and educating the child using building blocks of peace.

