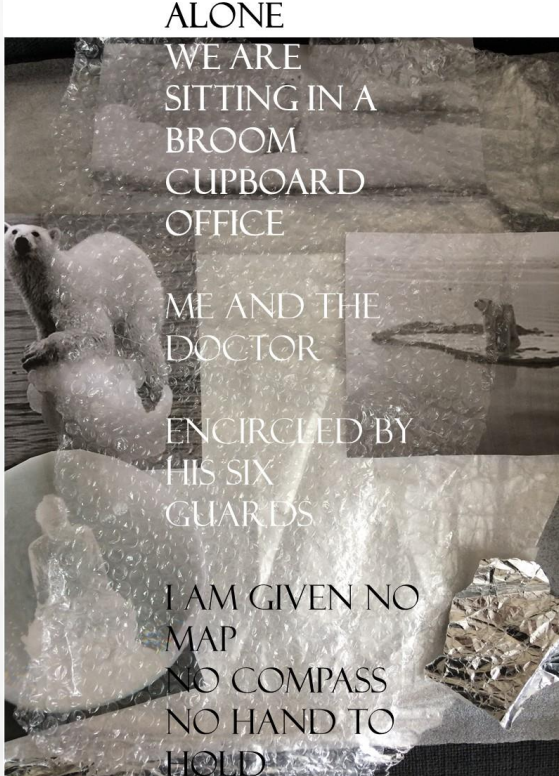


When I die these trees will still be here in all their magnificence and my son will still come here and scrape the rich earth with his strong hands in search of precious roots. Life will continue in the wood.  
My picture shows the tree in colour against black because the feeling of trees that night was of warmth. They were in silhouette, but the nature of them was bright.  
F, 53, breast cancer

The image of the polar bear came in a conversation I had with a loved one when I was trying to explain how I felt. I felt I was drifting away from someone I loved and who loved me, no longer counted among the general population on land. This illness was separating us. It was borne of a deep sadness. This was in the days after my operation and before I had the results of the analysis of the tumour they removed.  
F, 60, breast cancer

Before my diagnosis and treatment I spent a lot of time with Ravens on the mountain ridges of Snowdonia. I would soar high above the crags, catching the wind as it was lifted up the dark cliffs, diving, flipping, feeling the wind with every outstretched feather. After my treatment I was grounded and could only watch from a distance as my majestic friends flew the high ridges. I could no longer join them in their free flight. My four-year check up found no trace of cancer, and since my last clear results. For the first time since my diagnosis I believe that I will, once again join them.  
F, 53, breast cancer



Engagement with creative arts and engagement with nature has been shown to have a positive impact on cancer patient wellbeing. In an integrated arts-for-health enquiry we looked into how cancer patients described visually their engagement with nature and the role it had on their healing journey post-treatment.

Seven participants used plant (trees, the lotus flower, sunflowers, and shoots) and animal (raven, butterfly, polar bear) imagery to describe their experience. Natural elements were either used as metaphors of suffering or healing, or described actual lifeforms with which the patient developed a special connection during their journey. Shoots, sunflowers and the lotus flower symbolised hope and re-growth. Trees symbolised strength in vulnerability. Ravens symbolised freedom. A polar bear on a piece of ice floating away in the ocean symbolised the loneliness experienced after receiving a cancer diagnosis. The sighting of a butterfly with a broken wing resembled the female body after mastectomy. Images and personal descriptions have the potential to communicate experiences much more effectively than words.

We have used these images in cancer care education to promote person-centred and compassionate care.

More research is needed in understanding the role of nature in cancer survivorship and how to effectively use creative methodologies in social science research into illness experiences.

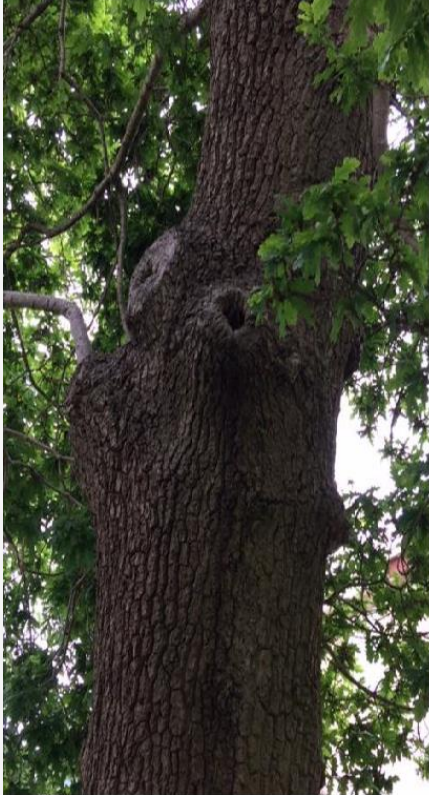
For more information:  
<https://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/cancerservicesresearch/art/>



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'Observe a tree, grow in peace' Trees are symbols of physical and spiritual nourishment, transformation and liberation, sustenance, spiritual growth, union and fertility.  
F, 40, breast cancer

Coming Home



SAFETY  
SECURITY  
  
A FIXED  
POINT  
THE  
FARAWAY  
TREE  
  
IS CLOSE  
TO MY  
WARM  
BEATING  
HEART  
  
LIVING  
STRONG  
ALIVE



This was inspired by a photograph of a butterfly someone else had taken when it landed next to her, and her observation of how it was broken but still beautiful, like her. It really spoke to me. For my painting, I switched over the broken wing to the left side, to represent my cancer and mastectomy side. The drops coming from the broken wing are blood and tears, representing the physical and emotional brokenness I have experienced through breast cancer.  
F, 35, breast cancer

The natural world became an important part of the healing process for me – being close to nature became a way of releasing some of the emotional turmoil and stress that resulted from my diagnosis. This tree offered a place of safety and peace. I felt a connection with it – it seemed strong and magnificent in spite of a wound in its side.  
F, 60, ovarian cancer