

# analog artist Digital World



## The Orlando Florida Sketchbook of Thomas Thorspecken

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THURSDAY, JULY 21, 2011

The Creative Center's AIR Program funded by LIVESTRONG



United Arts applied for a grant to **LIVESTRONG** to bring the creative process to patients at MD Anderson Cancer Center. The Creative Center Artist-In-Residence Program was made possible through a cooperative agreement with **LIVESTRONG**. This is the inaugural year and I arranged to sketch Andrea Canny as she brought art to patients. I met Katie Dagenais in the lobby and she arranged for patients to sign releases before leaving me with Andrea. Joan Dougherty was the patient we visited with. Joan sat in the tiny room with her friend waiting to get her chemo therapy. Andrea explained all the art supplies she had on her cart and Joan quickly decided she would do a collage on a mat for Nina, her grandchild.

I thought back to when I was ten years old waiting in a hospital in NYC, a woman invited me to create a small mosaic for my mother who had breast cancer. I became so focused on those tiles intent on creating a masterpiece for Mothers Day. My mom died the day before Mothers Day so she never saw that creation. She was just 47 years old. I wonder where that mosaic is now.

THOMAS THORSPECKEN



**THOR**  
I am an illustrator and journalist working in and around Orlando Florida. I started this blog January first of 2009 with the intent to post a sketch a day. This is my way to finally put down some roots, to become part of a community one sketch at a time. Contact: thorspecken@earthlink.net (407) 760-2813

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APRIL 2011



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A nurse entered and hooked an IV up to Joan's left wrist. She complained briefly of a burning sensation near the IV site on her wrist, then she started cutting paper in a flurry of artistic activity. She chose a red background with organic swirls rising from the bottom of the page. She then carefully cut out butterflies which she glued in the corners. Her friend said, "I could never do something that artistic, I would rather get a beating!" We all laughed. Andrea started explaining the importance of art in schools and then she had to check in on another artist she was inspiring in the next room. The complex looking IV machine started beeping incessantly. I started to wonder if something was wrong. Joan was lost in her creative process so I relaxed. Soon a nurse checked in and the beeping stopped.

Andre said that research showed that patients who were creating experienced pain far less than a control group. They never pushed the red pain medication button. **LIVESTRONG** is a national program but funding will have to come from grants applied for yearly or private donations. Joan cut out individual letters that spelled out NINA and she glued them to the mat. Her grandchild is at a stage where everything is fresh new and unexpected. Everything is a learning experience.

When Joan was finished with her creation, I finished with my sketch. Joan has a true artistic spirit. Faint wisps of hair lay on her shoulders having fallen from under her beautiful head scarf. It was inspiring to see that art could provide strength and meaning even when life is most challenging. **LIVESTRONG** offers support and resources to help patients face the challenges of cancer survivorship. Andrea gave Joan a book filled with resources and information. She also gave her a blank journal where she could create anytime.

Afterwards I sketched the MD Anderson Cancer Center. It thrusts up like a towering beacon of hope to help fight cancer. A group of three people walked up beside me. I thought they were curious about the sketch but they picked up a few soda cans scattered in my vicinity and shoved them in a large black plastic bag. They then stepped through a hole in a chain link fence and disappeared.

I thought back to the playful banter Andrea shared with Joan and the way that art can always enrich our lives. I hope that **LIVESTRONG** continues to flourish and grow here in Orlando. Not ready to die we **LIVESTRONG**.

POSTED BY THOR AT 1:00 AM

LABELS: ANDREA CANNY, JOAN DOUGHERTY, KATIE DAGENAIS, LIVESTRONG, MD ANDERSON HOSPITAL, UNITED ARTS

### 3 COMMENTS:

Cibelo Morais said...

Very expressive work. I liked it!

JULY 21, 2011 5:43 PM

Katie Dagenais said...

Thank you Thor for your beautiful sketches and your comments about the work we do here at MD Anderson Orlando.

JULY 26, 2011 10:11 AM

LIVESTRONG said...

So glad that you were able to participate in the program. LIVESTRONG funded 22 Creative Centers all over the US last year. It is our hope to fund even more cancer support programs in the years to come.

JULY 26, 2011 3:53 PM

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This project is funded in part by a Professional Development Grant from United Arts of Central Florida.



JULY 29-31 THE SKETCHBOOK PROJECT WILL BE ON DISPLAY AT FULL SAIL 3300 UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD



ORLANDO CORRESPONDENT

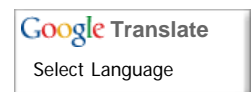


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