

Over the past year, I've been thinking a lot about art's power to heal. Amid the crises of the pandemic, the protests against systemic racism and police brutality, increasing political divisions, the economic and environmental disasters, I have witnessed how the arts can embody the voices of the underserved, the unheard, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised, acknowledging the collective mourning of many. Isolated dancers and dance companies produced and posted collaged video choreography, as did theatre companies and musicians in split-screen productions, independent makers raised funds to donate to social justice organizations by auctioning their works online, countless families and individuals produced handsewn masks, protest posters, yard signs for the election cycle, and collective actions such as the moving violin vigil for Elijah McClain in Aurora, CO. Galleries and museums, funding organizations and granting agencies joined in to promote the centrality of the arts to our survival. They affirmed what we know but rarely acknowledge- that making art is what makes us human. Providing access to the arts helps remind us of who we are, what we've lost, and how to persevere.

Artists and poets, playwrights and dancers, actors and musicians, are accustomed to working in a state of doubt and uncertainty - what Keats called Negative Capability - and with limited resources of space and time, money or access. Often considered the truthful voice of a culture, the arts can address what the culture is desperately missing. At a time when we are suffering from both collective and personal grief and are searching for hope and healing in our daily lives, the arts can offer us a space for mourning. They can allow us to feel vulnerable, be haunted by and confront our fears, bear witness to pain, break open our hearts and remind us of the beauty in the world.

For my part, I've been protesting and contributing my time and resources to local and national art and social justice organizations while working on several large-scale creative projects. More specifically, I've had the opportunity to focus on how sculpture can provide a space for healing through an invitation to design a sculpture garden on the sixth floor terrace of the new Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, which was scheduled to open in March of 2020. While the hospital is currently serving patients, the installation was postponed due to the pandemic and the production of five sculptures delayed. It is my hope that we will be unveiling the sculptural installation in early 2021.

Five sculptures will occupy a terrace that overlooks the East River and wraps the hospital on three sides. On the sixth floor, which houses the cafeteria and conference rooms, visitors and patients will be able to enjoy the lush plantings and tree-shaded benches and walkways of this terrace garden. At either end of this expansive terrace, two large-scale green wall-like forms inspired by architectural fragments and minimalist sculpture, frame the space. "Half Arch" and "Inverted L Beam," tall aluminum structures cloaked in green, terracotta, quatrefoil leaves, each suggest an upended or split portal. Spaced apart, between these bookend sculptures resembling hedges, three foliated, cast-concrete animals will live among the plantings within garden beds along the terrace. Larger-than-life, a squirrel, "The Collector (Memory)", dog "The Girlfriend (Fidelity)", and seated lion, "Wolfgang's Lion" occupy the stage of

this garden space as reminders of the denizens of NYC street life, and of the qualities we cherish and sometimes struggle to maintain in times of crisis: courage, remembrance, loyalty and friendship. The sculptures, all covered with a leafy surface, blend animal and architecture with natural forms, in an aim to collapse the distance between outside and inside, exteriority and interiority. The site of this garden, elevated high above the ground, asks us to suspend our disbelief, to dream, and - as only art can - allow us to reconstruct the world as we hope it could be.