

ART & HEALING

GUIDE



THE
ROCKWELL
MUSEUM
CORNING, NEW YORK

Acknowledgements

This gallery guide is the result of a community collaboration between The Rockwell Museum and area care organizations and was made possible with generous support by Art Bridges. Art Bridges works with museums of all sizes to create and support arts programs that educate, inspire, and deepen engagement with local audiences.

Recent studies have shown that appreciating and making art have measurable benefits on psychological and physiological health. This guide utilizes visual art to process challenges of mental health, memory loss, illness, injury, and other difficult life events.

The works of art selected, guiding questions, and accompanying activities have been provided by area organizations. We express our deepest appreciation to the participating organizations' staff, volunteers, and families, as well as community members who provided the thoughtful responses accompanying each work of art. We hope you will use this guide for yourself, a care partner, or with friends and family for reflection and healing.

Many thanks to our collaborators:

Alzheimer's Association

Bampa's House Comfort Care, Inc.

CareFirstNY

Memory Maker Consulting

This project is made possible with generous support by



Instructions

The works of art in this guide are located throughout the galleries.

- ▶ As you find the featured artwork, take time to do some close looking.
- ▶ Think about what you see, consider its story, and how it makes you feel (color, subject matter, etc.)
- ▶ Note the artists' decisions about the materials, style, and approach. How do these choices feed directly into the overall feel and meaning of the work?
- ▶ Then, relate this to what you have experienced in your own life.

This guide offers a brief description of the work of art and information about the artist. On the opposite page you will see **Community Voices** that are responses to prompts and questions. These reflections may resonate with you and help you to process your own experiences.

Remember, you don't need to know anything special about art to enjoy yourself in a museum. They are made for everyone, and your experience will be **personal to you**.

To enrich your museum experience, there are suggested art and writing activities throughout the guide. These activities are a great way to relax and engage with your inner artist!

Albert Bierstadt, *Mount Whitney*, c. 1877

Floor 3, Visions of America Gallery



Albert Bierstadt (1830 - 1902), *Mount Whitney*, circa 1877, oil on canvas, 69 × 116¾ in. Rockwell Foundation. 78.14 F

A powerful waterfall cuts through an expansive mountain range and cascades into a deep blue lake where rocks and fallen trees stick out from the shallow water. A majestic forest of evergreen trees shades a herd of deer and one looks directly at us. Heavy clouds arise from the snow capped peaks and gray ridges of the mountain.

Mount Whitney is a monumental example of late 19th century landscape painting that celebrates the vast wilderness of the new American territories. Such breathtaking scenes of the West were popular with audiences in the Northeast and are part of what is referred to as the Hudson River School. Though not an official school, it was a name applied to 19th-century painters who captured the beauty and majesty of the American landscape. Hudson River School paintings, though revered today, projected an imagined, largely uninhabited vision of the new nation. Thousands of Indigenous cultures were living on and caring for the land that these artists painted.

Landscapes continue to be one of the most accessible and universal genres of art that elicit the awe and wonder of the natural world. Landscapes evoke emotional connections and can take us to places that are meaningful and memorable.

ACTIVITY

Write a letter of gratitude to a place that is meaningful to you.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Where would you choose to go to feel relaxed? What would you do there?

“One place that I can let go and relax is the beach. In the water, I am weightless and my body has a break from pain. As the waves buffet me, I can give up just enough control to move with the water rather than fight against it.”

“I love how exploring the museum’s paintings is relaxing and brings back memories for me. This painting reminds me of the mind-blowing view from the top of Mount Marcy, the highest peak in New York State. I was so fortunate to make that climb with high-school friends over 60 years ago, and I can still remember what Montreal, Canada, looked like 65 miles away!”

“I would go to the ocean. I would walk the length of the beach and have a talk with myself and then go into the ocean to wash all the tension away. Then I would get my book out and read.”

“A comfortable chair is my choice to feel relaxed. I don’t need a lot of stimulation. With eyes closed, a focus on the breath of life, inhaling and exhaling, and feeling grateful for all of God’s gifts to me. I don’t need to travel to find relaxation.”

Elizabeth H. Remington, *Two Kings: Corn and Cotton*, 1876

Floor 3, Visions of America Gallery



Elizabeth H. Remington (1825 - 1917),
The Two Kings: Corn and Cotton, 1876, oil
on canvas, 36 x 26 in. Clara S. Peck Fund.
2015.2

Lush new blooms of cotton flowers and ripe ears of corn appear to be harmoniously growing together in front of a wooden fence.

This painting was created by Elizabeth Remington for the Centennial Exposition of 1876, held in Philadelphia, to celebrate one hundred years of American progress. The exhibition helped introduce the United States as a new industrial power and showcase Philadelphia as a center of culture and industry. This work is also an allegorical painting, using the two major crops of corn and cotton to represent the unification of the North and the South after the American Civil

War. It was an important time for the US to show unity and promote confidence in the country for economic and foreign relations.

In this painting, corn represents the major crop of the North. The sights, sounds, and feel of corn are ubiquitous in our region of New York State. We see it growing, we think of the sound of kernels popping, and the texture of the husks when preparing it for a meal. It fills our senses.

ACTIVITY

Create a tactile sensory board with materials that feel like the elements in the painting.

COMMUNITY VOICES

**Through our senses we experience our environment.
Which of your senses could you use to experience this piece?**

“This painting reminds me of playing and hiding in the cornfield as a kid.”

“I can smell this picture.”

“I remember feeling the fine corn silk and the rough corn leaves as I husked corn for dinner, an almost daily job of mine during the summer.”

“I think of late summer and picking/husking corn for dinner.”

“The sound and aroma of popcorn reminds me of when I was a child. Every Sunday afternoon, my parents would take me to the movies. We would all get an extra-large box of popcorn and eat it until our mouths puckered from all the salt. I miss those days and my parents. I smile with that memory, every time I eat or smell popcorn.”

Emmi Whitehorse, *Water & Mineral* #1246, 2000

Floor 3, Native American Gallery



Emmi Whitehorse (b. 1957), *Water & Mineral* #1246, 2000, mixed media on paper, mounted on canvas, 39 1/2 x 28 in. Clara S. Peck Fund. 2000.17.2

Water & Mineral is an abstract canvas with multi-layered meaning and media. Emmi Whitehorse explores memory, personal symbols, landscapes of the American Southwest, and her Diné (Navajo) culture. She is inspired by the seasons and nature's organic forms, which contribute to the ethereal nature of her canvases. Whitehorse explains that they, "tell the story of knowing land over time" and "being completely, microcosmically within a place."

Whitehorse credits her grandmother, a traditional Navajo weaver, as one of her earliest creative mentors who ingrained in her the Diné philosophy of Hózhó, or balance. Whitehorse's work fuses the

desire to reach balance between nature and the human world.

Water & Mineral draws us into otherworldly places. When experiencing grief or loss, we deal with uncertainty and face the unknown. Confronting illness or the loss of a loved one can be deeply painful and impact our daily lives. By acknowledging your feelings, you can begin the healing journey.

ACTIVITY

Create an abstract picture using symbols, line, and different media to visually express your feelings.

COMMUNITY VOICES

How could this artwork reflect your fears or worries for the future?

“I think this is what my mom’s mind looks like with dementia.”

“This must be what it may look like in a person’s mind who has been told they are dying. The dark is the sadness, the light is hope, and the shapes and lines are memories.”

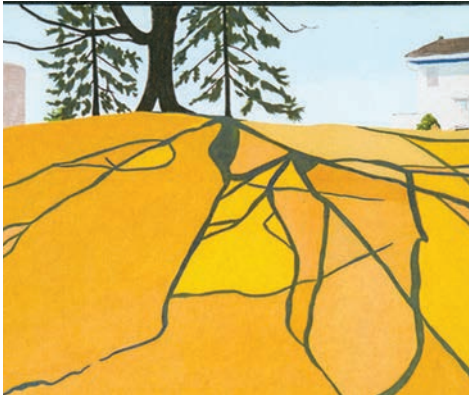
“It reminds me of what an anxious person’s mind might look like. There is always a little chaos in an anxious person’s mind, with many thoughts and worries floating around their mind at all times.”

“I don’t like uncertainty. It’s unsettling to not know what is coming next. And yet, looking back, I’m glad I didn’t know what was coming because I would have spent my life dreading it. For now, I will have to take things one step at a time, realizing that things don’t happen in the order that I planned.”

“In this painting I see areas of stability, of grounding that can come to us through our relationships with family and friends and natural surroundings. After all, rocks and minerals last forever, do they not?”

“The abstract circles floating in air or water suggests a feeling of uncertainty to me. It makes me feel as though our future is at the whim of the air’s breezes or the water’s currents.”

G. Peter Jemison, *North Farm Pine*, 2006
Floor 3, Haudenosaunee Gallery



G. Peter Jemison (b. 1945), *North Pine Farm*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 20 × 23¾ in. Clara S. Peck Fund. 2017.19.1

This spare and simple modernist landscape is enlivened by a vibrant warm palette to present an image of Haudenosaunee cultural beliefs specifically, the “Tree of Peace.” It is a white pine tree that symbolizes the unity of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Great Law of Peace. The featured house represents the artist’s home in Western New York.

Jemison (Seneca, Heron Clan) creates works that extend his Native heritage and enrich the stories told by American art. His paintings echo the symbolic power in Indigenous culture. Pine trees spread far reaching roots, which can be a metaphor for security and connection to the past. When connections with a friend or loved one are interrupted by illness or loss, it can challenge our sense of wellbeing and feeling rooted.

ACTIVITY

Draw the people who you imagine are living in the house. Paint your own colorful splotches representing things that make you happy. Draw lines to connect all the things that make you happy, symbolizing your network of support.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Much of a tree's structure is underground.

How does this image relate to your thoughts, feelings, worries or joys?

What meanings do these lines convey?

If troubling, can the lines be transformed to be life-supporting for you?

"I immediately saw the painting as a slice of the earth showing destabilizing cracks under elements of everyday life (house, trees, tall buildings) that threaten a happy life."

"There's more than meets the eye."

"We don't know what's under the surface."

"Living alone for the first time has presented me with both obstacles and opportunities. The roots remind me of my wonderful community of friends and family. Each person in my life meets different needs in different ways and depending on what challenges I am facing; I know I can reach out and have that someone get me through the tough times."

"Grief has a way of rocking your world in ways that you cannot imagine until you are going through it. I remember when my uncle died and how much it affected our family. He wasn't just my dad's brother, my uncle, he was my dad's best friend and a secondary father figure. The roots of the tree remind me of the interconnectedness of my family, and the light we find by talking about my uncle often and honoring his memory."

George Inness, *Landscape Sunset*, 1870

Floor 3, Visions of America Gallery



George Inness (1825 - 1894), *Landscape Sunset*, 1870, oil on canvas, 15 x 23 ¾ in. Clara S. Peck Fund. 2019.2.4

Shadowed trees, silhouetted against a pale cloudy sky, fill the center of this landscape painting. Beneath the trees, a split-rail fence separates two buildings from livestock that sit and stand in a pasture dotted with rocks and puddles of water. The painting portrays a rural landscape with hazy or blurred elements, so only with close looking can you see the details.

George Inness was one of America's leading landscape painters. He followed in the tradition of Hudson River School painters, such as Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand, who captured the majesty of the American wilderness. Inness' landscapes, however, feature peaceful scenes of humans and animals living in close harmony with nature.

ACTIVITY

Create a reflection of your own grief or loss by drawing or painting a landscape. Colors can often convey what words cannot. Look at a color wheel and pick the colors that best represent how you feel and then use those colors in a drawing or painting.

COMMUNITY VOICES

How does grief and loss change the landscape of your life? What helps you to find the light in the darkness?

“When the leaves begin to fall in the autumn and the trees are bare in the winter, I have flashbacks to the year that I was diagnosed and went through treatment. I used to love autumn, but now the earthy smells and beautiful colors bring back the fear and anger I felt. The cold days and the beautiful snowy view from my window remind me of how terrible I felt after each life-saving infusion. Someone recently told me that this year is going to be different because I am going to make it whatever I need it to be. That’s not to say it will be easy, but it will be new.”

“Before my husband passed away, our journeys over the mountains and through the forests and deserts of life were walked daily while holding each other’s hands for support and love. The experience of losing him has necessitated an acceptance that my life must go on without him physically by my side. I have learned I can move forward with my life, listening and responding to my heart and mind by sharing my thoughts with others through writing, painting, gardening, and nature walks.”

“The transition of light from darkness reminds me of the day of my father’s passing on a spring morning. When darkness sometimes crosses, I often reflect on that clear blue-sky morning to acknowledge there is brightness of light and will shine if looking for it.”

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, “Untitled,” (L.A.), 1991
On Loan from Art Bridges and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
Floor 3, Contemporary Gallery



Félix González-Torres (1957 - 1996), “Untitled” (L.A.), 1991, green candies in clear wrappers, endless supply, Overall dimensions vary with installation, Jointly owned by Art Bridges and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

This installation is made entirely of bright orange candies in a pile directly on the gallery floor. You are invited to participate in this conceptual work of art. Please take a piece of mango candy, unwrap it, place it in your mouth and taste the tart and sweet flavor.

Works like this are often associated with Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ relationship with his life-partner, Ross Laycock, who sadly died of an AIDS-related illness in 1991. The dwindling pile may be seen as a metaphor for the deterioration of the human body. This highly personal installation brings

attention to love, loss, remembrance, and grief, but also to joy, experienced through the candy’s sweet tanginess and zest.

Gonzalez-Torres also died of AIDS in 1996 at the age of 38. The ideas of longevity, human connectivity, and the human spirit are important elements in his work, as well as considerations of existence beyond life after the body decays. How are people remembered? How are important issues like the AIDS pandemic continually addressed? Gonzalez-Torres played an instrumental role in HIV and AIDS advocacy by spreading awareness of the illness and correcting misconceptions.

ACTIVITY

Create a ‘Life is Sweet’ list. Include at least one item each of something that gives you comfort to taste, smell, hear, touch, and see.

COMMUNITY VOICES

**Being offered a piece of candy can be a small,
universally comforting gesture.
What makes you feel comforted?
How do you comfort others?**

“On rough days, I usually want to put my head down and avoid people. Often, those are the days I need people the most. Somehow, they have a way of appearing at just the right moment – with a text, an invitation to lunch, a request to help with a project, a funny story – and they don’t even know it.”

“I treasure the opportunities I have to sit with friends in my mandala garden, that was created with the help of family in honor my husband’s passing.”

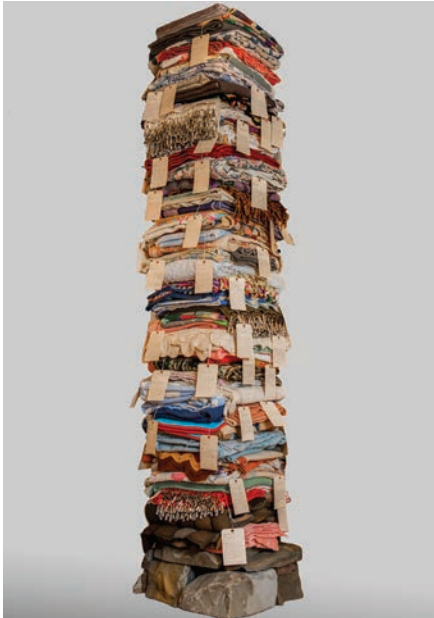
“Being asked how I am by someone who actually cares about my answer and listens and to know they understand. That is what I do to comfort others - as well as offering to help in whatever way that is needed.”

“The comforting feeling of a small piece of candy reflects wonderful feelings of my mother’s smile and love. Her taste of a small piece of candy seemed to provide her with an enormous amount of joy. I’m reminded of the simple pleasures that can bring so much joy.”

“I offer comfort by taking someone’s hand when there are no words.”

“I feel comforted by the quilt my friend made for me out of my husband’s shirts.”

Marie Watt, *Blanket Stories: Western Door, Salt Sacks and Three Sisters*, 2017 | Floor 3, Contemporary Gallery



Marie Watt (b. 1967), *Blanket Stories: Western Door, Salt Sacks and Three Sisters*, 2017, assembled textiles, blue stone, tin, steel, paper, 136 × 27 × 23 in. Clara S. Peck Fund. 2017.5.1

The blanket column was a collaboration between The Rockwell Museum and artist Marie Watt. The textiles were gathered through a call for blankets from the community. In this installation, each blanket represents a personal story. Watt believes every contribution to the work serves as a marker for the collective memory of a larger extended family and our shared human condition.

Watt is a member of the Seneca Nation and also of German-Scot ancestry. Her interdisciplinary works draw from history, biography, Indigenous teachings, and what the artist describes as Haudenosaunee “proto-feminism.” In it, she explores the intersection of history, community, and storytelling.

ACTIVITY

Create a memorial collage by gathering various materials and objects that evoke personal meaning—photographs and magazine cutouts, bits of fabric, and natural materials. Assemble these elements on fabric, a canvas or board, letting inspiration guide you. Share your collage story with a friend or family member.

COMMUNITY VOICES

**If you had to choose a blanket to add to the tower,
whose blanket would it be and why?
Why do you think blankets imbue such meaning?**

“Blankets sometimes have the smell of a loved one’s house.”

“Blankets are usually soft to the touch and hold sentimental value.”

“Some blankets are passed down from generation to generation.”

“Blankets provide comfort and safety.”

“I would choose our Pendleton wool blanket titled “Keep My Fires Burning.” It visualizes Native American storytellers sitting around a campfire viewing the constellations. My husband, of Haudenosaunee descent, would tell wonderful stories of the constellations to our family, friends, and students. It is one of my favorite and most enduring memories of his love and his appreciation of the glorious mysteries of this world.”

Paul Anthony Smith, *Dreams Deferred #50*, 2022

Floor 3, Contemporary Gallery



Paul Anthony Smith (b. 1988), *Dreams Deferred #50*, 2022, Oil stick and spray paint on inkjet print mounted on Dibond, 60 x 40 in. Museum Purchase. 2023.8

Paul Anthony Smith depicts a wildflower garden in an eruption of blooms that are tantalizingly close yet out of reach. The viewer is forced to view the garden from the shadows behind a blurred, chain-link fence.

This work of art depicts an urban lot in New York City, seemingly contained within single or double chain-link fences. The underlayer of this work is a photograph taken by Smith and then painted over with a heavy impasto of oil stick, creating a textured surface that blurs the line between photography and painting.

The artist is known for his distinctive photographic work that addresses themes of race, representation, and

cultural identity, with a focus on the African American experience.

Gardens are often used as metaphors to represent growth, nurturing, diversity, and the care we need in various stages of life. The act of planting, tending, and nurturing seeds is similar to caring for others.

ACTIVITY

Create a scratchboard by coloring a stiff board with crayons mimicking the colors of a garden. Then paint over the surface with black tempera paint. Once dry, scratch off the tempera incising the surface with a pencil or wooden stylus, creating a design to reveal your colorful garden. You can leave black areas for the background.

COMMUNITY VOICES

**Do you interpret the wire fence as a barrier or a window?
How does your perspective relate to caring for or losing a loved one?**

“This painting immediately meant separation from things that you love, probably a garden that you yourself had grown. It is tantalizing and beautiful, but not only one insurmountable fence, but TWO fences keep you from visiting that sacred space ever again. That made me immensely sad that that wonderful place would never be accessible by the viewer.”

“I feel restricted and want more access.”

“I want to be in the flowers, not behind the gate.”

“Something just out of reach.”

“Beauty that can’t be experienced...”

“The idea of seeing something beautiful, but not being able to access it, reminds me of losing a loved one. Their memory lives on inside you, but you can’t touch or hug them anymore. They are inaccessible, behind the fence of a different space and time.”

“Fences can separate us; feels like an analogy for being separated when we lose someone we love.”

Tim Kent, *The Appointment*, 2021-2022

Floor 3, Contemporary Gallery



Tim Kent, *The Appointment*, 2021-2022, Oil on canvas, 50 × 46 in. Clara S. Peck Fund. 2022.12

This painting by Tim Kent is populated by enigmatic figures whose bodies are partially rendered, leaving space for our imagination to take flight. His work draws the viewer into psychologically charged spaces that set up a dichotomy between the stillness of the scene's architecture and movement activated by shadowy, silhouetted figures. Focusing on 17th and 18th century architecture and the concept of the *enfilade*—the alignment of rooms so that the viewer has a direct line of sight from one to another—Kent plays with the tension between the seen and the unseen. Loss can make us feel like there are pieces that are missing or blurry.

ACTIVITY

Put a jigsaw puzzle together with a friend or family member. Puzzling can distract from stress and can be done alone or with a friend or family member. You can also make your own puzzle using a favorite picture.

COMMUNITY VOICES

What have you done or who have you turned to in order to feel whole again?

“There’s no getting back to who I was before my illness, because that person doesn’t exist anymore. I really wanted to use this to my advantage and choose which parts of myself to bring with me and which ones to leave behind, but how do I do that? In the meantime, I try to do one thing each day to make me stronger – physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually – but if all I do is get through the day, that is enough. I am enough.”

“My husband and I had a daily exercise routine; we would energetically dance together in the kitchen to Abba music and at the end of the song hug each other. His passing left a large hole in my daily exercise routine. I have discovered tai chi, Qigong, and Zumba classes, and I have returned to my childhood love of playing the piano and listening to old folk-music favorites. His hugs have been more difficult to reconstruct, but I have found eating a small piece of dark chocolate while imagining his hugs, although blurry, have brought those memories into better focus.”

“During times when pieces of life seem to be a bit blurry, I call upon my faith asking for clarification. I rest my mind with ease of confidence that the answer will come, and the path forward will be clear.”

“This work is a true personification of what it feels like to love and care for someone diagnosed with dementia and Alzheimer’s. They are there but they are not. My mom may not always say my name, but she does often tell me I am a “very good girl and she loves me very much.” Each time she says those words I feel whole again.”

Community Partners



Rochester & Finger Lakes Region
200 Meridian Centre Blvd. Suite 110
Rochester, NY 14618
(585) 358-4946
pjshippers@alz.org

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.



170 E 1st St, Corning, NY 14830
(607) 654-4205
BampasHouse@gmail.com

A non-profit 501(c)(3) comfort care home centrally located in the tri-county area

Bampa's House is a two-bedroom comfort care home where the terminally ill can spend the final days of their lives receiving compassionate care in a peaceful, home-like environment. We provide a nurturing and supportive place for our residents to spend their last days with dignity and respect. We understand that this time can be difficult, and our goal is to make it as comfortable as possible for our residents and their loved ones.



3805 Meads Creek Rd.
Painted Post, NY 14870
(607) 962-3100
info@CareFirstNY.org

A non-profit 501(c)(3) serving Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties of New York

CareFirstNY has been providing hospice care, grief support, and mental health counseling for area residents since 1981. The mission of CareFirstNY is to affirm life through extraordinary, compassionate support and care. Our comprehensive caregiving services support individuals, and their families, who are dealing with the symptoms and stress of a serious illness or grief.



Christina Muscatello
Phone: (607) 240-6204
www.MemoryMaker.me

Christina is an Art Educator and Creative Aging practitioner who provides creative aging programs for individuals, the public and at care communities. She specializes in drawing out the innate creativity of people living with memory loss and older adults. Her real talent, however, is connection. When words fail, she revels in the opportunity to connect with a person through the arts. Since 2005, She has worked with hundreds of people living with memory loss—learning, developing, and refining thoughtful ways to make art accessible.

In Loving Memory

The *Art & Healing Guide* is dedicated to Tali Sutton, beloved Chief Executive Officer of CareFirstNY, who passed away unexpectedly in February 2025.

To the many collaborative programs between CareFirstNY and The Rockwell Museum over the years, Tali brought her infectious enthusiasm and earnest dedication for improving the lives of the people in this region. Her support for the development of this guide is just one example of her commitment to caring for others.



The Rockwell Museum, along with so many other local organizations and community members, mourns her loss.

Cover Image: Elizabeth H. Remington, *The Two Kings: Corn and Cotton (detail)*, 1876, oil on canvas, 36 x 26 in. Clara S. Peck Fund. 2015.2.



THE ROCKWELL MUSEUM | A SMITHSONIAN AFFILIATE

111 Cedar Street | Corning, NY

607-937-5386 | RockwellMuseum.org