



# ***The Last Time***

**Story by: Jeremy Janiak, Assistant Director  
University Centers  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Little did I know that January 2020 would be the last time that I would see both of you.*

*The US had just confirmed its first case of COVID, I paid little attention to the news, it would go away, we live in the Midwest where nothing happens.*

*Our visit was good, I wished both of you the best and promised to visit again, as soon as I could.*

*Time slips by.... faster than we want it too. COVID was in the news more, but I still did not pay too much attention.*

*More time slips by.... I received a call today; your assisted living would no longer accept visitors.*

*I called to see how you were, you were bored, wanted to get out.*

*I called every couple of weeks, our conversations were almost a repeat each time, brief, but we still talked.*

*Even more time slips by.... It is somehow now July 2020. I received a call today, one of you are failing in health, your assisted living was allowing limited visitors – due to the circumstances.*

*I came down as soon as I could, they made us take our temperatures, put on a gown, wear face masks and gloves. We all had to stay apart. The visit was heartbreaking, I said my goodbyes.*

*This was the last time that I saw you.*

*I receive a phone call a couple days later, one of you was gone.*

*I tried to increase my calls; the conversations were still short. How many times can you say that you are sorry, how do you help someone grieve when they are alone?*

*It is now October 2020; I called you on a Sunday night, how could I know that this was the last time we would speak?*

*You said that you were not feeling well, I told you to take care of yourself and get some rest.*

*I received a call on Wednesday. You were gone.*

*How could I know?*

---

# **Healing Reflection**

**Story by: Jan Larson, Chair  
Department of Communication and Journalism  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*I am standing on the shore. Arms at my sides, hands open, palms facing the sea as gentle swells touch the shore. The horizon shows no hint of the storms to come.*

*The first wave laps at my toes.*

*"Let's order a CT scan just to be safe," my doctor suggests.*

*A white puff appears, dim on the horizon.*

*"Are you driving? Can you pull over?"*

*I am in Friday night Minneapolis traffic heading to an Airbnb where my adult daughter and I will spend the weekend making Covid-19 masks, watching girl movies and visiting over a bottle of wine. And swallowing fear.*

*"I'm sorry, the CT scan came back abnormal. We'll schedule an MRI for Monday."*

*The waves cover the tops of my feet.*

*"It's a tumor," the neurosurgeon I met minutes before, tells me. Unable to join me during the office visit - another bit of Covid-19 fallout - my husband phones in from the hospital parking lot. He listens. There is nothing to say.*

*The images tell a story. The tumor measures roughly three inches long by an inch wide. It has been there awhile, slowly taking up space meant for my brain.*

*My feet melt into the wet sand as the wave covers my ankles. I breath in and blow out trying to calm my frantic heart.*

*We are in Rochester with yet another neurosurgeon. He assures us the tumor is benign. We cling to hope.*

*Clouds on the horizon show hints of gray. The seas build and I brace myself for the waves that splash white foam up my legs.*

*It is early morning. A young resident appears at my bedside. My head is swathed in bandages ala "The Mummy." Lauran already knows what I am just learning. The tumor is malignant.*

*A rogue wave crashes the shore. I am knocked to my knees. Drenched, I struggle to regain my footing, determined to face the coming storm.*

*The next 10 days will be consumed waiting to learn whether we have a future. Lauran insists all will be well. I want to believe. But I don't want to make promises I can't keep. I share the image of my lone vigil against the storm with our youngest son.*

*"Mom," he chides me. "You need to rethink that image."*

*"You are not alone. Others are on that beach, joining hands, linking arms."*

*What comfort those words bring.*

*I construct visions of rows and rows of friends, family, loved ones, volunteers, medical professionals, and all those who will join me in facing the crashing waves, forming a barrier that surrounds me in love and healing.*

*Another day, another doctor. "You have a rare lymphoma. This is something you will learn to live with, not die from." There will be work ahead. It will be hard, but we can do hard.*

*Storm clouds threaten, but hints of blue appear.*

*I am filled with gratitude for the community that will see me through.*

*I am not alone.*

---

## ***Bent Not Broken***

**Story by: Colleen Marchwick, Director  
Center for International Education  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*"A tree that is unbending, is easily broken." Lao Tzu*

*This year has been one of intense emotions like a winter storm that blows so that I no longer see, full of snow and ice weighing me down until I was nearly touching the earth.*

*I cancelled your dreams—no study abroad—and that weighed me down.*

*I furloughed you and re-assigned you to save money and that weighed me down.*

*I was separated from you in your time of illness and isolation and that weighed me down.*

*I cannot give you back what you have lost—a wedding, joys of first-time motherhood, milestones, adventures—and that weighs me down.*

*Bending under the weight hurts me and I cry sometimes but I am not broken.*

*I did not break.*

*Now, the sun is coming out, the weight is lifting a little, and I am following the warmth and light one day at a time.*

---

**Artist: Joshua Brown, Professor  
Department of Languages  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

Joshua is a professor of German and linguistics at UW-Eau Claire, and he is also a weaver and needleworker with a focus on historical forms of folk art. His textile website is <https://www.ullfrogintextiles.com/>.



*For this project, I wove fabric for three stories and embroidered a recurring motif from each one using blackwork embroidery techniques. I then replicated the loss, fear, and disruption from each story by cutting the fabric into pieces. I then sewed the pieces together with visible seams and in an irregular pattern – reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century piecework textiles. I was struck by these stories of loss and fear in our own UWEC community – we don't often know about the very real struggles of our coworkers, but we need to hear those stories and work as a community to lift each other up.*

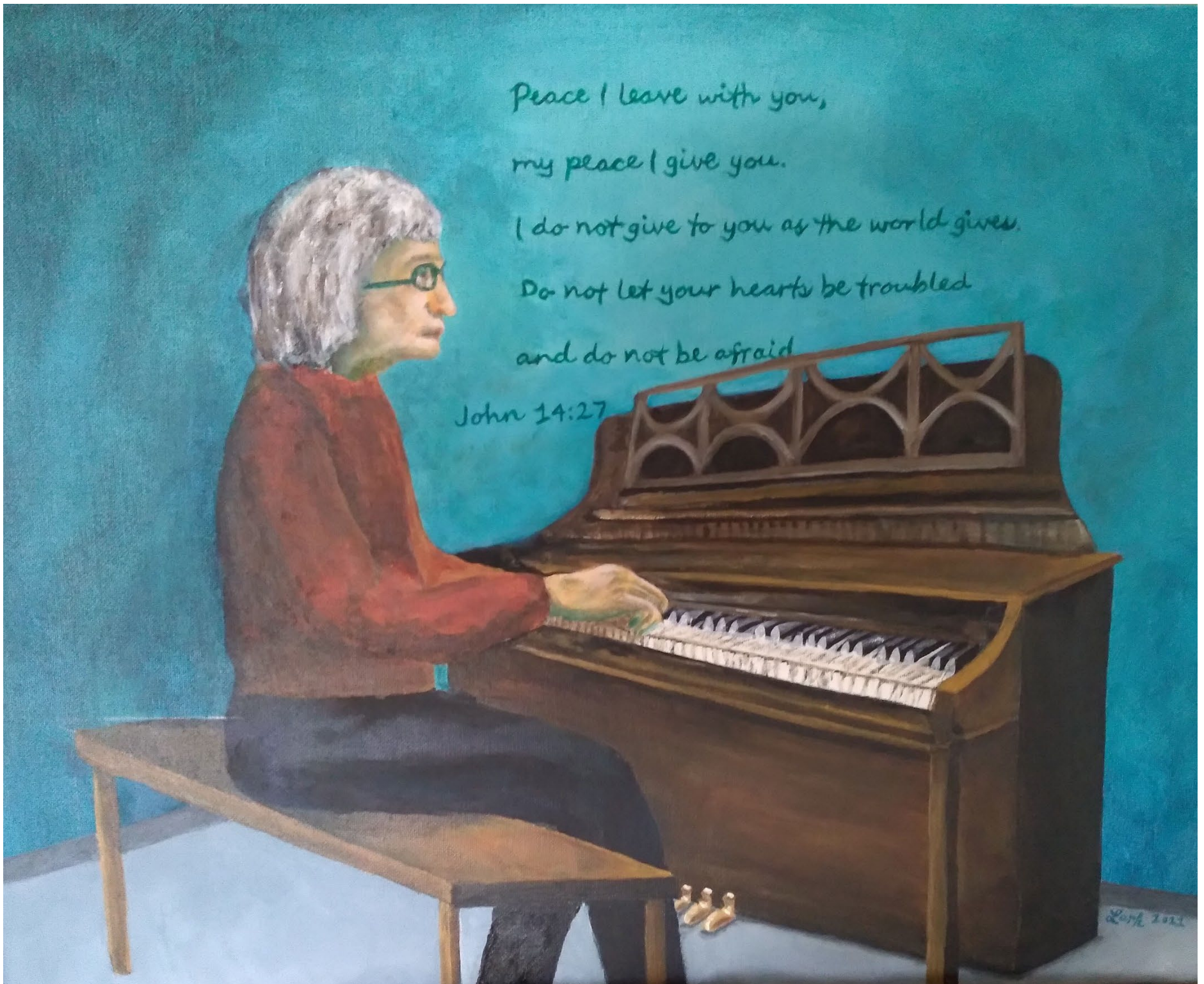
**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**

Peace I leave with you,  
my peace I give you.

I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled  
and do not be afraid

John 14:27



# Peace

**Story by: Beth Kranz, IS Technology Service Senior  
Learning and Technology Services  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*How does one become peaceful in a world full of turmoil? How can peace be maintained over a year-long pandemic strain?*

*In March 2020 when the order to stay at home was given, “peace,” as I knew it then, ended. At first I faithfully watched the news and gleaned from it all the information that I could take in, but I found that I was becoming anxious and spending all of my time reaching for more “information.” It took me about one week to come to the realization that almost nothing on the news was entirely reliable. Oh yes, we knew that this terrible virus was headed to the United States and that there would be a resulting number of deaths, but all the predictions were simply what experts thought would happen. People of science gave their best effort, but face it – you could find “science” on whatever side of the discussion you were on. None of the information offered a viable solution to the problem. What peace could be offered by the experts that we relied on?*

*And so I stopped watching the news and haven’t purposely listened to it since March of 2020. I instead turned towards what has always sustained me through trials and trouble. I turned to my faith in the one TRUTH of this life. My Lord Jesus Christ gives me that TRUTH. I turned to my piano and let music fill my soul with hymn verses that repeatedly told me that the Lord God in HEAVEN was in full control. His promises were a soothing ointment to my soul. I turned to my church’s online services and was refreshed through live services and Bible study. The comfort that I never felt while obsessively learning the facts of the virus filled my heart, and I found PEACE.*

*So how could I share my inner peace? I wanted my friends and colleagues to also feel this rest. It was evident in Video calls that others did not share my “peace”. Every conversation that I have held for the past year has contained the word “COVID.” My goal became to be extra cheerful and welcoming every time I was able to interact with colleagues at the university and friends throughout the community. I tried to add humor to my virtual meetings and phone conversations. I made it my mission to become a pleasant diversion in their day.*

*While I continue to work from home and feel the effects of COVID in other areas of my life, I am at peace. In breaks during the day and off-work hours, I find respite in Scripture and in sitting down at my piano to play sacred music. I laughingly tell people that COVID has increased my repertoire of music and improved my keyboard technique through countless hours of practice time. That time spent in reflection and praise of my Lord has certainly brought me my desired PEACE.*

---

**Artist: Lark Keating-Hadlock, Assistant Archivist  
McIntyre Library  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

Lark Keating-Hadlock is the Assistant Archivist at UW-Eau Claire. Lark earned her BFA with an emphasis in both ceramics and painting as well as a BA in art history from the University of Delaware, and a graduate degree in library science from UW-Milwaukee. She has been painting in watercolor, oil, and acrylic on and off since childhood.

*I chose to interpret Beth Krantz' story of trying to be peaceful, of turning to her faith and her music for comfort. I imagined her in isolation, playing her piano, seeking solace in her music.*

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**





# **A Cure for COVID-19**

**Story by: Michael Hilger, Emeriti  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*After earning a PhD, I taught in the UWEC English department for many years ago until I retired quite a few years ago. When COVID-19 hit, I became a hermit and took refuge in TV, mystery novels and listening to popular songs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This kept me safe and allowed me to escape the everyday sad news, but it came with a price. I became hooked on cozy romantic shows like Firefly Lane, and I developed a taste for Perry Como and Doris Day songs. After years of teaching close analysis of texts, whether they be literary works or films, I abandoned most of what I learned when sitting in an easy chair reading a detective novel or watching movies on TV. This did help me avoid COVID-19, but it also filled me with doubts about myself and the price I was paying. Was I becoming just a superficial, sentimental person, or was I developing senile dementia?*

*After deciding that my mind was still working, I chose to give it a rest by staying put in my easy chair and completely giving in to TV, mystery novels, and all those nice old songs on Alexa.*

*Soon never-ending Netflix TV grabbed me with movies in which the death of a hero, or young lovers overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles left me gushy, even though the sleeping part of my brain would have known that those stories are standard patterns in such shows. I also started to live more in the past when watching a TV series like Cobra Kai, which brought me back to the good old days of the original Karate Kid and dreams of the old romantic struggles.*

*So, how did I finally manage this trade-off between escaping COVID-19 and surrendering to those old-fashioned emotions?*

*The answer turned out to be easy. As time went on, and I got tired of life in an easy chair and ventured out to take my turn in the vaccination line. That got me moving and my mind woke up. Then I remembered what I had learned about living a thoughtful, active life, and I forgot the temptation of that easy chair. If you experienced anything like what I did as an old-timer, hopefully you, as young-timers and middle-timers, will take you place in the vaccination lines, and then remember yourself and what you learned before COVID-19.*

---

**Artist: Sierra Lomo, Instructional Designer  
College of Business – Online Programs  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

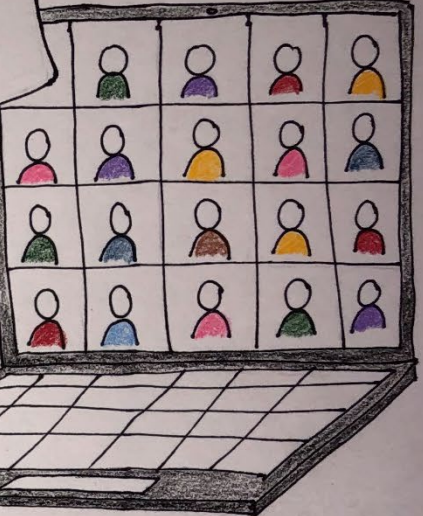
Sierra Lomo is an illustrator and fine artist based in Wisconsin. They received their BFA in Illustration from UWEC (2018) and their MFA in Illustration Practice from the Maryland Institute College of Art (2020). Themes important to their work include health and health care, nature, and identity. See more of Sierra's work on Instagram @Sierrmo.

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**

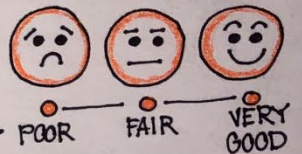


\* UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - EAU CLAIRE \*

# COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



## HI-FLEX



SUPERHERO SUPPORT STAFF & INTERNS



US NEWS & WORLD REPORT  
2020 BEST ONLINE  
**TOP 10**

**MBA**  
PROGRAM



# QUARANTINE



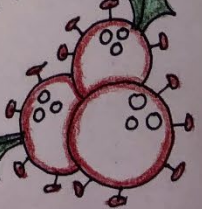
THE POWER OF  
**AND**  
BREAK OUT ROOMS

## zoom

VS



COLLABORATE ULTRA





# Sketchnote

**Story by: Jane Strong, Associate Lecturer  
Department of Business Communications  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Sketchnoting is a form of visual thinking that helps me to process my world. As a discipline, it can be both a personal expression and a professional practice. I came upon the concept following my master's degree and spent years studying the science behind doodling, visual communication, visual thinking, cognition, and retention. As an artist and a Ph.D. student in communication, I have found the science to be fascinating and even validating.*

*Doodling is a powerful form of information synthesis. The personal benefits include a tool to process the complexities in work and life, a mode of expression for concepts and emotions when words fail, and an daily exercise in mindfulness that leads to a better understanding of self.*

*Sketchnoting is a close cousin to graphic facilitation and graphic recording where practitioners record live conferences and meetings by drawing content in real time. Practitioners make use of their personal visual library to synthesize information and draw it using simple icons and visual metaphors. Graphic facilitators use similar skills to conduct training and development meetings.*

*I use sketchnoting to record meetings, sermons, class lectures, and conference presentations. It helps me to focus on the material, process what is being communicated, and retain more information. Other than a commissioned graduation piece, sketchnoting has been a personal practice.*

*Last March, I began to be more purposeful with my writing and drawing. I began a COVID journal to record the extraordinary events and my reflections of life in a global pandemic. My only rule was that I would write and draw something every day. Many days it was a chore just to find words or to create a simple drawing. Other days, it flowed. My Nana had a degree in art and always admonished me to draw daily. Over time, I began to see the benefits as I found my "voice" and developed a mental library of visuals.*

*When I was asked to create a doodle for the College of Business 2020 holiday card, I had a full mental library of COVID imagery that I had developed in my journal and my notes. The purpose of the doodled piece was to visually communicate the lived experience of those engaged in a business education at UWEC during a global pandemic. The imperfections and sketchiness of the doodle art aptly reflected the 2020 year. Computer screens, personified brains, and muted microphones were doodles that appeared quite often in my 2020 sketchnotes. The Collaborate Ultra (CU) alien was something that made a surprise visit as I was creating this piece. On the CU platform, the singular chair/desk icon represents an empty virtual classroom. The chair always looked to me like an alien in a saucer - some days it mocked me and other days it was a reassuring companion.*

*Sketchnoting is not for artists; it is for everyone. Doodling with purpose will benefit anyone who is willing to give it a try.*

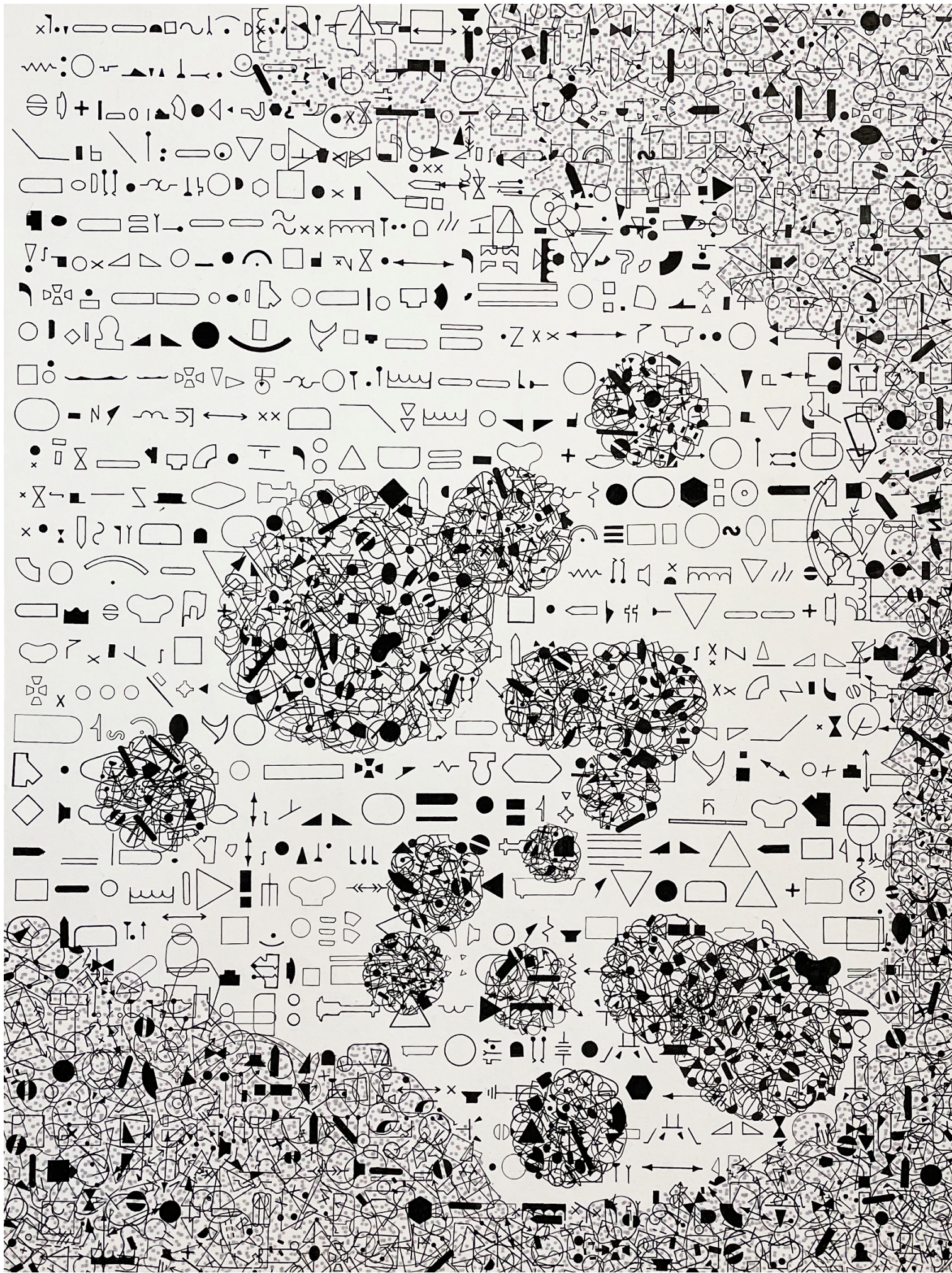
---



**Artist: Jane Strong, Associate Lecturer  
Department of Business Communications  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**







# **Bouncing Through Quarantine**

*(a longer version was previously published in The Leader-Telegram)*

**Story by: BJ Hollars, Associate Professor  
Department of English  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*When life gives you a pandemic, buy a trampoline.*

*Said no one ever.*

*Except my wife, who, a month into the Safer At Home order, decided it was the most expedient way to persuade our children to get a little fresh air.*

*“Isn’t it also the most expedient way to get a broken arm?” I asked.*

*But after a month of being sardined alongside one another, we decided it was worth the risk.*

*To say that assembling a trampoline was more difficult than I expected would be an understatement. To say that it involved no four-letter words would be a lie. But it was all worth it to see my children’s smiling faces, which I observed from some newly earned distance.*

*Thanks to the trampoline, social distancing became easier for the kids. When trapped within its cage-like net, there was little chance of them coming into contact with anyone. An added benefit was that the trampoline allowed them to practice a rare moment of social distancing from their parents, and we from them.*

*Yes, it was a happy time in our household—right up until my son’s symptoms emerged.*

*It started with a fever, then a cough, then a few other ailments that checked off the boxes we feared. My son took it in stride, though my wife and I didn’t. Under “normal” circumstances, such complaints would have hardly registered on our parental radars, but these were different times. We called the Mayo Clinic, and after an intensive pre-screening process, were told to take Henry to the drive-thru testing tent in the converted lot to the right of the hospital.*

*We masked up, then made the short trip to the tent, where we were greeted by a health care worker protected behind a face shield. I rolled down the window to the appropriate level.*

*“Hi Henry,” the man said. “Could you sit on your dad’s lap, please?”*

*Unbuckling, Henry climbed over the console.*

*Then, the man explained that he would soon insert a cotton swab into Henry’s nasal cavity.*

*“Will it hurt?” Henry asked.*

*It would, though the worst pain—at least for me—was the sense of doom that loomed over us for the next 12 hours, as Henry and I self-isolated from the rest of the family waited for the results. We whittled away the hours staring out the window as his little sister bounced carefree on the trampoline.*

*Suddenly the fear of a broken arm seemed trivial.*

*Was I scared? Absolutely. But not just of the virus. Equally troubling was what the virus had already revealed about who we are as Americans. That we would imperil our own lives for a day at the beach seemed bad enough, but that we would also imperil the lives of others to ensure our good time was nothing short of a moral reckoning.*

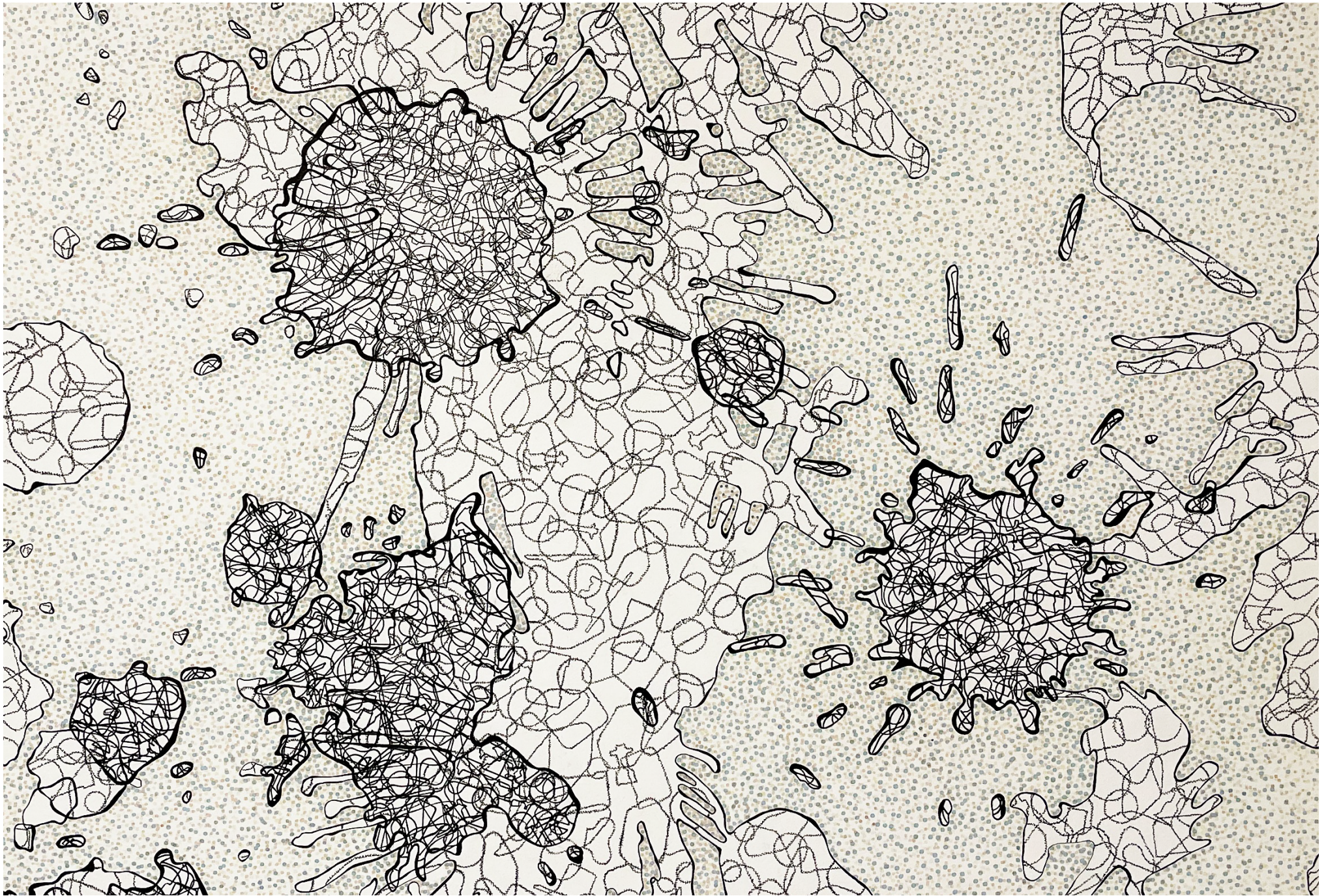
*At the time of this writing, we've lost nearly 6500 Wisconsinites to Covid-19. And so, we're passed the point of pretending that our actions don't directly impact the people around us. What we do matters. Always, but especially now.*

---

**Artist: Jill Olm, Associate Professor  
Department of Art and Design  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**







# Healing Reflection

Story by: Emily Popp, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

*I remember the day I knew it was over. I sat on the floor, and I took in the defeat. It started off distant. Far away, it wouldn't affect us. Then it got uncomfortably close. The hand sanitizer bottles scattered about. As if they would help in the long run. I remember my roommate driving away. We didn't know it was for good. I walked the campus, and I took pictures to try to save this feeling. I look back on them now and I wonder where our masks were. And then I was 15 again. Trapped in my home, hours from my new adult life. Isolated and afraid. I remember the day they said that we wouldn't come back. I didn't even bother leaving my bed. I didn't listen to music, I didn't see people, I didn't feel anything. I scraped through the rest of the semester. Things I enjoyed felt pointless. Breathing the public air felt forbidden. I was a shell of myself. There was no good news. There was sickness and fear, conflict and public unrest. Nowhere felt safe. I remember begging to just go out and drive, to try and regain some sense of feeling like myself. I remember putting off the return to college, to move the rest of my life back out of my dorm. Never to return. My first year of sweet freedom, ripped out from beneath me. Even the drive felt illegal. Cool spring turned into warm summer. Time passed, yet it didn't. Finally, I was able to return to work. I lied to my parents so they would feel safe about me leaving. How dumb I was. To escape my own thoughts, I worked myself into the ground. Seeing no one, doing nothing. The steamy days passed by in a blur. Entire weeks and months of my life, I waited in desperation to escape. But even once I did, it wasn't better. I moved back to college, but for some reason, the anxiety remained. Why? Why couldn't I get rid of the deep feeling of dread within me? I lost friends, relationships, opportunities, moments. I lost pieces of myself that I will never get back. Desperate summer turned into anxious fall turned into listless winter turned into impatient spring. One year of masked expressionless faces. Of fear in public. Of hand sanitizer that makes me feel sick at the smell. Of eyes darting around above strips of fabric. Of temperature checks and health scares. Of isolation. Of standing feet apart from my peers. Of disinfectant. One year of a desperate wish to breathe the sweet, fresh air again without unease. The me that I was one year ago wouldn't recognize the me that I am now. Through all of it though, I've grown. And despite the circumstances, I've changed for the better. If I ran into me from a year ago, I'd lower my mask and smile at her. And I'd tell her that things might just end up okay.*

---

Artist: Jill Olm, Associate Professor  
Department of Art and Design  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).







# ***Hope Is the Thing to Do Right Now***

**Story by: Mickey Crothers, Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice and Professor  
Department of Psychology  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Hope is three crumpled dollars you find in a coat pocket when you thought you were flat-broke... then giving those three crumpled dollars to somebody who needs them worse than you do.*

*Hope is that power surge of devotion when a tiny, brand new hand closes around your finger, and you realize in that moment that life will reach way out beyond any days you will see. And you realize the world will be tended skillfully and lovingly one day by the owner of that brand new, tiny hand.*

*Hope is a chameleon. It morphs. If hope in one form doesn't do the trick, it mysteriously transforms into a revised version of itself so it can rise to the occasion. Hope changes its clothes, reinvents itself as many times as it must, to get the job done.*

*Hope is working shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers-becoming-friends. It's the deep, coursing power of building together what we cannot build alone. Hope is a neighbor showing up to milk the cows when somebody's leg is broken. Hope is a barn-raising. Hope is a casserole.*

*Hope is straining the eye to look through the chinks in the headlines for the good news. It's about believing in things unseen, like the million small acts of generosity we'll never know about, because they won't be touted in the bold, black strokes of headlines. Hope is written quietly, by hand.*

*Hope is a prayer whispered through the darkness. It's the prayer you whisper for someone you love. It's the prayer you whisper for someone who hates you. It's the prayer you whisper for a stranger you will never meet. It's the prayer someone whispers for you.*

*Hope is starting to sing when the last thing on earth you feel like doing is singing. It feels artificial at first – dishonest. Your brain doesn't believe a word of it. But keep singing. The vibration of throat and chest set the air around you vibrating, and the song streams back in through your ears, and your skeptic brain has now forgotten who it was that did this singing in the first place, and grudgingly allows itself to be cheered. First thing you know, you won't really have to sing any more – the song will start singing itself. And every stringed instrument in the universe will start resonating – echoing hope.*

*Hope is a hand. The strong hand that pulls someone up when they're too exhausted to make the climb on their own. The hand that milked your cows when your leg was broken. The hand that raised the barn. The hand that made the casserole. When the hope of one is on the ebb, it's the gentle hand of another that reaches out and pulls it back. Hope is the unspoken language of a hand that touches the places words can't reach. Hope is the hand that promises it will never let go.*

*Hope is the thing to do right now.*

---



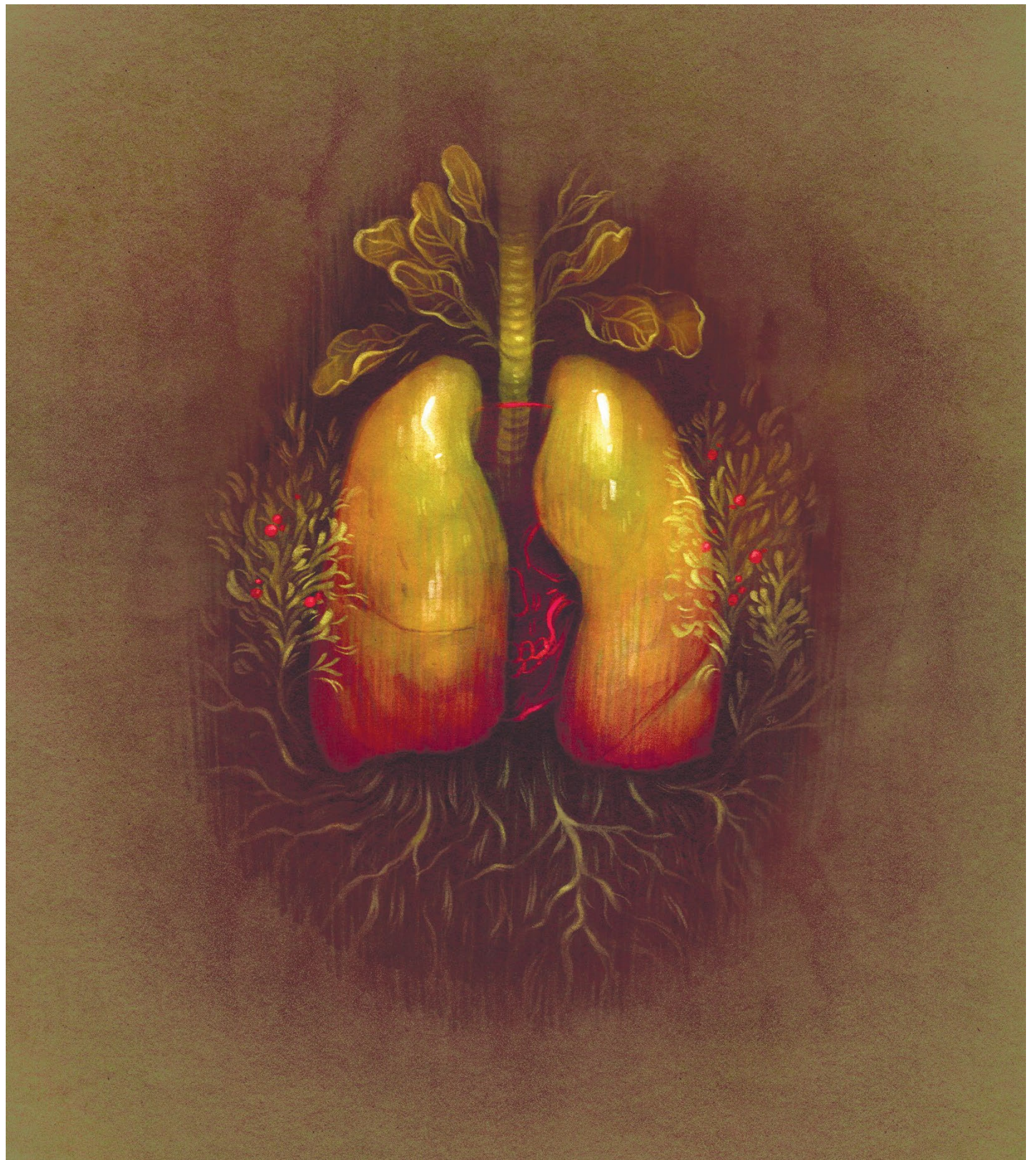
**Artist: Jane Mohler, Student and Local Artist**  
**University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Buds Hoping for Blossom*

Jane Mohler is a UW-Eau Claire student and local artist.

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**







# ***Healing Reflection***

**Story by: Katie Johnson, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Death was as common as breathing in oxygen, but as painful as trying to breath without it.*

*A cough equivalent to full lock down.                      To a bunker six feet under.*

*A constant flee to nowhere.*

*The days seemed longer than prior thought possible. Even with the technology laying lazily in our laps, filling up desks, cluttering our living rooms. No one was close enough. No one was far enough.*

*The virtual virus spread just as fast as the physical one.*

*terrifying. resilient. despite.*

*Humans losing the loss of a loss*

*for death  
desires until we forget how  
many meals it's been  
stealing*

*and how many it was served*

---

**Artist: Sierra Lomo, Instructional Designer  
College of Business – Online Programs  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

Sierra Lomo is an illustrator and fine artist based in Wisconsin. They received their BFA in Illustration from UWEC (2018) and their MFA in Illustration Practice from the Maryland Institute College of Art (2020). Themes important to their work include health and health care, nature, and identity. See more of Sierra's work on Instagram @Sierrmo.

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**







# Eyes

**Story by: Kaia Simon, Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*On our first day back in Fall 2020, teaching and learning in person again, I stood in front of my classroom on the pre-placed dot on the carpet that marked my socially-distanced teacher position. I looked at the Monday group of my Histories and Theories of Rhetoric students, seated in a grid of twelve desks spaced six feet apart. Their eyes, so prominent above their masks, were bright, nervous, skeptical, hopeful, unsure. "Hi everyone," I said. "Welcome to English 212. I'm so glad you're here. I'm so glad to be here." My voice crinkled with emotion before I could finish those three sentences. Left to figure out how to handle teaching a class that couldn't all meet in person at the same time but was still expected to meet in person, I dedicated so much time over the summer trying to figure out the way that would be least stress-inducing for all of us. Focusing on all of their eyes, I explained how they'd attend in person once a week and complete individual work on their off days. "This is what I thought would make sense," I told them. "But we'll make changes if we need to." I noticed that I was exaggerating my gestures because I couldn't use my whole face. I found myself hollering from behind my mask, my throat extra sore from using my out-of-practice teacher voice at maximum volume. I found myself internally questioning why we were insisting on teaching and learning in these conditions. Everything about it felt so uncertain and wobbly. "I think you'll like learning about Rhetoric," I told them. That was Monday.*

*When I met the next third of my students on Wednesday, and the last third on Friday, I was also struck by their eyes. Amid all the mixed emotions, their eyes told me that they wanted this to work. "So do I," I told each cohort. "We will make this work, together." Some of their eyes smiled back at me. Some looked down at the desk tops they had sanitized with a wipe before sitting down. Some eyes gave me a measured gaze, waiting to find out if I would be as good as my word. My voice betrayed my emotions each of the first days when I told them "I am so glad you're here. I'm so glad to be here." I've been a teacher for many years, and I had never told a class this so plainly before. I had never felt it quite so profoundly before. Being forced to move instruction online abruptly during Spring 2020 made me realize what a gift it is to spend time with students, in person. This is why I made eye contact for too long on our first days back, willing them to know how glad I was that they'd showed up. That I hoped we could make this uncertain and wobbly semester into something steadier. Their eyes met me halfway. We did it.*

---

**Artist: Amanda Bulger, Lecturer  
Department of Art and Design  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**