



## CAME Voice/Voix

### White Coat Warm heART

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In 2010, a national call for art submissions resulted in a “first ever” medical education art exhibit in Canada. I suggested the name White Coat Warm heART (apologies to Dr. Brian Goldman at CBC who hosts White Coat Black Art!) and the name stuck. Dr. Pamela Brett McClean collaborated with me to assemble the 20 pieces for this first exhibit. The response that year was so overwhelmingly positive that we proposed WCWA become an annual event at CCME. In 2012, Dr. Michiko Maruyama became my co-curator.

In 2017 we had more than 60 paintings, sketches, photographs, collages, sculptures and installations submitted for WCWA. Submitting artists include medical students, residents, medical faculty, and other healthcare professional students/ practitioners. In addition to the 25 pieces exhibited in the gallery, we present a rolling Powerpoint of up to 50 additional pieces of art sent in as digital images.

Many visitors have told me that the gallery is a welcome reprieve from the busy conference pace; a place for some quiet and reflection. Some visitors have wept openly while standing in front of pieces of art, while other pieces have inspired viewers to reminisce enthusiastically about their time in training; some pieces make people laugh and smile.

The art submitted to WCWA exhibit is not exclusively medical in nature. Artists submit work that is intensely personal, and outside of the medical gaze. Matthew Kennedy, then a first year medical student (University of Toronto), painted a portrait of his grandmother at 96 years of age, focusing on “her beautiful character, her innocence and peaceful simplicity”. Gary Xu, then a UBC medical student, painted “Apple, Once Daily” as an exploration of patient compliance with medication. His artist statement explained “As the saying goes an apple a day, keeps the doctor away. Instead, our aging population is dependent on a plethora of pills. I want to experience the challenges of taking a complicated regimen of medication by drawing one apple daily for 28 days. I found it extremely difficult to adhere to and was only able to paint 12 apples.”

Since 2016, the WCWA exhibit has hosted a Facilitated Art session where artists present their art in the gallery and answer questions from the audience. These artist presentations are thoughtful, scholarly and at times very moving. Questions from the audience included queries on technique, media choice, and theoretical underpinnings of the work.

It bears noting that there is a growing literature around the positive role of art-making in medical education; benefits that include better work life balance, professional identity formation, more reflective practice and solidification and integration of learning.

In summary, White Coat Warm heART has evolved into a showcase of Canadian creativity in the medical and allied health community. Shining a spotlight on medical practitioners’ art, in the context of our national medical education meeting, sends a strong message that there is a vital role for art-making during training and beyond. The call for submissions for WCWA2018 will go out in September 2017! Email [courneya@mail.ubc.ca](mailto:courneya@mail.ubc.ca) if you want to submit a piece or help get the word out to your students, residents and fellows.

Past WCWA submissions can be viewed at:  
<https://www.teachingmedicine.com/galleries/Galleries.aspx?collection=9>

This article was adapted from a piece written for UBC CHES Quarterly.