

Artist Statement

This book presents the work of two artists, Arthur Hand and Janette Maley. They had been together as a couple for over thirty years. Janette was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 1998. The type of cancer, lobular carcinoma, was not easily detected by mammograms or self-exams. Rather than initially forming a solid, dense tumor, it grows in a pattern called Indian Filing, in which there are rows of cells throughout the breast tissue. Because it is hard to detect, the cancer was farther along once detected. In Janette's case, it had spread to 5 cm and into the lymph nodes. Eight of the sixteen lymph nodes dissected were malignant. Once diagnosed, Janette asked Art to make images of her before the surgery, a modified radical mastectomy, which would alter her appearance. These first images became the beginning of a photographic documentation of Janette through the treatment of this illness; surgery, a first round of chemotherapy, radiation therapy, a second round of chemotherapy, and tamoxifen. These images also show Janette developed a complication that can occur with lymph node dissection and radiation therapy, lymphedema, in which the affected limb swells. The photographs also show Janette's recovery back into a healthy life, followed by her return to treatment. There are now over 90 photographs in this documentation. A small portion is shown in this show.

Once Janette had recovered enough from the illness and the effects of the treatment, she began to make this series of collage (paper assemblages). There are now over 40 of these collages. Initially they were studies for future paintings, but soon they took on a life of their own. The intention of Janette's work was to show what it felt like from the inside. What it was like going through the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, and the changes and questions Janette faced. In the depictions of the figures, the face represents Janette without being the face of Janette. She was looking for an image that could be a more universal representation of all the women who have gone through breast cancer. This is a personal account of one family's journey through cancer, but it also speaks for the countless women who have faced or will face this disease.