

PORTRAITS OF WELLNESS . A THESIS BY ESTHER DANE



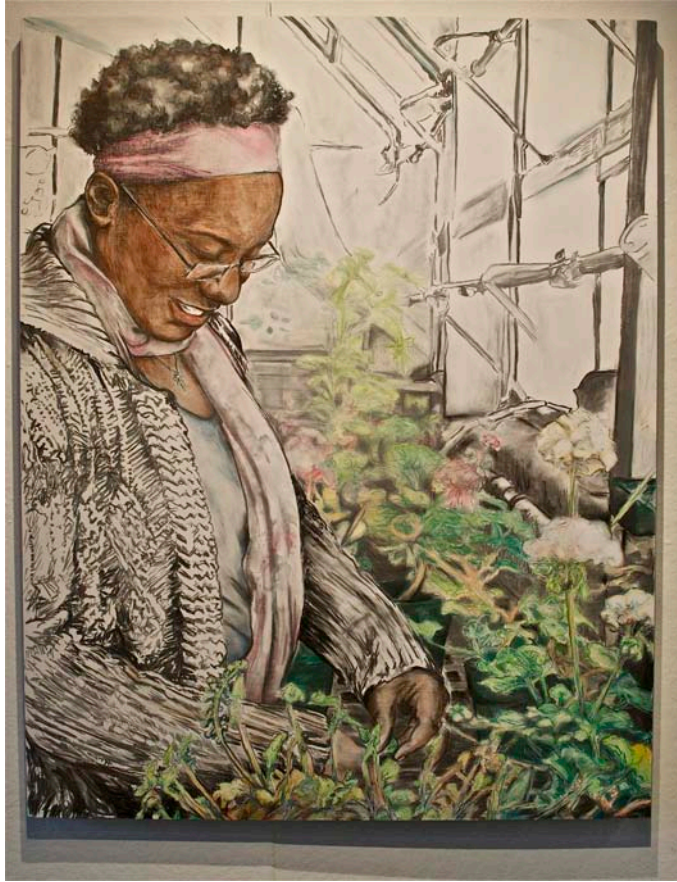
Esther's work [...] is set at the intersections of studio arts and wellness studies, and as such offers a wonderfully rich and creative presentation of this juxtaposition. Esther's impressive project evolved out of her work in the health sciences, bringing together the narratives of people who have faced chronic illness and recovery and lived their own stories of resilience. She has created images of them that reflect their experiences and the power of their bodies. Her work is both dynamic and empowering, offering six different portraits that are beautiful and thought-provoking. In her gallery show, she coupled these portraits with personal narratives and objects and items loaned to her by each of her participants.

Esther says, "With the charcoal and pastel, attention to detail, time and respect for my subjects, I am attempting to use drawing as a medium through which to discuss larger issues that get silenced or neglected in long academic papers, or in the progress of our daily routines. It is not everyday that we are asked to reflect on what it means to be well, and whether we feel good in our bodies, and happy and powerful. My Division III has broadened my experience and knowledge and I believe will contribute directly to my future as a health care provider and member of society."

--Dr. Pamela K. Stone, Hampshire College
Professor of Physical Anthropology
& Committee Chairperson

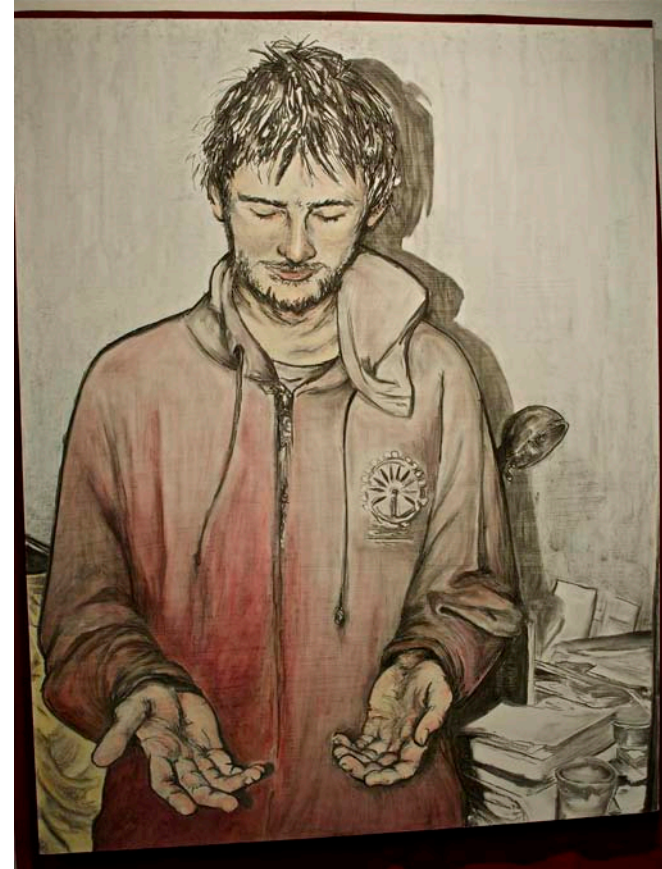
This document offers the reader a small glimpse of the original exhibition: photographs of the portraits (charcoal & pastel on wood panel—gifted to participants) & excerpts from the original health statements developed from transcriptions of interviews with each individual.

**Your body is telling you what it needs,
just listen.**



**Health comes from a place of understanding
apply it because you believe in it, apply it because you
know that's the way to live. How have my experiences
influenced my health and my views of my health?**

**I think often in life, some of the most
painful things don't appear painful at all.**



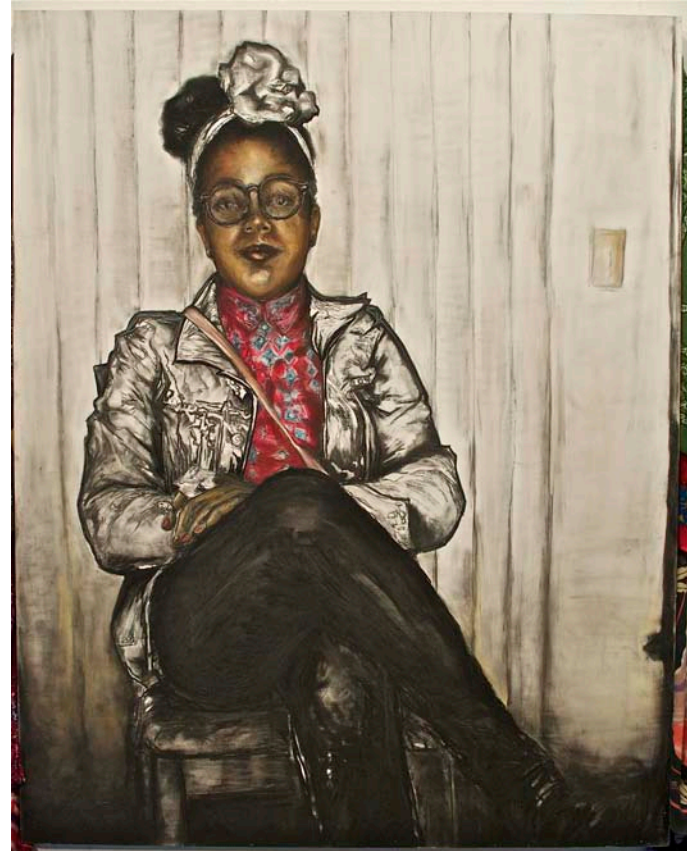
**As a young kid I was mostly interested in adventure,
with no notion of wellness now I'm more engaged in
a different way, moving towards freedom and the
peacefulness.**

It doesn't matter what medical science say about whether or not you're okay.



They don't get to dictate that. You do. If your doctor doesn't treat you like a person who has a brain, get out of there immediately. Find a new one. [Breaking my leg] was kind of a reminder that I am not immortal in a way—that what I take for granted can go away that fast.

I hyper-focus on self-care. Everything feeds into one another.



So it's just like, it's a road, it hasn't been smoothed just yet but the rough patches are evening out a little bit. Everything has to be nurtured and nourished just as much as the other in order for the circle to revolve steadily.

The one word I can say for health, or being healthy, is equilibrium.



I started taking things into my own hands & navigating the health care system on my own at 18 was really difficult. Screw everyone else, it has to come from within. "What do I want from this day?"

Self-knowledge is really important.

I think the word health to me means to survive.



I broke my neck playing football when I was 22. I still watch it. I don't care. I believe that I'm forced to work out. Because I'm in a chair, there's no other excuse. I want to live. I go to the best doctors in the world. You have to be sincerely consistent.

As future nurses, doctors, patients, well and ill persons, how will our experiences inform our health care? These images and excerpts from the accompanying health narratives assert that individuals hold the most significant information about health through their lived experience. I strive for a system where the patient-provider relationship is balanced and the patient's knowledge of their health is more completely honored and validated. Both portraiture and narrative collection seek to capture and understand the experience, voice, vision, and wisdom of a whole person; our health care should, too.

Portraits of Wellness combines health science research with the practice of studio art to investigate individual formations of 'health' and 'wellness' conceptions within broader notions of health in the U.S.



The framework of this project will serve as a model for future projects. I would like to move forward in collaboration with educational, community, and health institutions that to focus on individual experiences in health. By using ethnographic and artistic tools to provoke community conversations about health & wellness, I will address a larger goal of moving progressively toward the development of more relevant, patient centric, methods of care delivery.

Portraits of Wellness was made possible by:
Carla Costa & The Creativity Center
Innovation & Experimentation Grant
Art Barn Faculty Harris Viet Art Barn Grant
Financial Aid Office Division III Grant
& **Hampshire College IRB Ethics Committee**