



IMAGINATIONS:  
JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES |  
REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE  
L'IMAGE

Publication details, including open access policy  
and instructions for contributors:

<http://imaginations.glendon.yorku.ca>

## Relmaging Breasts

May 31, 2020

To cite this article:

Loughridge, Sally. "Rad Art: A Journey Through Radiation Treatment."  
*Imaginations: Revue d'Études Interculturelles de l'Image/Imaginations: Journal  
of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, May 2020, pp. 85–87,  
doi:10.17742/IMAGE.BR.11.1.7.

To link to this article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.BR.11.1.7>



The copyright for each article belongs to the author and has been published in this journal under a [Creative Commons 4.0 International Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) license that allows others to share for non-commercial purposes the work with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal. The content of this article represents the author's original work and any third-party content, either image or text, has been included under the Fair Dealing exception in the Canadian Copyright Act, or the author has provided the required publication permissions. Certain works referenced herein may be separately licensed, or the author has exercised their right to fair dealing under the Canadian Copyright Act.

## RAD ART: A JOURNEY THROUGH RADIATION TREATMENT

SALLY LOUGHRIDGE

**W**hen I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010, I was startled, frightened, and anxious. After surgery, radiotherapy was recommended for 33 consecutive days (excluding weekends). As an artist, I decided to make a quick, small, and unplanned daily painting immediately after each radiation treatment to help me express, discharge, and cope with the overwhelming and unfamiliar feelings I was experiencing. I did not want cancer to become my identity! After treatment ended, friends and professionals encouraged me to create a book from these private paintings and their accompanying daily log. The American Cancer Society published this material as *Rad Art: A Journey Through Radiation Treatment* in 2012 (Atlanta, GA).

These oil paintings are the first two I created as my radiation course began. My goal was expression, not artwork *per se*. I allowed myself 20 minutes or less for each 5 x 7" painting in order to minimize rational thought. Indeed, the pieces seemed to flow from my brush without forethought or planning. Stirred by each completed painting, I wrote a few words to describe how I was feeling at that moment.

### **Image credits**

"My Right Breast." Copyright 2012 American Cancer Society, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

"My Terrain." Copyright 2012 American Cancer Society, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

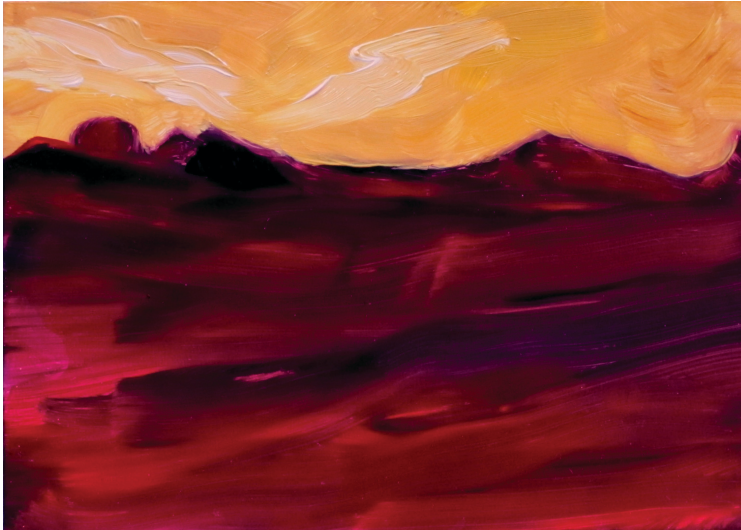
## Day One: My Right Breast



"I had always thought of my breasts as a matched pair. But since I received a diagnosis of breast cancer, they have become distinctly individual. i am anxious about starting radiation, and I feel protective of my right breast—in a familiar, motherly way. in this first painting, i am startled to see how dark the interior is, full of the mystery and menace of the cancer cells.

One treatment down, thirty-two to go! Six and a half weeks feels like a very long time. I am glad I have started this series of paintings, but I am not sure how my near daily practice of studio painting will fare. I am already looking forward to my first weekend off treatment.

## Day Two: My Terrain



"I started this painting full of raw emotions and uncertainty about the radiation process. Do I need it? Will it help me? Will it have long-term side effects? I am angry that I need more treatment, angry that I have cancer.

I loaded my brush with magenta and sculpted a mountainous terrain. The landscape quickly became my profile as I lay on the metal treatment table—arms over my head and knees elevated. I have to assume a very exact position and remain still during the treatment so that the rays can be precisely focused on the target area mapped on my chest. The jagged cloud shapes in the painting are the radiation beams aimed at my breast, coming from a huge, circling, and humming apparatus over the table. I have already begun to count the clicks and movements of the machine."