

Joy Shear

Artist Statement

I paint for expression. It is a personal experience for me as I seek inside myself for the source inspiration. What do I want to paint? And for this series a wave of emotion came over me as I felt I had to paint my cousin Erika. One year ago my cousin passed away. I had never had any person close to me pass away before. And I felt her loss deeply. We were close, raise with each other. Only a few years ago we live together.

And while we lived together, I promised her I would paint her. There are 5 Stages of Grief; Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. And these stages do not necessarily occur in order. As I have worked through this series I have been able to work through the final stages of grief, Bargaining and Acceptances. When my cousin was a little girl, her parents divorces. As a way of comforting her children, my Aunt came up with these fairy tales where each of her children were a hero of their own story. Her older sister was Eliza, Prima Ballerina of the Butterflies, her elder brother was Forrest, Lord of the Tall Trees, Her younger brother was Prince Jake of the Snakes, and her littlest sister was Katiebug of the LadyBugs. Erika was Queen of the Sunflowers.

She had a tattoo of a sunflower on the back of her neck placed when she was old enough. She had a lot of tattoos and they meant alot to her. She wore them with pride.

Most of my family got sunflower tattoos as a way of remembering her. I am unable to get a tattoo and felt a sadness at not being able to participate. So I found I could honor her life in a way that I felt connected to her and my family. This series is the result.