

ARS MORIENDI

BY

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DEDICATIONS

Without Jill Hollis, my unforgettable, radiant mother, none of this would be possible.
Your love and your life were monumental. You are constantly missed.

Ms. Dorothy, my friend, may you always rest in peace .

ABSTRACT

As a means of understanding how art can translate the legacies of grieving hospice patients, I collaborated with Hospice of Wake County to establish a working hypothesis and model of implementation for an outreach program for hospice patients. I also developed an ongoing series of work as a personal visual response to the experience. The outreach program focuses on recording the legacies of the dying—the stories of hospice patients—and the visual response took and will continue to take the form of installations that attempt to engage viewers with those stories.

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PROJECT STATEMENT

Grief as concept has informed my work ever since I entered adulthood and my mother was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Up until her death, six years post-diagnosis, I was making purely cathartic work, utilizing textile techniques with both traditional and alternative materials.

During the last five months of her life, my mother received hospice services which addressed not only the physical manifestations of her illness, but also the emotional, spiritual and psychosocial symptoms. Grief was addressed and examined as a natural part of the dying process for the patient.

After my mother's death, I created pieces that were still about the raw emotionality of my grief, but I also began to address grief in a more intellectual way, uncovering my thought-process as it existed in mourning. Evaluating my own grief responses gave me artistic insight and emotional clarity and spurred an expansion in my work: I began to interview others about their own grief responses. This gradual shift in my work led me to begin community outreach efforts with Hospice of Wake County (HOWC). After serving as a family support volunteer for a year and a half, I met with HOWC's volunteer coordinator to determine the realities of initiating an effort to document and visually translate the stories of hospice patients.

To effectively carry out the project, I analyzed and compiled research regarding grief as a means of understanding grieving processes and variations more completely, and to be better equipped to serve patients in future interactions. Understanding the definition, importance, and compulsion of sharing a legacy served as a vital tenet of my research pursuits, as I established a working hypothesis and model of implementation for documenting patients' legacies.

From my gathered experiences of being with dying patients, I created an ongoing series of my own work—a personal response to interacting with hospice patients and their stories—utilizing textile techniques and alternative materials. This component of the project sought and continually seeks to bring awareness to the local community about hospice, as well as contribute to the culture of death awareness and acceptance.