

Art isn't anecdote. It's the consciousness we bring to bear on our lives.

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# Existentialism & Art— Creating meaning for others in the Mayo Clinic community.

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For our next project, we will link Logotherapy, Existentialism, beauty, and art in order to help those in our community find meaning when faced with adversity. After researching and discussing the role of art in healing and a tour of the art at Mayo Clinic, and after researching a specific health concern, you are going to design/create a piece of art that would help a patient or their family **find meaning** in an otherwise existential time in their lives. Philosophically and literally, it will be *beautiful*. Your piece will be universal but especially layered with a feeling of comfort for your patient.

As you create your art, you will complete a reflective statement—an Artist's Purpose Statement—that shows how you have connected our studies in class to your work.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR ART

- Your art project may come in **any medium**. You will be required to share it with the class.
  - If you're working in a *complicated* medium, you may bring in "blueprints" for what this might look like. That is, if you wanted to do a large installation piece like many at Mayo are, just draw what this would look like and in your explanation clarify the size, etc. as you answer the artist statement questions. You don't have to *literally* sculpt or weld, I mean. (But that would be pretty b.a. if you did.)
- You *are* graded on creativity and effort. A poorly or lazily executed piece in this sense would be found offensive. The reality is you don't have to be "good at art" to do this. Find a way. Keep in mind that your piece shouldn't be *overt*. Often collages or pieces that need words on them to tell the story show lack of confidence. **You're not creating a "replica" or retelling of the condition, but rather offering an emotional connection to your patient. It should be a reminder of comfort in suffering, not simply that suffering exists (or a reminder/retelling of their pain).**
- Your art project should be designed for a specific audience so you may best make Existential and emotional connections. Choose from these patients and families of these patients:
  - Cancer patients (choose a specific type of cancer)
  - Those suffering from heart disease
  - Those suffering from mental illness (a specific mental illness; careful of overgeneralization here)
  - Those suffering from personal injury (be specific, e.g. loss of limb or vision, etc.)
  - Those suffering from traumatic brain injuries
  - Any other option, discussed with me
    - Also consider specific groups of patients to add to the complexity of your piece, e.g., a Veteran or a child.
- This project may be personal for some of you, so please check in with me for any support throughout the process. My goal is catharsis, not stress. ❤️

## REQUIREMENTS FOR REFLECTION

- Much of your assessment for this project comes with the artist's statement, which is (at least) a four-page document that explains how and why you made the choices you did. Include the following in this statement in *interview* form (imagine it in an art magazine or on display next to your piece), organized how you see fit. The "Editor" is interviewing you:
  - Your name, the title of your piece, the medium of your piece.
  - A description of where your piece would be on display at Mayo Clinic and why.
  - A detailed explanation of the patient (and family) you are commissioned for, and what you know about the struggle of that particular group [site your research about the condition]
  - A sentence or two that explains your overall vision/philosophy. How do you hope your patient will react to the piece? [connect Frankl here, perhaps]
  - Notes about the power of art in hospitals and life. [cite research here and "Art as Therapy"]
  - The *tone* of your piece (adjectives that describe it), and specific decisions you made while designing it to create that tone; how the tone reinforces healing and comfort.
  - The *inspiration* for your piece. How did you come up with this? Other artistic influences of your piece? Which pieces at Mayo (list at list three) were especially moving to you? [see *Art and Healing* book]
  - Answers to these:
    - why did you choose the medium that you did?
    - why did you use certain colors?
    - why did you use certain materials?
      - Are any of these functioning metaphorically?

**Within** this artist's interview, organized how you see fit, reference the work we've studied in class and your research:

- Directly cite research you found about your patient's health concern. [one or more sources]
- **Connect Frankl**—integrate at least three well-chosen (not haphazard or random) quotes or examples from the text. ...think about how Frankl would interpret your art or how it might represent his Logotherapy; think about the patients he worked with and how their predicaments might be similar to those you are helping to cope. For example, the quote, "For what matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to turn one's predicament into a human achievement" (135) would be poignant.
- Directly cite the "Art as Therapy" article and how that reading applies to your work.
- Directly cite **at least two other sources** and/or videos you/we consulted about the healing power or importance of art in healing. (Could include the Ehrenreich excerpt on cancer, videos we watched, the Mayo clinic *Art and Healing* book, the MPR story, and others that you found online during that time in class when I told you to find some online.)
  - Thus, this requires a Works Cited page of at least five sources (Frankl; [patient research]; "Art as Therapy"; [two additional sources on healing and/or art] and in-text citations, appropriately cited.