

ARTISTS IN TRANSITION

Exploring what happens to visual and performing artists when our ability to practice our craft is affected by health issues.

Inaugural Conference

Sunday April 11, 2010 - 12 Noon-5:00 P.M.

Western Connecticut State University, Westside Campus Center

www.artistsintransitionusa.blogspot.com/



Keynote Speaker Tom Luckey

Tom Luckey is an artist/sculptor and Yale-educated architect who is the world's foremost designer of sculptural playscapes. His projects adorn sites in major cities in North America, including Boston, Chicago, St. Louis and Mexico City among many others. He is the subject of "Luckey," a documentary film aired recently on the Sundance Channel that portrays his life and work after an accident at the height of his career resulted in quadriplegia. Tom continues to design and examples of his art can be viewed at www.luckeyclimbers.com.

Tom has described the artistic process as, "...going for the big high – the

plateau where I will know what I am doing – where the pieces will zing together and the energy will explode."

A witty, candid, eloquent speaker, Tom is filled with exuberance, artistry and life!

Featured Performer Our Time Theatre Group



Taro Alexander founded Our Time Theatre in 2001 as an artistic home for young people who stutter. An actor who has appeared on stage, screen and television, Taro has stuttered since age five. "At Our Time you enter this whole new world where the idea of time is not the same as it is for

normal people," Alexander has said, "You know that no one is going to interrupt you and finish your sentence for you." Citing actors James Earl Jones and Bruce Willis among performers who stutter, Alexander directs a theater company of young people ages 8-19 that has performed from New York's famed Cherry Lane Theatre to venues in San Francisco and points across the nation in between.

In 2009 Our Time Theatre released a CD "Listen," with songs written by children in the company and recorded by performing artists such as Carly Simon, Mandy Patinkin and Daryl Hall and John Oates. Selections will be performed by the children.



I'm Too Young For This! Cancer Foundation
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Joel's post-surgical halo (January, 2008)

Hi. What happens when an illness or accident affects your ability to create/perform art, music, dance, theater, film or any other art form for which you were trained. I didn't put a question mark at the end of that sentence, for it's really a rhetorical question. That's what's happened to me, so with the generous support of an ART Outreach Grant managed by The Philanthropic Initiative in Boston I created Artists in Transition to explore the issues that sometimes partner artistry with infirmity. The goal is not to provide answers, but to assist visual/performing artists like us in asking the right questions.

For me, a series of surgeries to negate the effects of rare spinal tumors (benign, but unkind) resulted in nerve damage in my hands that pretty much left them without feeling or function when my last surgery was completed in late 2007 (and my background's in Visual Arts. Bummer!). That was then, though, and this is now. Extensive physical and occupational therapy and the support of loving family, friends and colleagues have enabled me to function very well and what doesn't function well, works well enough. That's great for everyday activities, and I consider myself blessed (my neurosurgeon calls me the "Poster Boy for Neurosurgery" and gave a paper on my case at a medical conference in Chicago. Believe me, you do not want to have a case curious enough to gain that kind of notoriety), but I cannot yet (perhaps never) create art with the skill I once did (there are artist friends who claim that I never really did create art with much skill and now at least, I have an excuse).

But still, what happens to us as visual and performing artists when our artistry is disrupted by disability. We are in the process of planning an inaugural conference for Spring, 2010 in Danbury, Connecticut, where we'll gather folks from the medical, therapeutic, arts, advocacy and educational fields to explore the issues that affect, frustrate, scare and perhaps may eventually inspire us as we become Artists in Transition.

Be well.

Joel Levitt

Walking the Stepping Stones of Life



"Good luck trying to squeeze us into any sort of box," declares the SteppingStones Theatre Company of NYC. "We don't fit. We are different, yet we are the same." The same could be said about this diverse ensemble's director, the actor and playwright Christopher Roberts. Christopher began his acting career around age 14 and from that time through 2005 was legally blind, then became completely blind. Christopher will discuss the diversity of his life and work and art: a life in the theatre, but out of the box.

Christopher Roberts is an actor, playwright and director. He has been an actor and master teacher at the Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre and Samuel

Beckett Theatre and has appeared in the HBO series *Oz* and *Sex and the City*. He is proud to have had his first full length drama, *Reflections of a Heart* to be the inaugural production of the SteppingStones Theatre Company.

"I'M TOO YOUNG FOR THIS! CANCER FOUNDATION



If you're a young adult diagnosed with cancer, after you scream, "I'M TOO YOUNG FOR THIS CANCER!", you'll find there's a support foundation by that very name....and their mantra is, "Now get busy living!" Jack Bouffard, who received a diagnosis like that a few years ago at age 32, is a self-styled "cancer anarchist" and VP of their Young Adult Leadership Cabinet, which oversees the actions of the Stupid Cancer Task Force. With over a million young adults (ages 15-39) with cancer in the US today, i(2)y says there's no reason to feel isolated. Jack will help open the door to age-appropriate resources and social networking connections.

Jack Bouffard is the co-host of The Stupid Cancer radio show and has appeared on television to talk about the problems facing young adults with cancer. He serves locally as liaison with Ann's Place and helped organize the OMG Summit for Young Adults in NYC last May.

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Breakout Session Information:

(A-1) Walking the Stepping Stones of Life

(see picture and description page 2)

(B-2) The Healing Power of Clay

Susan Wortman will discuss her journey to recovery from a breast cancer diagnosis through the use of porcelain clay. She has created a body of work entitled, "Winged Women" which are bud vases for flowers, as well as curved hourglass figures reflecting the human form. In this session, Susan will share how creating the "Winged Women" has helped her adjust to the physical changes of a mastectomy with reconstruction, accept physical and personal imperfection, listen to her inner voice, practice patience and express her true self with others.

Susan Wortman is a ceramic artist and psychotherapist in private practice in New York City. She is participating member of the Clay Art Center in Port Chester, New York

(C-3) Movin' On

Elizabeth Parkinson and Scott Wise both recently transitioned from successful careers in the performing arts to owning and directing their own performing arts school. It was a difficult transition to make, but with a variety of resources they were able to navigate a new world with relative ease. Elizabeth and Scott will talk about the process: the reasons for the transition, the assistance they received, the problems they faced, etc. They will outline the different agencies/websites concerning actors, dancers, medical issues and performers over 40. Elizabeth and Scott will answer questions and share personal insights on recreating yourself artistically and staying current in this ever-changing economic climate.

Elizabeth Parkinson is a Tony nominated performer and winner of the Astaire Award for best female dancer on Broadway. Scott Wise won the Tony Award for Jerome Robbins' Broadway and received Tony nominations for State Fair and Fosse. They own and direct FineLine Theatre Arts in New Milford, Connecticut.

(D-4) Strategies in Occupational and Physical Therapies

What are the goals, commonalities and differences in occupational and physical therapies? Certified occupational therapy and physical therapy professionals Glenda Brawley and Vincent Orlando will explore these issues, as well as describe how each health care specialty can help improve or restore the ability to perform daily activities and mobility.

Glenda Brawley, OTR/L, CHT has a wealth of experience in the treatment of neurological issues. She is trained in the use of Saebot and Bioness and is a certified hand specialist. Vincent Orlando, PT/MS has 13 years of experience as a physical therapist. He has experience with stroke, SCI, TBI, orthopedic and amputee issues. They are both affiliated with Danbury Hospital's Main St. Physical Rehabilitation Center.

(E-5) Integrating Creativity with Our Healing

Tap into your creativity to facilitate healing. Through Intuitive Art, Marion Pierce will describe how she uses drawing and painting to deal with the debilitating disease that left her in chronic pain. The ability to make art is present even when the body can no longer do what it once did. Intuitive Art is all about listening to your instincts and letting what you feel express itself.

Marion Pierce, BS, TRD is the Director of Therapeutic Recreation for Filosa facilities in Danbury, Connecticut. She has taught her "Healing Art" program at The Holistic Center, the Center for Integrative Healing and Wellness and Naugatuck Valley Community College.

(F-6) Creating Wellness: Life as a Canvas and a Medium

"Life itself, and recovery (which I call redevelopment)," explains session facilitator Don Fischer, "are for me designs in the making, never finished, but with completed sub-projects along the way." Don is a draftsman-designer who describes himself as "living well with a mental illness." He will discuss his own experiences with mental illness and the services available within the community, such as In Our Own Voice presentations, the Peer to Peer recovery education courses and the NAMI Connection recovery support groups.

Don Fischer is the Coordinator of Consumer Programs for the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Connecticut (NAMI-CT). Don also serves as a member of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board, whose logo he designed.

(G-7) Employment Opportunities in the Arts for People with Disabilities

What are the strategies and services that enable visual and performing artists with disabilities to maximize employment possibilities? Allyson Pequita and Arlene Lugo will explore the challenges and opportunities in the job market in this practical, "how-to" workshop, as well as the latest in assistive technology applications for people in the Arts with disabilities.

Allyson Pequita and Arlene Lugo are both employed by the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. Allyson is a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (as well as a lifelong dancer) and Arlene is an Assistive Technology Consultant.

Breakout Session Information Continued:**(H-8) Our Time Theatre: an Artistic Home for Young People who Stutter**

"Our Time Theatre Company is unique in the vast, diverse, and exciting array of New York theaters."

Jane Alexander, actor and former chair, National Endowment for the Arts

(I-9) Creative Thinking, Aging and Living: Engaging our Strengths, Living our Purpose

Steven Dahlberg, director of the International Centre for Creativity and Imagination will take us on a journey through creativity, more specifically the creative thinking process, which engages our strengths and purpose. We'll explore insights about positivity, strengths, adaptability, and neuroscience in tapping into and harnessing our creativity in living more meaningful lives.

Steven Dahlberg is head of the International Centre for Creativity and Imagination and teaches the Creativity + Social Change course at the University of Connecticut. Steve is the editor of two blogs, Applied Imagination and Aging as Exile?

(J-10) Health Care Options for Artists and Performers

Affordable health care for people in the Arts may seem like an oxymoron, but Jim Brown of the Actors Fund of America holds seminars around the country on making this a reality. The Artists Health Insurance Resource Center, a program of the Actors Fund was founded in 1998 with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts. Their new publication, "How to Get Affordable Health Care in Connecticut" will make its publishing debut at our Artists in Transition conference and Jim will walk us through and explain its contents.

James Frederick Brown is the Director of Health Services of the Actors Fund of America and a nationally recognized "guru" on health care issues for artists and performers.

(K-11) Hire Me Because I Can Act!

"Let's talk about how to move past disability and address the issues of being an artist and human being, FIRST," is how Ashley and Nancy Wolfe describe their workshop. Each an experienced actress, they will discuss the experiences, training, resources and networking skills needed to break through the inherent (mis)perceptions that make society view the disability ahead of the person, while encouraging performers with disabilities to persevere, to ask for more and to work toward their dreams.

Ashley Wolfe, an actor, speaker and model has appeared in NBC's Third Watch, as well as the films Jewel and Mr. Blue Sky. She is a research assistant at the Institute for Community Inclusion and is on the board of the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress. Nancy Wolfe is an actor and arts administrator. She was the founder/managing director of COMPANY ONE, an AEA theater and is in her 11th year as the Director of the Center for Creative Youth at Wesleyan University.

(L-12) Working through the Haze

Dan Griffin was a successful arts manager and producer when he learned he was HIV positive - three months after dropping his health insurance due to economic reasons. After quickly going through his savings, Dan discovered the opportunities for assistance with every phase of treating the illness, including housing assistance, from organizations especially focused on people in the Arts. Join Dan as he describes his remarkable journey.

Dan Griffin is a filmmaker and writer based in New York City. In 2006, Chicago Review Press published his co-written biography, The Blue Moon Boys, about the lives of Elvis Presley's original band members. Dan is completing a companion film, as well as a biography of the writer Carson McCullers.

(M-13) I'm Too Young For This! Cancer Foundation

(see description and picture page 2)

(N-14) Grants and How to Get Them

Artists and arts organizations thrive and survive through grant funds. And while the climate for grants is chilly, there's still money to be made from local, state, national and private foundations and agencies. This "how-to" workshop will focus on resources and techniques in finding and applying for grants in the Arts and education.

Darla Shaw, EdD is a Professor of Education at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, CT. Grants have enabled Darla to travel the world, working in residence at one point with Jane Goodall in Tanzania. Sharon Kaufman is the Art Director and resident grant writer at Village Center for the Arts in New Milford, CT. An artist and teacher versatile in many media, Sharon is an accomplished potter and clay sculptor.

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Artists in Transition Conference Registration

Sunday, April 11, 2010 – 12 noon – 5:00pm
 Western Connecticut State University – Westside Campus
 Campus Center Building (fully accessible)
 43 Lake Avenue Ext. (opposite Stop & Shop), Danbury, CT
 Directions: wcsu.edu/campustour/directions.asp

Registration continues on a space available basis. A full service food court is on-site.

Please print all required information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

If involved in the Arts, what is your art form? _____

Are you an artist with a health issue/disability? Yes___ No___

Do you need accommodations (specify)? _____

Do you work with individuals with health issues/disabilities? Yes___ No___

Please specify which arts, health, disability or educational organization(s) you are affiliated with. _____

How did you learn about the conference? _____

Please complete the reverse side and mail this registration form, along with the \$25 registration fee (payable to Artists in Transition) to:

Joel Levitt
 Artists in Transition
 10 Britannia Drive
 Danbury, CT 06811

Your name _____

Conference Schedule

11 am – 12 noon Check-in - Campus Center Upper Lobby

12 noon –
12:45pm Welcoming Remarks
Musical Selections by *Our Time Theatre*
An Artistic Home for Young People who Stutter
Taro Alexander, Founder/Director

There are 15 Breakout Sessions over three time periods. **Please circle your session choices.** Please visit our website for session descriptions

www.artistsintransitionUSA.blogspot.com

1:00pm – 1:45pm	Health Care Insurance	Creative Aging	Hire Me	Our Time Theatre	Working Thru Haze
2:00pm – 2:45pm	Employment Opportunity	Stepping Stones	Integrating Creativity	Strategies OT/PT	Healing Power Clay
3:00pm – 3:45pm	-	Grants	Movin' On	Creating Wellness	Too Young For Cancer
4:00pm – 5:00pm	Featured Speaker – Acclaimed Architect/Sculptor Tom Luckey, subject of the documentary film " <i>Luckey</i> " Closing Remarks				

Questions or Scholarship Requests:
Please contact Joel Levitt at artistsintransition@yahoo.com.

Major funding for this conference has been provided by the A.R.T. Foundation, with additional funding provided by the Danbury Cultural Commission and Western Connecticut State University. We thank them and our over 100 co-sponsoring organizations, and our wonderful volunteers.

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Conference Co-Sponsors- 2010

- *A Common Ground Arts Center
- *Ability Beyond Disability
- *Actors Fund of America
- *Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum
- *Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts
- *Alliance for the Arts/NYC-ARTS.org
- *Alliance of Artists Communities
- *Alliance of Resident Theatres
- *American Institute of Architects: New York Chapter
- *Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
- *Ann's Place, Home of I CAN Cancer Support Services
- *A.R.T. Foundation
- *Art Connects New York
- *ArtsWestchester
- *Arts Council of Greater New Haven
- *Berkshire Creative
- *Brookfield Craft Center
- *Brookfield Theatre for the Arts
- *Catskill Mountain Foundation
- *Center for Contemporary Printmaking
- *Center for Creative Youth at Wesleyan University
- *Center for Independent Documentary
- *Chamber Music America
- *Chappaqua Orchestra
- *Charles Ives Authority for the Performing Arts
- *Charter Oak Cultural Center
- *Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation
- *Clay Art Center
- *Coney Island, USA
- *Connecticut Alliance for Music
- *Connecticut Art Education Association
- *Connecticut Arts Administrators Association
- *Connecticut Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- *Connecticut Ballet
- *Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
- *Connecticut Business Leadership Network
- *Connecticut Dance Alliance
- *Connecticut Film Festival
- *Connecticut Music Educators Association
- *Connecticut Storytelling Center at Connecticut College
- *Craft Emergency Relief Fund
- *Creative Alternatives of New York

Conference Co-Sponsors- 2010

- *Creative Arts Workshop
- *Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County
- *Cunningham Dance Foundation
- *Danbury Cultural Commission
- *Danbury Hospital
- *Danbury Music Centre
- *Danbury Public Schools
- *Dutchess County Arts Council
- *Fairfield County String Teachers Association
- *Filmmakers Collaborative
- *FineLine Theatre Arts
- *Florence Griswold Museum
- *Gallery of Contemporary Art at Sacred Heart University
- *Grammy Awards/MusiCares Foundation
- *Greater Hartford Arts Council
- *Hill-Stead Museum
- *Housatonic Museum of Art
- *Housatonic Valley Cultural Alliance
- *Hudson River Museum
- *Hudson River Potters
- *I'm Too Young For This! Cancer Foundation: The Voice of Young Adults
- *International Centre for Creativity and Imagination
- *Josef and Anni Albers Foundation
- *Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center
- *Iona College Arts Council
- *Lifetime Arts
- *Litchfield Performing Arts/Litchfield Jazz Festival
- *Litchfield Visual Arts
- *Lyme Art Association
- *Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival at the American Museum of Natural History
- *National Alliance for Media Art and Culture
- *National Alliance on Mental Illness: Connecticut
- *National Organization for Rare Disorders
- *New Britain Museum of American Art
- *New Milford Hospital
- *New York Foundation for the Arts
- *Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
- *Orpheus Chamber Orchestra
- *Our Time Theatre: an Artistic Home for Young People who Stutter
- *Putnam Arts Council
- *Real Art Ways
- *Reelabilities: The New York Disabilities Film Festival

Conference Co-Sponsors- 2010

- *Richter Association for the Arts
- *Ridgefield Guild of Artists
- *Robert Rogers Puppets
- *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum
- *Rockland County Music Educators Association
- *Sculpture Barn
- *Silvermine Guild Arts Center
- *Society for the Arts in Healthcare
- *Society of Illustrators
- *Storytelling Center of New York City
- *Textile Arts Center
- *The Broadway League
- *TheatreWorks New Milford
- *20 West Gallery
- *Village Center of the Arts
- *Visual Aids
- *Waterbury Symphony Orchestra
- *Weir Farm National Historic Site
- *Western Connecticut St. University
- *Yale Art Gallery
- *Young Audiences of Connecticut, a VSA Arts affiliate