

**Marcia Brennan** received her Ph.D. in the History of Art and Architecture from Brown University, and she is currently Associate Professor of Art History at Rice University. Her research engages modern and contemporary art history and museum studies; gender theory; mysticism and comparative religion; and the emerging field of the medical humanities. She is the author of four books, including *Curating Consciousness: Mysticism and the Modern Museum* (MIT Press, 2010); *Flowering Light: Kabbalistic Mysticism and the Art of Elliot R. Wolfson* (Rice University Press, 2009); *Modernism's Masculine Subjects: Matisse, The New York School, and Post-Painterly Abstraction* (MIT Press, 2004); *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (MIT Press, 2001, 2002); and she is the lead author of the Menil Collection's twentieth-anniversary exhibition catalogue, *A Modern Patronage: De Menil Gifts to American and European Museums* (Yale, 2007). Recently, she is the recipient of grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Office of Research, Rice University, and Rice's Humanities Research Center. In both 2009 and 2010 she was awarded the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching. In addition to her work at Rice University, Marcia Brennan serves as an Artist In Residence in the Department of Palliative Medicine at the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Her experiences in this clinical context represent the subject of her latest book project, *Words Beyond Words: Finding Language Where There Is No Language* (forthcoming from Intellect Books, Bristol, U.K., with U.S. distribution through the University of Chicago Press).

### ARTIST STATEMENT

Since early 2009 it has been my privilege to serve as an Artist In Residence in the Department of Palliative Care and Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. No matter how many times I pass through the hospital doors, I always feel like I'm walking on sacred ground. In my mind's eye, I often see a trail of rose petals forming a pathway into the hospital building, onto the Acute Palliative Care Unit, and into the patients' rooms. Sitting quietly with each person, listening closely to their stories through conversations that range across a broad emotional and existential spectrum, the ethereal rose petals often appear to change color before my eyes.

It has been an unbelievable privilege to participate in Dr. Jennifer Wheler's organization, COLLAGE: The Art for Cancer Network, and to collaborate closely with the distinguished painter Lynn Randolph. Working together, Lynn and I assist patients and their caregivers in creating meaningful texts and images to express their insights and experiences. Working at the bedside and the chairside, people will often describe a scene that Lynn will create visually, while I gently encourage them to talk and make notes to help crystallize their thoughts. Once the artwork is complete, I read the person's words back to them. The image and the narrative are then inscribed into a handmade paper notebook, which the person is able to keep and share with their family. In this way, the portable microenvironment of the text provides a durable yet tender memory of this transient moment in their lives.