



## Medical Humanities and the Arts

# Rise Up (2022): Using Art to Heal Through the Pandemic

Emily Hagn, MD

**R**ise Up is a COVID-19 memorial and tribute from Project Art Heals. This sustainable, collaborative multimedia project blends art, medicine, science, and community.

Rise Up presents three brightly colored human figures comprising small mementos donated by the public to commemorate pandemic losses and journeys, and countless pieces of clean health care waste. The figures are joyously jumping and “held in space” by thousands of empty COVID-19 vaccine vials.

When I received my first COVID-19 vaccine in December 2020, I asked for the vial to remember that moment and to symbolize our path to healing. I wanted to honor our patients, our community, health care workers, science, and humanity. The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected



most everyone on earth, but there was no community tribute for the pandemic. People across the globe were experiencing pandemic fatigue, and health care communities were suffering profound moral injury

and burnout (including me). I felt like we needed something to acknowledge our pandemic journeys. Project Art Heals was born when that first vial grew into tens of thousands of vials and when artist Heidi Calega said, “I’m 100% in” to collaborate.

Whether you are standing in front of the 5’ x 5’ mosaic in the University of Utah Hospital lobby or viewing it online via the interactive high-resolution maps, my hope is that Rise Up creates a space for people to pause, reflect, acknowledge, mourn, and heal ([asamonitor.pub/3vCSrVo](https://asamonitor.pub/3vCSrVo); [asamonitor.pub/3GaLyPT](https://asamonitor.pub/3GaLyPT)). Even if you did not donate a memento, collect health care waste, or receive a vaccine dose from the vials in the art, anyone can be considered a part of this project simply by having lived through the COVID-19 pandemic. This art project is for everyone, near and far.



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I encourage you to read the courageous, touching, and sometimes funny stories behind the donated mementos and explore the art piece in stunning detail ([asamonitor.pub/3X3QXPo](https://asamonitor.pub/3X3QXPo); [asamonitor.pub/3IpyV6a](https://asamonitor.pub/3IpyV6a)).

In the words of Andra Day’s song “Rise Up”:  
“All we need is hope,  
And for that we have each other...” ■

# The Seeing Eye: Finding Insight and Inspiration from the Humanities

Albert B. Lin, MD

**O**n a frigid Chicago winter day in 2015, I gathered with a group of 12 second-year medical students around the Georges Seurat painting “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte,” which is prominently displayed in one of the main exhibition halls at the Art Institute of Chicago. I was attending a humanities course offered through my medical school titled The Seeing Eye, which aimed to teach young doctors mindfulness and observational skills through art appreciation. On those precious afternoons away from preclinical studies, I eagerly exchanged my stethoscope for a magnifying glass and wandered the museum with my friends, studying stroke patterns, colors, shades, and hues that leapt from famous paintings and statues. It was a wonderful time, and certainly one of my most memorable, if not most formative, experiences during medical school.

Five years later, as a CA-2 at Stanford, I decided to enter the California Society of Anesthesiologists History of Anesthesia



contest. History has always been a source of fascination and inspiration for me, and it was not lost on me that our everyday tools and techniques of the trade – e.g., Miller/Macintosh blades, Seldinger technique, Apgar scores, Larson maneuver, Mallampati scores, etc. – were eponymous testaments to the pioneers of our field. While the demands of residency certainly made writing an extracurricular essay more challenging, I found time to reflect and write over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays (which I was fortunate to spend outside of the hospital!). After several hours of staring at a blank Word document and skimming through the UCSF Arthur

E. Guedel archives, I ultimately decided to write an essay about Dr. David Gaba at Stanford, which I titled “Rethinking ‘Normal Accidents’ in Anesthesia: How Dr. David Gaba Translated Crisis Management Principles from Aviation to Anesthesiology.” Although I had taken a simulation course taught by Dr. Gaba earlier that year, I had no idea that Dr. Gaba had pioneered the scientific field of OR crisis management until I began the background research for my essay. I loved reviewing old interviews and articles featuring Dr. Gaba from the 1980s and 1990s and linking his early interests in space flight aviation to his later work in simulation and crisis management. Gratefully, I won the contest that year with my entry, and received the opportunity to highlight Dr. Gaba’s lifetime contributions to anesthesiology for a broader CSA audience.

I am reminded of the famous quote attributed to Hippocrates – “where the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.” As I come to the end of my medical training, I would add my



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take on it: a love of the humanities is foundational to the love of medicine, the latter of which seems to be in crisis, as evidenced by surveys of physician burnout. The intense day-to-day productivity demands on physicians can produce feelings of dehumanization, making it all too easy to neglect the humanity in our patients, and in ourselves. There is no easy solution to this problem. However, just as how contemplating Seurat’s magnum opus taught me the dual values of careful observation and mindfulness, the humanities can offer ways to better understand who we are as humans. I believe the first step to any sustainable solution will involve fostering a greater respect for the humanity inherent in all of us. ■