

ART AGAINST BREAST CANCER

Sculptures encourage early detection in fighting disease

By **RALPH J. BELLANTONI**
CORRESPONDENT

Being diagnosed with breast cancer can devastate a woman. But artist Marion Behr confronted her diagnosis head on, molding her turmoil and treatment into scul-

tures that convey a message of hope.

The Somerset Art Association honors National Breast Cancer Awareness Month by hosting an exhibit of Behr's transformative creations throughout October. "Image Early"

aims at raising awareness through the power of art.

Behr found inspiration in alpha cradles — forms molded to a woman's torso to keep her body still during radiation treatments.

"The radiation cradles were lined up on the shelves, one on top of another, shelf after shelf," recalls Behr. "I was lying on top of one of them on a sort of bed, waiting for my first treatment. Initially there

ABOUT ART

was some anxiety — but then my focus kept going back to the cradles and to all of the women who bravely laid here before me."

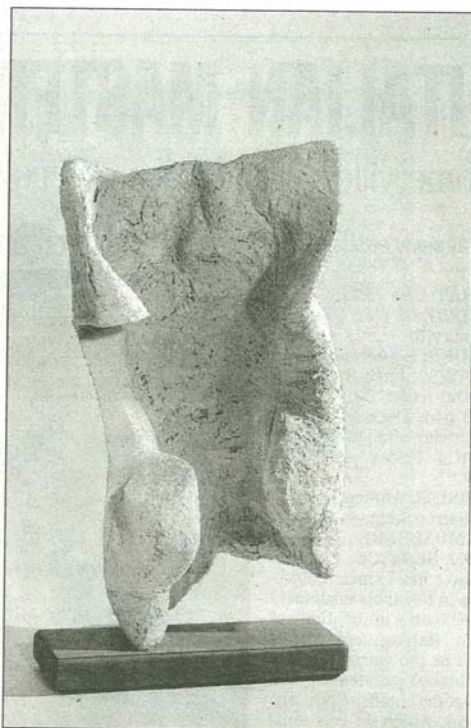
Behr, a resident of North Branch Station, reshaped and adorned the alpha cradles into expressions of the anxiety, hope, pain and triumph of her journey. Each "totem" possesses a distinct personality. Some stand isolated, while others huddle in "conversation."

"In my mind, the cradles took the form of sculptures

representing other patients and their emotions, as well as mine," Behr said. "It was then that I decided to turn these blue plastic flat forms into abstract figures that would encourage others to get an early mammogram the same way my kids encouraged me."

The titles and moods of the sculptures narrate the jostle of Behr's conflicting emotions. "Jumping for Joy" expresses an innocent glee, while "Detox" revels in a patchwork of jubilant colors. "Pre-reconstruction" hits a more ominous note with its jagged pathways of stitched nails and a rusted plumbing pipe in place of a breast. But even here a vibrant blue fabric underpinning hints at hope and healing.

Behr and her husband pioneered ElectroEtch — an environmentally sound graphic etching process that substitutes electricity for toxic chemicals. They have traveled throughout the U.S. and abroad lectur-



FILE PHOTO

Marion Behr aims to raise breast cancer awareness through the power of art with her exhibit "Image Early," on view at the Somerset Art Association. Above, Behr's "Jumping for Joy" sculpture.

ing on and demonstrating their patented etching process.

Behr is also a fervent advocate for women and home-based businesses. Her efforts have been profiled in *McCalls*, *Vogue*, *Family Circle* and others, and she has appeared on the TV programs "Dona-

hue," "Good Morning America" and "Woman to Woman."

The association will hold an Image Early Benefit from 7:30 to 10 p.m. on Oct. 23 at \$75 per person. Wine, hors d'oeuvres and desserts will be served, and Susan Speidel — famous for her cabaret shows — will perform.

IMAGE EARLY

Sculptures in honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month by Marion Behr

• The Somerset Art Association, 2020 Burnt Mills Road, Bedminster • 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, through October • Admission is free • 908-234-2345; www.somersetart.org

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