

Hearts: Metaphor, Mayhem and Meaning
An Exhibition of Collaborative Art by Sue Taves and Zia Gipson
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Heart images resonate across centuries and cultures. For the past couple of years, we've collaborated in an exploration of the heart-as-metaphor. How can images of the heart depict our journey through life? Our work captures a few of the moments along that journey.

In an age of technology, we tend to consider our brains as the seat of our self, or soul. But it's the image of the heart that captures our imaginations, our emotions and our personal histories to a degree our brains never can.

We began our work by meticulously carving and sculpting hearts out of every material we could come up with: stone, papier mache, felt, plaster...Then we deliberately broke, cut and tore apart the hearts, a process documented by photographer Michael Stadler. His photos capture the moment of shattering, the mayhem of destruction. The evidence of a broken heart? Shards, cracks, and broken-to-bits pieces of damaged hearts.

The next step was searching for ways to reassemble our work in ways that produced an emotional or intellectual response in us. We found that some of the hearts were easily mended, both mechanically and thematically; others not so much. Some heart pieces had flown too far or had shattered into dust, like forgotten or repressed memories, they were lost forever.

The last step in our collaboration is to visually articulate the stories inherent in the mending of the broken hearts. We reflected on how the form of each heart pertains to our own personal history, to our time and culture. We've attempted to encode the hearts in ways, and with materials, that express our insights:

- Heart break introduces powerful and sometimes irreversible forces
- Each heart uniquely contains the record of its journey
- Like Humpty Dumpty, nothing fits back together exactly the way it was before
- It's shocking to purposefully break something beautiful
- How to depict joy and happiness with originality?
- Healing is optional; scar tissue is not
- Our lives are shaped by both the breaking and the mending of hearts
- We don't always have much choice in how hearts shatter, but we do have choices in the way we mend them
- While the mending isn't always pretty, it's pretty interesting