

# TONI BARCA

**Drawing A World Where Those with Cancer are Understood and Loved, Body & Soul**



**W**hen artist Toni Barca started drawing as a young child, infatuated with female figures, especially Amazons, she could not have fathomed the path her journey would have taken as an artist. Never afflicted with breast cancer herself, yet through her empathy for those who have, she was inspired to create a series of touching and impactful etchings. These hopeful intimate portraits are of our fellow journeyers in this transitional time in their life. Each one a sensitive and moving testament capturing the fully intact soul whilst the physical body no longer is, and all that comes with that including the inner solitude and struggle often endured as well as the power and unwavering essence.



*My Soul Is In Tact*

Toni Barca was literally a child of the planet. She was born in Paris, and lived in Rome, London, Africa, and Hong Kong and finally the United States. Her family traversed the world due to her father's business which called upon him to travel constantly. "I felt like my father hoisted me on top of his shoulders and showed me the world. I saw all the beauty and all the sadness the world carried." Her father grew up during the depression and WWII due to which Toni readily admires that, "He had a great capacity for empathy for others. He saw the kind of things that can make you hard

and shut down or can open up the heart. His heart was open to other people's plight. It was a great lesson through which I learned to have compassion for others and life's struggles."

Thanks to her exposure to many different cultures and customs at a young age, and her father's example of caring and empathy, she grew into an open-minded woman, relating and understanding to many different situations and people. One experience that impacted her quite deeply was when she was around 10 years old she happened to overhear a conversation

between her mother and a neighbor. This chance eavesdropping on an adult discussion would alter the path of her artwork years later, and steer her own empathetic feelings towards women and what they sometimes have to withstand. Her mother's conversation was about a beautiful model who underwent a double mastectomy that ruined her career, and then was profoundly deserted by her boyfriend. This relatively innocent retelling of one woman's hardship had a deep influence on young Toni. "The message I got was, so if you're not perfect, your man will leave you?" Are you not a

whole person, a complete woman, a beautiful woman without your breasts? It made me think, this is not right. Who says you're not whole if one or both breasts are gone? Who makes up these rules?"

Around the same time, Toni became preoccupied with female figures of varied cultures, especially the female Greek Amazon warriors. As a child she would consistently choose these as her subject matter in her drawings. She knew of the story of the Amazons who were known for cutting off one of their breasts in order to be more proficient with their bow and arrow so they could better go into battle. These Amazon women were not meek or weak, but powerful female figures, ready to sacrifice themselves to be strong and self-supporting.

Most little girls play with Barbie, and so grow up seeing that image as the beautiful female figure. Yet, Toni was drawing female figures with one breast at a very early age. As Ms. Barca shared her fascinating story, I could not help but wonder if maybe she had a past-life as one of these Amazons, or some form of spiritual link to them, so I asked this of her. She replied "I believe in past-lives, yes, I've thought of this myself. It's very possible." The image of a warrior, a survivor, a strong and powerful woman was something she was meant to impart in each and every image that she creates. Her childhood preoccupation with the Amazons was not an accident, or a coincidence. She had a mission, a life-path to share this female warrior energy to current day cancer patients, who many times are looked upon in our society as victims. She is the voice to herald these woman (and men) who have been afflicted with breast cancer as champions, not tragic prey. So what Ms. Barca understood at an early age, is what she was destined to share through her artwork.



*Buddha Power*

**“These etchings arouse healing compassion for others while at the same time breeds it for the self for the struggles we each go through.”**

To say the least, these Amazon women with one breast were not the typical fertility goddess, they were the alternate image of a highly evolved spiritual warrior, going into battle, filled with valor and power. Just like the Amazons, her subjects go into battle, but in these cases against the cancer, society's stigma, and their own inner idea of their new selves. It's a wonderful allegory and visual for people battling an illness, for hope and triumph over their oppressor, whatever or whomever that may be. "I think writers, and some visual artists have to step into other people's shoes in order to create the kind of art that speaks to others. So in a sense, it wasn't such a stretch to sit sketching



*My Beloved*

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Amazons and to realize that to be a breast cancer survivor transformed a woman into a warrior, an Amazon." Though her images are clearly powerful as well as sensitive, early on in the process of getting her work out to the public, it was hard to find a home where they were accepted and revered for what they were saying.

Initially after the images were created, friends urged her to submit her work to breast cancer support groups and agencies, but originally there was silence from that community. She put the work aside for 6 years, "I realized that our society was neither ready nor comfortable with the dialogue of breast cancer and intimacy." But over the years, the reaction to her images has softened, and the time has come where her themed images of compassion, love, empowerment and transformation have become accepted and treated as an important step in the cancer dialogue. In May of this year she was invited to the influential 20th

Annual California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP) Symposium sponsored by University of California to share not only her work, but also her thoughts, feelings and ideas on how her images could assist in the healing conversation of cancer patients. Prominent people in the world of breast cancer are taking notice and finally realizing the power of these images in the recovery process, as well as sharing and telling the story of these amazing paths of people through an illness, who may not be physically whole, but are spiritually stronger and more empowered.

This is the message she evokes with her etchings, to everyone who views her artwork, not just those with or who've had cancer. The process of creating the series touched upon many deep-felt emotions for her; "it was heartbreaking, fulfilling and ultimately enlightening. I think that art has been the conduit to a multilingual dialogue about the mind body healing

paradigm." Going through the journey of losing a breast, or losing anything with attachment to identity for that matter, indeed offers the opportunity to grow and become a spiritual warrior; stronger and more victorious than otherwise imaginable. So her images are a metaphor for any of life's losses, poignant documents for the human experience that can influence and reach so many, crossing borders and languages.

Without words, she invokes compassion into her images and elicits the same from the viewer. In many of her works she shows the scars from a breast removal on her subjects, and with it exhibits the empathy for yourself that you must have first when life is a struggle, as well as the love and understanding needed from friends, lovers and even strangers. It's a patchwork of sensitivity and tenderness that will make the journey for the sufferer tolerable and ultimately successful.

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The artwork reaches out to the audience and says, "Do you understand what I'm going through? Are you with me? Or will you look away in denial? Or maybe even repulsion?" Her work is both thought provoking and to some, provocative. Unlike in Europe, in our society (as well as the media), we are not used to viewing nudes without there being an overtly sexual context attached. However, these nudes are not about sex, rather about bonding, connection, and tenderness; while they may be harder to look at due to the deep attachment to oneself and the relationship with their partner that the images portray. The work has been deemed an important visual representation of deep personal relationships and worthy of further study and examination. In 2006, ten of her visual works were accepted by The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (Indiana University), these pieces are now part of their permanent collection.

The images are both "salacious" and innocent. "Some think of my work as pornographic. They are confusing nudity with sex. It's not the same thing." The images are reminiscent of Sumerian and ancient Hindu deities, expressed from a contemporary approach. The innocent sexual references are shown in a concise graphic illustration that are clean and succinct, which allows the theme of empathy, love and empowerment to permeate her work. The sketches are line drawings cut into linoleum blocks, and then printed. The art is done very simply, purely, with an almost childlike quality. The subconscious decision by Ms. Barca to approach her images in this manner makes the serious subject matter much more palpable and easy to comprehend. Her pieces exhibit nudity, suffering, and in some cases sexual intimacy, yet with an innocence that penetrates all of her art. The gritty details of the nude images are left out,

so the deep emotions of the subject matter can shine through. She has managed to create spiritual and emotional stirring pieces in a two-world plane, using a clear and uncomplicated depiction of their struggle using thin lines, very little color, mostly black and white frameworks to tell the stories of these women grappling with life's trials. What's left is the emotion of the story. You're not bogged down by specific elements that will take you away from their personal saga. Her work is similar to ancient pictograms in style, which ironically she is incorporating into a new book about breast cancer survivors.

She will be employing pictograms from the Harappan Culture, and the ancient Greek fragments from Sappho into her work, undeciphered languages of symbols and images. This ancient text stands as metaphor for the misunderstanding of her subjects,

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women, and men who have suffered from cancer. Like her focus, the pictograms are not quite understood or fully realized by society, just like the patients she represents in her book. Last year she got the urge to create a pillow book for breast cancer patients and their partners. "I researched the web and was shocked to see that not one pillow book was available to breast cancer survivors. I saw a million Kama Sutra books, tarot cards and so forth but nothing out there for breast cancer survivors and their lovers." She knew that it needed to be done. But first she needed to show the work, so she contacted Sandy Taylor at the Tah gallery and she allowed her to show her work. Upon the heels of this first confirmation, she knew that she hadn't finished, the pillow book had to be done. Hay House was so moved by her pillow book idea, they decided on the spot to fund it and gift her a grant to complete the book. "So this has been a process of love. I feel privileged and awed by the task of allowing myself to be guided, I trust the

process." The pillow book, "Songs of Solomon: A Pillow Book for Breast Cancer Survivors and Their Lovers" will be out in October of this year on Amazon and Kindle.

You don't have to lose a breast to get the message, the lesson of growth or spiritual enlightenment. Even as a man or a woman never having any health issues whatsoever, you are touched by these etched portraits because they are about transformation, rising from the ashes, and accepting a redefining moment in one's life. Everyone on the planet can relate to that.

Ms. Barca's images arouse healing compassion for others while at the same time breeds it for the self for the struggles we each go through. She is inviting the embrace of the deeper understanding that we are all one, not separate as we so often see ourselves. And though we all have an individual journey, each path contributes to the whole of humanity and the planet.

Her artwork, at its core, speaks about loving and caring for one another, and victory over life's obstacles. It's empowering to see a human, real, imagined, or implied, triumph and grow from pain and suffering. Through her series of etchings depicting cancer patients we can all learn and be inspired by that role model. Her subject matter may initially appear to be of cancer patients, and they undoubtedly are, but actually the subject is each and everyone of us. Her artwork tells a story of someone struggling as they go through a life-changing experience. As fellow humans, don't we all have to go through at least one of these in our lifetime? Depending on our vantage point at the moment, we are either the subject who is yearning for wholeness, or the partner or viewer who elicits love and compassion to the struggling soul. With her sketches she enables us to step into either side of the equation due to her own empathic nature. In order for these images to exist, they first had to be created in the mind of the artist herself. These drawings are a peek into her feelings about people dealing with life's trials and tribulations. They are a snapshot of Ms. Barca's own compassion towards the cancer patients and ultimately the world at large. Compassion is something that can be taught, shared, and encouraged, and if these drawings touch you, even a little, then your heart, or your heart chakra to be specific, can open to be more loving, feeling and empathetic towards others and to yourself. And that's a profound gift that Ms. Barca has decided to share with the world through these touching and intimate drawings.

*You may see more of Toni Barca's work at [www.tonibarca.com](http://www.tonibarca.com)  
You can email her at:  
[bacchor@att.net](mailto:bacchor@att.net)*

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#### SUNDAY, AUGUST 4

BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE .... With EFT! Level I Seminar with John Freedom 12-5:30PM. EFT, aka 'tapping' is a powerful technique for resolving emotional distress & trauma, simply by tapping acupoints. Learn to tap with John Freedom, author of Heal Yourself with EFT. \$65 prepaid; \$55/person for two prepaid; \$75 at the door. 520/241-5124 ; [freejii@yahoo.com](mailto:freejii@yahoo.com) ; The GATEWAY 2507 S. Barrington Ave, West LA 90064. Free Parking. [www.eft-seminar-august4.eventbrite.com](http://www.eft-seminar-august4.eventbrite.com)

HOW TO DEAL WITH OBSESSIONS. 7-9PM. Discover how obsessions influence your thoughts & actions--usually without your awareness. You will learn how to identify an obsession & what to do about it from an interdimensional perspective. Visit or watch the class streamed live via [www.unarius.org](http://www.unarius.org) ; Unarius Academy of Science, 145 S. Magnolia Ave., El Cajon ; 800/475-7062.

#### MONDAY, AUGUST 5

MEDITATION WORKSHOP 7:30-8:30PM. Free, donations welcome. Experience an inner attunement to Spirit & your own Divinity as you practice these guided meditations taught by John-Roger, Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA) Founder. 3500 W. Adams Blvd, Los Angeles 90018 ; [www.peacelabyrinth.org](http://www.peacelabyrinth.org) ; 323/737-4055x1137 ; Registrar@[peacelabyrinth.org](http://peacelabyrinth.org)

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THE AETHERIUS SOCIETY TWELVE BLESSING POWER CIRCLE MONDAYS 7:45PM with this worldwide non-profit spiritual organization also in Los Angeles since 1960 dedicated to help heal & uplift humanity. Also offer Sunday Divine Service 11AM, Operation Prayer Power Thursdays 7:45PM, Free Spiritual Healing by appointment only Tuesdays afternoon & evening. 6202 Afton Place, Hollywood 90028. 800/800-1354. [paul@aetherius.org](mailto:paul@aetherius.org) ; [www.aetherius.org/la](http://www.aetherius.org/la)

#### TUESDAY, AUGUST 6

FEEL THE QI MEDICAL QIGONG WEEKLY TUESDAYS WITH DEBBIE NAGATA, MQP 5-6:15PM. Join in at anytime. Medical Qigong combines gentle movement w/natural breathing to correct Qi imbalances, & strengthen & increase the flow of Qi (energy) in your body, meridians & organs to help increase vitality & promote healing & peace. \$15. The GATEWAY 2507 S. Barrington Ave, West LA 90064. Free Parking. 310/479-0430. [www.thegatewayportal.com](http://www.thegatewayportal.com) (Click Calendar)

ANGEL CIRCLE WEEKLY TUESDAYS WITH PHILIP GARO DORIAN 7:30-9:30PM. You may join us at any time. This is an experiential workshop designed to help increase your intuitive & psychic abilities. Starts with a half hour guided meditation, then in a circle sharing format, each person asks questions & opens up to the group for guidance. \$20. The GATEWAY 2511 S. Barrington Ave, Ste 100, West LA 90064. Free Parking. 310/479-0430. [www.thegatewayportal.com](http://www.thegatewayportal.com)

#### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7

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LOVE ON HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY FAIR 7-10PM. Free Qi Gong, & various Healers, Readers, Vendors & more. Admission is free, book in advance to avoid lines w/Nita Patel at 404/324-2212 or [info@worldloveon.com](mailto:info@worldloveon.com) ; [www.worldloveon.com](http://www.worldloveon.com) ; The GATEWAY 2507 S. Barrington Ave, West LA 90064. Free Parking. [www.meetup.com/TheGATEWAYPortal/events/129390282](http://www.meetup.com/TheGATEWAYPortal/events/129390282)

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 8

ALOHA KAHIAU HEALING ACTIVATION & MEDITATION (& CONSTELLATION HEALING INTRO) WITH GARY STUART 7-10PM. Features the Hawaiian Results Healing Approach to reveal what's unseen that is exhibiting a negative effect in our lives. \$20. The GATEWAY 2507 S. Barrington Ave, West LA 90064. Free Parking. [www.meetup.com/TheGATEWAYPortal/events/129938732](http://www.meetup.com/TheGATEWAYPortal/events/129938732)

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