

Be Joy!



By Gina Rose Halpern, Director, Healing Through Arts

Our lives have been touched and transformed by our association with Patch Adams and Gesundheit. We have been tickled back into health. Our sense of purpose, as doctors, nurses, educators, and most importantly as human beings has been restored through love and laughter.

Years ago, I had made a vow to use my art in the service of healing, but I stayed hidden behind the phone, computer and the role of Director of Healing Through Arts. I hid myself in the studio and sent the art into the world to speak for me. I was a productive, but not a happy person.

In June of 1995, I met Patch at a Healing Arts Conference where I was presenting a project I had just completed for the Children's Hospital of San Diego. After my presentation, Patch said to me ***"It is not enough to make art about joy, you must BE JOY!"*** This was a sacred mandate which I did not know how to fulfill, or even how to begin. So I signed myself up to go to Russia with Patch's clown tour, and learn from the master.

We left the airport in our clown clothes and did not take them off for two whole weeks. We began our tour of pediatric hospitals in Moscow in a cancer ward. There were rooms and rooms of bald children with

luminous eyes. As an artist I would find myself drifting to the bedside of the most immobilized children. I would follow their line of vision to see what they were looking at all day. Then I would take out my crayons and create a little shrine in front of their eyes.

In the tiny room of the burn hospital a little boy was shrieking in pain from burns over half of his body. Patch and another doctor hovered over this bed crooning, but because of the burns on his back he just faced the wall and wailed. I somehow felt that I should draw for him, and leaning over I place the paper where he could see it, and began to create.

I drew a smiling crescent moon with a little clown dancing on its tip, and as a rainbow appeared, he stopped crying. Patch leaned over to me and said, "What you are doing is Real Magic. Don't stop."

For an hour I drew, taping visions of birds and stars and smiling cats to the wall he was facing. In the process of drawing for him, I remembered my own reason for existing. To "BE JOY," to create more beauty in the world.

Since my return from Russia, I have formed a children's music, art and performance group. We call ourselves "Real Magic."