

David Patrick Columbia's
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Lunch with Paige Peterson.

I left to take a very warm walk down Fifth to 55th where I was meeting Paige Peterson and her daughter Alexandra for lunch. I was thinking as I was making my way down the avenue that Paige, a several-times cancer survivor, is one of those individuals who has benefited (with her life) from the work of the Society of Memorial Sloan-Kettering and their brilliant staff which make up the largest private institution dedicated to the prevention, detection, control and cure for cancer.

Meanwhile that's all water under the bridge these days for Paige who is one of those people whose personality is always putting the best foot forward. No matter how she's feeling, she's one of those people who will put a good face on things. I think you're born with that quality although no matter what you often have to work at it. Paige is a hard worker.

I'd never had more than a passing conversation before with **Alexandra** who is an undergraduate at Middlebury and about to go to Buenos Aires where she is going to study for a year. Both Alexandra and her younger brother **Peter Cary** are bilingual, proficient in Spanish because of their longtime housekeeper. When the children were very small, Paige asked her housekeeper to speak to them only in Spanish. The simple result: today Peter and Alexandra converse effortlessly in Spanish with among others, their

housekeeper. Only mama Paige doesn't know what they're talking about.



Friday she was showing off a new summer haircut

and brimming with excitement over the new children's book that she and **Christopher Cerf** have put together called "Blackie, The Horse Who Stood Still." It is a true story about a horse who lived out his life on an island in the San Francisco Bay. Chris wrote the text and Paige did the illustrations.

With Sloan-Kettering still on my mind, I asked Paige about her bouts with cancer.

She told me it started years ago with a pain in her face. "It felt like some demon with an ice pick was in my right cheek bone stabbing me relentlessly ... then out of no where it would stop. This went on for years. I would grab my face to stop the pain. I finally went to a doc who said that I probably had a sinus infection, but we would do an MRI of my brain just to make sure everything was okay. It never occurred to me that anything other than some antibiotics would be needed.

"One day I was on a train with my friend, **Peter Brown**, headed to the White House for the first **Tony Blair** dinner with the **Clintons**. While on the train I spoke to my doc who said I had brain tumor and that I needed to come right back to New York. I did not. I thought to myself I may never have the opportunity to go to the White House again, and so I went to the dinner and had a wonderful time. Upon my return, I saw Dr. Frank Petito and he advised me to remove the tumor immediately, so we did.

"The tumor was the beginning of many operations. I have ended up at Sloan Kettering too many times. My body makes tumors, some malignant, some not. I have had surgery somewhere around every 18 months for the last 10 years. Often times the treatment is harder than the surgeries.

“However, after years of design and television work, I took the presence of the brain tumor as a wake-up call. I knew it was time for me to concentrate on what I truly loved doing – painting. I had always spent time painting, but now I decided to focus on it exclusively. “I started painting my children, my friends at the beach, and my family. Over the past few years, I have had 6 gallery shows and was privileged be included in Jonathan Becker's book, "Studios By The Sea.”



“One opportunity led to another. Now I have collaborated with Chris and illustrated ‘Blackie, The Horse Who Stood Still.’ It will be coming out in September through Welcome Books and Random House. “Blackie” is about being calm and quiet and focused and thoughtful – things I have concentrated on being since my body began challenging me.”

Spellbound by her matter-of-fact telling of her story and impressed by her pluck, I asked how she handled all the bad news. “It is all about attitude in the end, and how well we handle ourselves in the face of adversity.”

I’ve been an admirer of her work since I first saw some of it a few years ago. The images just moved into my imagination and have stayed there ever since. **Barbara MacAdam** in ARTnews put it more succinctly: “It continues and even updates a Pop-minimalist tradition of such practitioners as **Will Barnet** and **Alex Katz**. Her use of “negative space,” is what makes it personal and distinctive. It both conceals and projects a certain emotional content, hinting at an underlying narrative. The group of bathers are defined mainly by stripes and their suits and towels,” and yet you can almost see and feel the East Hampton beach that they are on.

Or as described by her longtime friend and collaborator, Chris Cerf, "What I most enjoy in Paige Peterson's canvases is her irrepressible energy and her unexpected bursts of humor. One of my favorites—an image of a young boy, jumping for joy right 'out of frame'—is a perfect example."

A sampling of Paige Peterson's broad range of work





