



CAROLINE RAJAN

Solo Exhibition

“The Unsung Voices: Women Living with HIV”

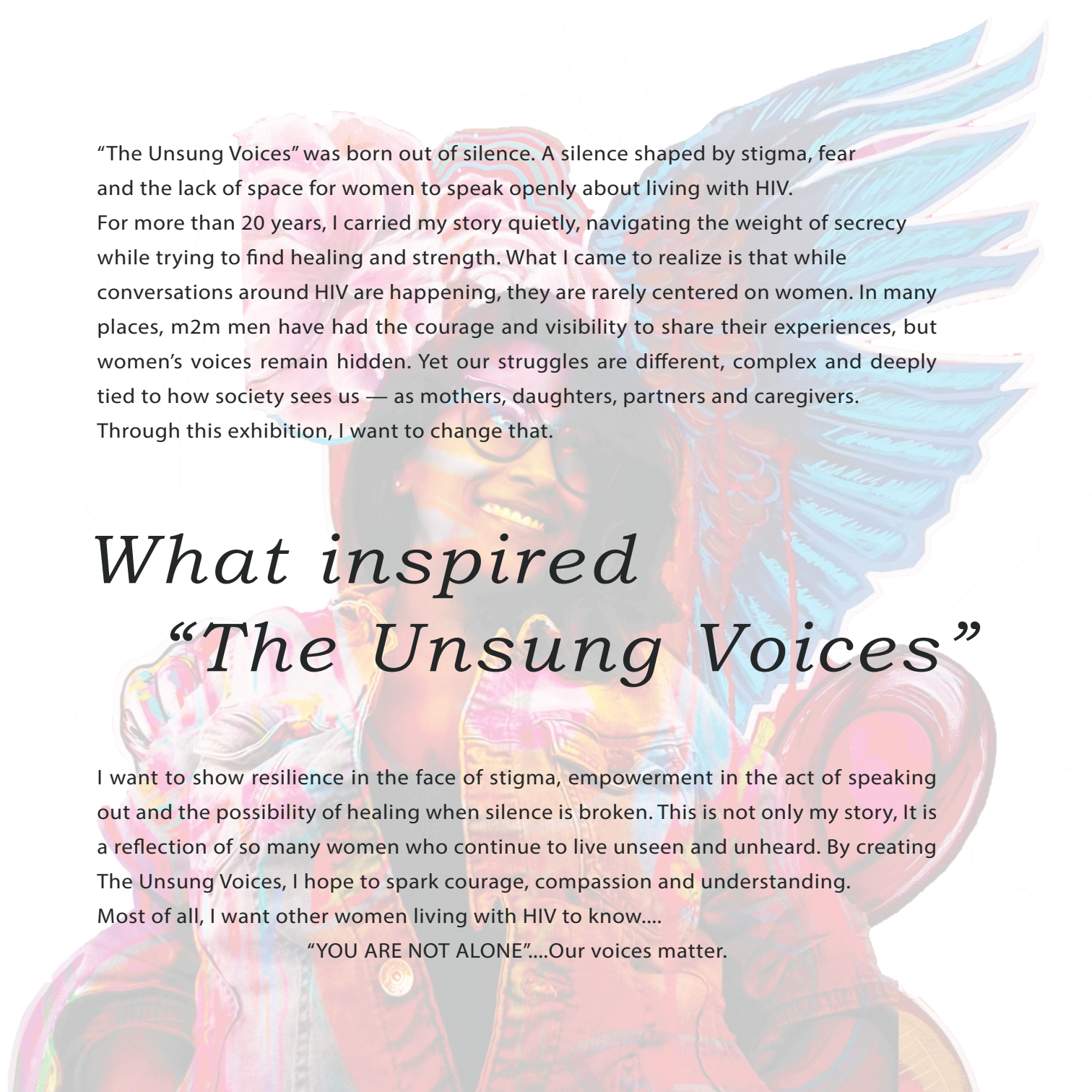
The Voice, Reflection and Celebration
of Women Unheard yet Deeply Inspiring

“The



Unsung

Voices”



“The Unsung Voices” was born out of silence. A silence shaped by stigma, fear and the lack of space for women to speak openly about living with HIV. For more than 20 years, I carried my story quietly, navigating the weight of secrecy while trying to find healing and strength. What I came to realize is that while conversations around HIV are happening, they are rarely centered on women. In many places, men have had the courage and visibility to share their experiences, but women’s voices remain hidden. Yet our struggles are different, complex and deeply tied to how society sees us — as mothers, daughters, partners and caregivers. Through this exhibition, I want to change that.

What inspired “The Unsung Voices”

I want to show resilience in the face of stigma, empowerment in the act of speaking out and the possibility of healing when silence is broken. This is not only my story, it is a reflection of so many women who continue to live unseen and unheard. By creating The Unsung Voices, I hope to spark courage, compassion and understanding. Most of all, I want other women living with HIV to know....

“YOU ARE NOT ALONE”....Our voices matter.



What exactly am I saying?

As you would know by now, I have been living with HIV for over two decades. This journey has been a rollercoaster of emotions. Moments of pain, fear, and self-doubt. For years, I believed I had to accept the world's silence and judgment, simply because of who I am. But art became my language when words failed me. My canvas became a mirror to my healing. A space where I could release my wounds, my grief, my hope, and the madness swirling in my head. Every brushstroke carries a fragment of my truth; every color, a heartbeat of resilience.

So through art, I found the courage to reclaim my story. And to give voice to the many women who still live unseen and unheard. My paintings are not just about living with HIV; they are about living fully, fiercely, and unapologetically.

“Hello Everyone, my name is Caroline and I am a 45-year-old visual abstract artist from Malaysia. Art has been a part of me for as long as I can remember. I was already painting and experimenting with colors and forms as a child. I later studied at Lim Kok Wing University, where I nurtured my passion further, but it was life itself that became my greatest teacher.

About The Artist



Over the years, I explored many different jobs and paths, yet I always found myself returning to the canvas. Painting became not just a hobby, but a calling. The one thing that consistently gave me a sense of purpose, expression and freedom. Eventually, I chose to fully embrace this path and dedicate myself to a career in art. For me, abstract art is more than technique, It is emotion, storytelling and connection. Through my work, I hope to share not just my journey, but also the resilience, beauty and strength that art can bring to life”



“Turn the page to step into the journey I’ve poured myself into these past 10 months...”



Diagnosis

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025

Diagnosis

At 23, my wings were clipped. What began as a future full of dreams collapsed suddenly into silence and shadow. Confusion, shame, guilt, denial and a loneliness so heavy it felt like falling without end. This work captures that moment of diagnosis. The exact point where life split into before and after. Trying to comprehend a future that seemed torn away. It is not only sorrow, but the private hurricane that follows a single piece of news: The breaking, the fear, the suicidal despair and the slow, trembling awareness that somehow you must continue. This piece invites the viewer to witness that grief. To feel the abrupt loss of possibility and to sit in the stillness of being unseen, while everything inside is falling apart.



Retaliation

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Retaliation

When I painted *Retaliation*, I wasn't making a picture of illness. I was making the survival strategies I turned to more visible. At that time I had nothing but a single, dark option in my head: to make myself stop. Drugs became the anesthetic for a life that felt unbearable; risk felt like meaning. The colors and violent marks in this work are not metaphors.

They are memory. They map the instant when something inside me snapped and self-love disappeared. This piece marks a turning point: an admission of how I tried to escape, and an attempt to hold that brokenness in the open so it can be understood, grieved and one day, healed. They are meant to confront the illusion that stigma, shame or addiction are private failings. They are human responses to unbearable pain.



Shame & Isolation

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Shame & Isolation

After denial came the quiet realization that the world could never truly understand what it means to live with HIV. I learned to wear silence like armor . Protecting my honor by hiding my truth.

Isolation became both my refuge and my prison. To be understood, I had to reveal myself; to be accepted, I had to disappear. This painting holds that fragile balance. The weight of dignity wrapped in solitude, the longing to be seen yet fearing the judgement of others.



Denial

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Denial

This piece reflects the stage which was sometime after my HIV diagnosis, where I refused to accept the truth. The bold red symbolizes denial itself. Loud, chaotic, and unavoidable. While the black represents the drugs I used to numb the reality. The painting embodies the inner chaos that consumed me, rupturing my sense of self until I no longer recognized who I had become. I just did not want to see nor acknowledge what I was doing to myself or that I even have this virus in me.



Anger

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Anger

A storm with no sound.

I wore smiles like masks,
a quiet actress in a world that judged
yet claimed to accept.

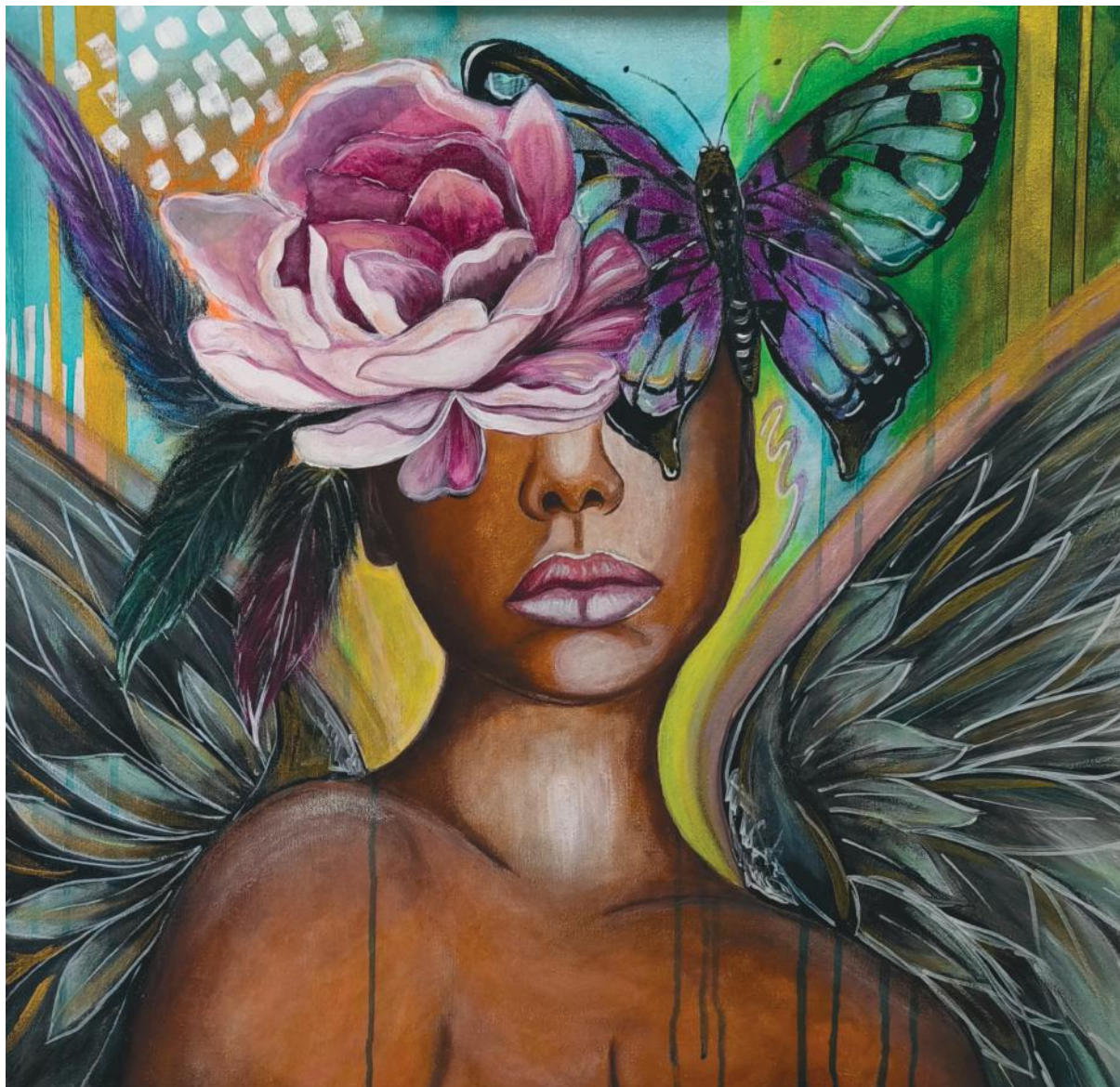
Inside me burned a secret fire,
rage at men, at society, at God Himself.

Questions with no answers:

Why me? Am I unworthy of love?
How to survive this virus, this silence?

For years I swallowed the heat,
until it became a hidden ocean of red.

This painting is that ocean unleashed, the fury, the hurt,
and the power of a heart still beating through it all.



Chokehold
Mixed Medium
60cmx60cm
2025



Chokehold

The flower and butterfly are symbols of beauty and freedom, yet bound by silence.

This painting speaks of the voice I longed to have but couldn't.

I wanted to spread my wings, to express, to be, but fear kept me still.

Chokehold captures that quiet struggle and the yearning to speak, trapped beneath the weight of judgment.



Grief

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Grief

Since my diagnosis,
sorrow has lived within me like a quiet storm.

I searched for ways to escape the ache,
to silence the heaviness that never left.

Why me? became a whisper that followed every breath.

Painted in blue and purple,
colors as deep as the ocean,
this grief runs through me still,
a shadow that refuses to fade.



Reclamation
Mixed Medium
60cmx60cm
2025

A large, stylized green brushstroke graphic that forms a wavy, horizontal shape. The word "Reclamation" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font across the center of this graphic.

Reclamation

It was during the stillness of COVID that something within me began to stir. In the quiet, I found voices women living openly with HIV. Their strength, resilience, and unapologetic truth shining through the noise of the world. They became mirrors, reflecting what I longed to see in myself: the power to live unhidden. For so long, I had been silenced by fear. The weight of judgment, the eyes that saw only stigma. I was screaming quietly, aching to step into the light, yet asking myself, then what? But something shifted. Their courage became a spark inside me, igniting what I thought I had lost. This painting is that fire.

The moment I began to reclaim my voice, my story, my womanhood.

It is where fear turns into freedom, and truth becomes light.



Disclosure
Mixed Medium
60cmx60cm
2025



Disclosure

From the depths of murky waters, a lotus begins to rise, fragile yet unyielding. It's petals open slowly, just as I begin to reveal myself. For years, silence pressed against my throat, keeping me hidden, unseen. But in this moment of awakening, I let the waters carry my truth upward. My face, once veiled by fear, now emerges; my eyes meet the world unflinching. This painting is that becoming — a slow unfurling of voice, of self, of freedom. The lotus stands as my witness: resilient, unapologetic and radiant against the darkness.



Acceptance
Mixed Medium
60cmx60cm
2025

Acceptance

Integration of diagnosis into identity, not as definition, but as part of who I am. Acceptance felt like a rebirth: and the quiet after the storm, I began to meet myself again. Acceptance was not gentle. It was a rebirth wrapped in ache. To live with HIV meant unlearning shame, releasing denial and watching the old self dissolve into something truer. Purple bleeds through the canvas—grief's lingering shadow, a bruise of what was lost. Yellow breaks through it, tender, trembling light, the color of surrender, of learning to breathe again. I once craved acceptance from others, believing their approval could make me whole. But the truth whispered otherwise: the only acceptance that could free me was my own.



Love & Intimacy

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Love & Intimacy

This is the 11th stage of my journey living with HIV. This painting carries the echoes of fear, the quiet thought that even on medication, I might harm someone I loved. That fear dulled my ability to feel, to be seen, to enjoy closeness. For a long time, I believed intimacy was something I had lost. Through the colors and symbols, I painted my journey back to love. The closed eyes speak of surrender and trust. Orchids and irises bloom as emblems of sensuality and healing. The blue halo reflects serenity, and the wing is a symbol of freedom. It shows how understanding can lift us from shame. Behind me, the heart remains: bruised, but still beating. I learned that love is not forbidden, and intimacy is not dangerous. With the right person, one who truly understands and holds you without fear, connection becomes sacred again. Even in a body once burdened by shame, love can bloom. Safe, beautiful and free.



Advocacy & Empowerment

Mixed Medium

60cmx60cm

2025



Advocacy & Empowerment

From silence, I found my voice and with it, my power. What once felt like a burden has become my banner. I stand not only for myself, but for every woman still hiding behind fear and stigma. The colours in this painting rise with energy and light, movement, motion and life. They speak of courage blooming where shame once lived, of resilience painted in every stroke.

This is the stage where I step forward, no longer defined by the virus, but by the strength it revealed in me. My art becomes my advocacy, my truth becomes a torch. A reminder that we are more than survival; we are strength, we are beauty, we are unsung voices no more!!.

Stigma (Pop Art Lips)



Bold, bright and beautiful, yet silent. These lips speak of the stories that never get told. Beneath the vivid colours lies the weight of judgment, the quiet ache of what cannot be shared. Each pair of lips holds a world of emotion. Joy, pain, survival and love painted in defiance of shame. These pieces represent the silence many of us carry: how society's stigma forces us to mute our truth, to smile when we want to scream, to hide when we long to be seen. Through colour, I reclaim that silence turning what once was suppression into art that dares to be seen, even when unheard. Because behind every closed mouth, there is a story, beautiful, painful and human.



Pop Art
Mixed Medium
20cmx30cm
2025

Acknowledgement

This booklet is dedicated to everyone who stood beside me on this journey especially my late mother and father.

To those whose love, belief, and presence that made "The Unsung Voices" possible.

To my curator, whose insight and creativity helped ignite this spark and shape it into something meaningful; to my friends, each of whom stepped in with ideas, encouragement, and strength; and to my family, whose unwavering support has been my foundation and light through every stage of this process. I thank you, deeply and endlessly.

This exhibition is more than a collection of paintings; it is a journey of hope. It reflects not only my story, but the resilience of every woman living with HIV, the ones who continue to rise, to heal and to find their voice even in silence. May this work remind us all that there is beauty in vulnerability, power in truth, and freedom in self-acceptance and may it bring hope to every woman who still feels unseen, that your voice, too, matters and your story is worth being told.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir for officiating and gracing my event with her presence. She certainly did give me that extra courage."

"I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) for fully supporting me in my exhibition and also being the official partner. Also, WAO - Women's Aid Council as well as the media and press, for their support and for helping to share my story and this exhibition with a wider audience. Your encouragement means the world to me and to everyone walking this journey of hope. "To my friend Ramesh from Advocate Asia, thank you for helping spread the word and supporting me in this exhibition too.

"My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the team of Temu House, especially Sharmin and Kimberly for so generously opening your space to me and allowing this exhibition to come to life."

Kathleen Rajan
Barry Westerhout
Simon Ee
Karan Singh
Parveen
Azreen Mubarak Ali (Curator)
Praveena Jay
Sonia Pathmarajah
Stacey Westerhout

Tareq Nassri
Azrena Ramli
Amy Yap
Aaron Francis
Atif Zulkifly
Zieq Hakim
(The late) Arifwaran
Adelina Anne
Sharon Xavier
Sofea Amelia

And to all those who cheered me on from the background since day one of my artistic journey



Malaysian Aids Council (MAC) Official Partner



ADVOCATE ASIA
ADVOCACY & SUPPORT

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)
Volunteer run HIV / AIDS advocacy & support group

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Beyond creating art, I also open space to share it through:

- * Private art classes (for children & adults)
- * Commission projects tailored to each client



artbycarolinepr



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