Alisa Grodsky imitates her "chemo pole dancing" cartoon.

Humor in Every Situation

COMIC WRITER ALISA GRODSKY LETS LAUGHTER GET HER THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

BY ALYSSA FISHER

When Alisa Grodsky is in a scary situation, she cracks jokes. Like that time she was robbed at gunpoint as a teenager: When the officer asked her to describe the gun, she spit out, "black with a hole."

These days, she turns to cartoons to find humor in her stage-4 colon cancer diagnosis. They'll be on display—along with pieces from her 30-plus years as an artist—at the Coral Springs Museum of Art through May 20.

"I was looking for a purpose, a way to use my art that contributes to other people's experiences and gives them some kind of laughter," she says. "It's always been my thing."

Three years ago, Grodsky, "57 and counting" she says, moved to Coral Springs from New York. She was in need of a community and reached out to the museum, where she's been volunteering ever since. (Most recently, she taught an animation workshop at local underprivileged schools.)

Her career has been diverse: She illustrated trials for newspapers (Mark David Chapman, who shot John Lennon, was among her subjects). She created the movie poster for "Polyester," featuring Divine. Her television credits include "Saturday Night Live," Nickelodeon's "Doug" and Disney's "Stanley" and "PB&J Otter." She won a daytime Emmy in 2007 for main title design on "The Upside Down Show." She made a board game, which can be seen in the exhibit (which also includes work by charcoal artist Virginia Fifield and pop culture artist Stan Slutsky). She's working on a book about the letter X leaving the alphabet.

She started drawing caricatures when her husband was diagnosed with colon cancer—the same disease she's battling—so she could work from home and be there for her daughter, who was starting high school at the time. Grodsky was diagnosed in 2013, two years after her husband died.

Even when the topics turn grim, Grodsky manages to keep things light and in perspective.

Speaking about her many surgeries, she quips: "I've had so many organs taken out, I should take out an ad for Airbnb—there's plenty of room to rent in here."

She giggles again, and her blue-green eyes twinkle. "I'm just trying to have humor about it," she says. "That's the only way to get through it."

Grodsky used to bring her sketch pad to chemotherapy (she's on her third round) and recently compiled those cartoons into a 6-by-9-inch photo book, *Cancer Crack-Up*, which can be found on Amazon. She left the last page blank so people can personalize it for loved ones battling cancer.

"Believe me, I've had my share of 'Why me?' and pity parties and name-calling," she says. "But, really, you just have to have fun with it. This book is my way. You have to find a purpose. I combine it with what I love to make it worthwhile to be around. Otherwise I'm just watching Drew Carey on 'The Price is Right,' and that's no fun. It gets really boring. I'm getting good at pricing things, though."

Best Bets for May

"The Sound of Music"
The new production of the beloved musical following the lives of Maria and the von Trapp family in World War II-era Germany, directed by three-time Tony Award winner Jack O'Brien, is sure to be a hit.
When: May 9–14 (eight total performances)
Where: Kravis Center for the Performing Arts, West Palm Beach

Delray Beach Craft BeerFest
Sample more than 100 craft brews, ciders and wines at the sixth annual festival. There will be pub bites for purchase; live music means dancing is encouraged.
When: May 12, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Crest Theatre at Old School Square, Delray Beach

Lotos Music Festival
Boy George, the Romantics, Jenny Berggren of Ace of Base, Stevie B, Katrina (of the Waves), Exposé, Nu Shooz and original members of When in Rome UK come together for this third annual, standing room-only festival.
When: May 19, 7 p.m.
Where: Mizner Park Amphitheater, Boca Raton

"Spamalot"
Inspired by "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," the Tony Award-winning musical retells the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table—featuring a pack of showgirls.
When: May 19–June 4
Where: Kravis Center for the Performing Arts