



## Ophelia Reconsiders

*Archival reproduction of an oil painting by Linda Dell*

What if Ophelia decided not to die?

*The apparent suicide of Ophelia may have advanced  
the plot for Hamlet, but it did very little for Ophelia.*

Many painters, most famously the pre-Raphaelites, have constructed images of Ophelia as the fabulous corpse. This Ophelia transforms herself, offering an alternative to the assigned script. The painting depicts Ophelia at the moment she chooses to pull herself up from the brink of death. With this act of will, she becomes a triumphant victor over death.

Inspired by the stories of two young women who have struggled with self destructive behaviours, this work addresses the positive choices young people with emotional problems can make to overcome their inner demons.

*I find their ultimate refusal to surrender to sorrow inspirational.  
I want to applaud that.*

There are several symbols painted into this work. The red winged blackbird represents the voice of a concerned male, the poppies refer to imagination and subconscious dreaming, and the daisy, in addition to being one of the original attributes in the play, invites a “*loves me, loves me not*” inquiry. Historically, amethyst symbolizes sobriety. In this case, it also represents the geographic location of the Thunder Bay artist. The purple loosestrife has a trajectory though Ophelia’s head, suggesting a suicidal direction, while toying with the meaning of getting a grip on strife as part of survival.

In the manner of Caravaggio and many other past artists, the subject from a traditional narrative is given garments contemporary to the painter’s era. This Ophelia is depicted as a participant in the youth subculture of today, giving her a contextual relationship with contemporary viewers.