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Chronic Pain in a family context: an art project informed by lived experience

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The Project

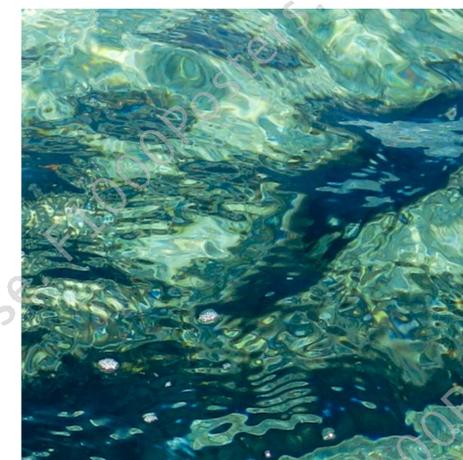
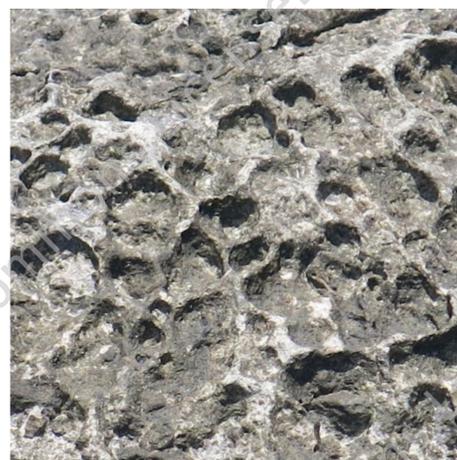
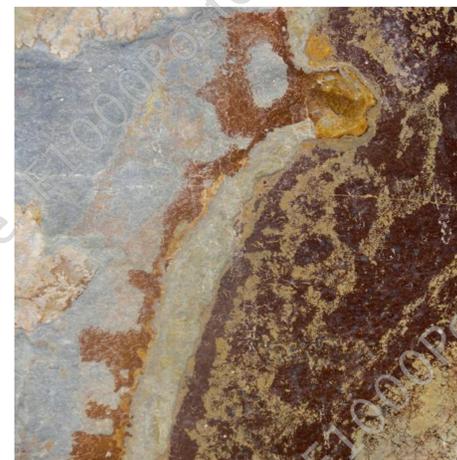
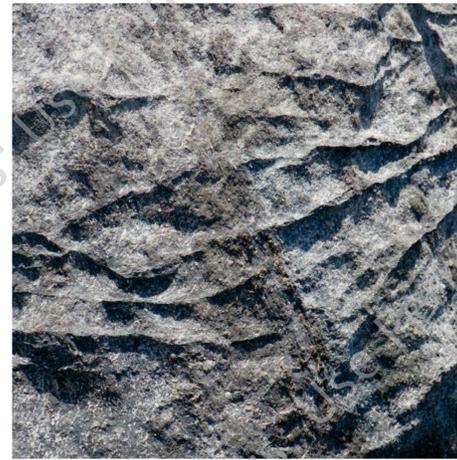
My research aims to visualise the issues experienced by families who are coping with chronic pain - as patients, spouses and children.

Pain is still widely considered a phenomenon restricted to the sufferer's experience, yet, it has as it were a rippling effect on the sufferer's social circle, particularly the immediate family relationships.

I am proposing to create a body of photographic images by translating the sheaf of emotions into pictures which may provide sufferers and their families with a tool to improve understanding, communication and ultimately family life. Additionally, this work will show the complexity of the phenomenon of chronic pain to people unaffected by those intricate issues who therefore might hold a naive understanding of its impact on daily life.

The aim is to produce a body of work based on the research into the impact of parental chronic pain on family life through conversations with patients, their partners and their children. I will explore whether potential issues can be dealt with more effectively with help of the much more immediateness of photographic imagery over an intellectual understanding on the basis of text or speech.

Together with the theories of photography in particular, I am also reflecting on the strengths of art in health and wellbeing and why I feel it is an appropriate medium to address issues concerning chronic pain.



I am hoping to answer whether this idea is utopian or reasonable; whether it potentially provides society with long-term rewards, whilst we challenge what we experience and engage with the transcendental and abstruse. My aim is to articulate the collective lived experiences of chronic pain in a common language that is visual, giving sufferers and their carers a unique voice to communicate their stories in an expressive way which calls for active emotional instead of intellectual engagement.

Developing a visual language which will speak to not only an art enthusiast, but to people who live chronic pain every day needs to be carefully considered. I have been avoiding to use a figurative approach to the subject in order to allow all viewers to find themselves rather than feeling for the person pictured in the images.

I am aiming to produce a body of work which might enable viewers to consider their own and others emotional experiences without the need for words but with a susceptible mind, allowing engagement and partaking in an activity which has the potential to enrich their understanding of themselves and others.

Further Information

Please visit my website for previous work on the impact of Fibromyalgia on daily life:

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"Artistic works in music, dance, and visual arts are a media for expressions of meaning and the 'voice' to suffering which is inadequately expressed in words. Artistic expressions are the conduit to personal and universal experiences of suffering and, in return, provide relief and give meaning to that experience" (Davis, A.A.; Davis, M.P., 2010. Art in medicine and the art of grief. Progress in Palliative Care, 18(5), pp. 266-269)