



*Headache (detail)* by Theda Sandiford

October 3, 2017 through January 5, 2018

## Paint Your Pain

An Exhibition about the Pain Experience



Atlantic  
Health System  
Overlook Medical Center



## **Paint Your Pain: An Exhibition About the Pain Experience**

People experiencing pain often find that their feelings go beyond verbal expression, or that there simply are no words sufficient to describe their feelings. Healing Arts and the Pain Management Center at Atlantic Neuroscience Institute invited individuals to participate in an exhibition by submitting works of art that share their pain experience, including emotions surrounding pain management and recovery.

The works and statements in this exhibition each tell a personal story about what it means to feel pain, cope with pain symptoms, witness a loved one's pain, or experience relief. In picking up a paintbrush or pencil, anyone can tell their story with art.

## Vincenzina Baumann



*Feeling Good*  
Acrylic on canvas

Creating art has helped me find peace, a way to deal with my ongoing heart arrhythmias. Art helps me to not concentrate on what may happen and just try to live for the moment.

Colors and shapes covering canvas.... a very simple process in a complicated world brings joy. When something you create gives pleasure to others it is uplifting and with my paintings I hope to achieve that goal.

## Michelle De Candia Zogheb



*My Body Hates My Body*  
Acrylic on canvas

I spent years trying to conceal it, trying various ways to numb myself from the pain within.

*My Body Hates My Body* is a candid depiction of what is happening inside of me resulting from Rheumatoid Arthritis. It has been my internal enemy for nine years, and it is difficult to accept it. Creating this piece of art helped me face my pain and dissolves my need to continue hiding the truth from others, as I have peeled away the outer covering, and mapped out my painful sites.

RA caused me to lose passions I enjoy. Gardening, my favorite hobby, is too difficult. With the pain and weakness in my hands, merely pulling a weed has become almost impossible. Today, my yard reflects my RA and looking at the overgrown, weed ridden flower beds saddens me. Pain rains on my life, and the yellow edges depict the sun is behind me.

In retrospect, I tried hiding my pain because of pride. On the outside, I look healthy and beautiful, so why should I tell anyone? was my thought, and I did not want my three children to worry. I also did not think anyone would understand, nor did I want pity.

## Mike Fenton



*The Abused*  
Oil on canvas

All these are portraits of people I know. I asked to paint their portraits and told them I paint them as if they had suffered some form of abuse. Abuse happens in many forms and can happen to anyone. My personal connection to people who have suffered physical/mental abuse has motivated me to express my sense of their pain through these 12 faces, each suffering needlessly. Some heal, some don't.



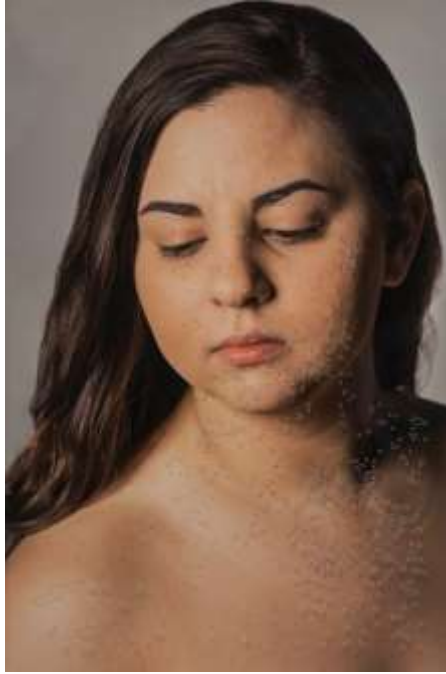
*Faceless Hands, Forceful Restraint, 2006*  
Oil on canvas

Before I discovered my passion for art, fencing was my outlet, my form of expression, in high school. After fracturing my spine in two places (L4, L5) during my junior year, life changed drastically. I was unable to express myself through movement and competition. I needed help for the simplest things that I had once taken for granted. Forced to cheer my peers on from the sidelines during what was supposed to be my breakout year, I felt immobilized.

After nearly a year of grueling PT, my spine was solid and I was eager to jump back in the saddle only to find that I had torn the TFCC in my dominant hand. I was left with a choice: be sidelined, once again, and spend my senior year on the bleachers; or fence through the pain with the help of proactive PT and mounds of athletic tape and wrist braces. I chose the latter, despite the consequences. Perhaps this is why my work focuses so much on hands. I could run, jump and play, but only as far as wrist would allow. Just as faceless hands restrain the person in my painting, I too felt held back by my own.



## Kate Hanna



*Face*

Digital inkjet print, laser engraved acrylic, light

Through photography, I am able to document, to evaluate, and to work through my thoughts, my questions, and my problems. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with a chronic, lifelong illness called Lupus. Lupus is an autoimmune disease which weakens the immune system and can cause inflammation, pain, and damage in any part of the body. For a while, it was easy to pretend that I wasn't affected by the diagnoses, especially because many of its symptoms are invisible. Through these pieces of art, I am making my illness and the pain it has caused me visible by using self-portraiture and imagery of damaged cells effected by lupus. The images are layered in a variety of ways so that I can see and accept it for myself and so that, hopefully, others can, too.





*Chest*

Digital inkjet print, letterpress

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## Sandra Koberlein



*Protection*  
Acrylic and mixed media

Too often we give our pain priority, validating it and giving it importance. We continue to let it torment us while we wallow it and hold onto it. When in fact, the pain we hold onto, is what remains from what might be better left behind. I paint to heal.

Through my practice, I explore emotions that were damaged and deteriorated through suffering. I paint intuitively, creating a visual language in the attempt of moving forward. The process of putting marks onto canvas helps remove them from my mind, out of my heart, leaving them on the surface.

Painful words and imagery are layered into the surface as a process of pushing them into the past. This process of layering emotions into the materials communicates how pain might fade over time. The marks show process of healing, but sometimes still show through the translucent colors as a reminder of their happening.

In viewing my completed paintings, I get lost in thought. I examine the surface. I peak at what shows above, remember what is hidden and what might still need to be mended. The imagery is a reminder and a necessity of my healing.



*Back Out, Back Down, Back Up*  
Acrylic and mixed media

Several years ago I herniated several discs in my back. For several months I went thru all kinds of tests, physical therapy, acupuncture, and pain management. At one point, I thought I would never walk again because the pain was that horrific. Through time, positive thoughts and my sense of humor, I slowly regained my life back...

## Joe LaMattina



*Prostate Analysis*  
Acrylic and mixed media

Two summers ago during a regular, annual physical, I was directed to go for more tests on my prostate. Finally, I was hit with the diagnosis of prostate cancer. During that summer, I finally made the decision to undergo radiation therapy as my treatment. Today, my doctor classifies me as cancer free!



*Early Springtime*  
Watercolor

The year 2016 was a very challenging one. I had to make many adjustments to my daily activities and was grateful for completing small tasks. It was after an earlier arthroscopic surgery in August, a subcontroplasty in November when complications occurred. The same day surgery resulted in a visit to the ER later that weekend. The only symptom of my diagnosed pulmonary embolism was the sensation of a violently spinning room while I was laying down. I was hospitalized a few days and then received physical therapy and nursing care at home. I am just so grateful to my family, friends and the medical staff who made my ordeal bearable. It was a while before I could attend my art group and paint again with being busy with doctors' appointments, outpatient testing, and facing double knee replacements. Today, I work around the pain and pace myself. When I only need two doses of Tylenol, it's a good day!

## Maryann Martin



*Serrated Edge*  
Pastel drawing

Someone very close to me suffers with an L5/S1 ruptured disc in their spine.

My pastel drawing is an attempt to capture the feeling of knifelike agony felt at the sudden moment the pain hits.

Pain.

It comes out of the darkness suddenly, sharp like a lightning strike, searing electricity down your nerve endings, a burning fire throughout your body. White hot light pulsing behind your eyes, standing your hair on end, throbbing through your skull, blazing through the night...

No sleep...no reprieve, it is a storm that won't pass, a living breathing nightmare.





*Bargaining Prayer*  
Acrylic on canvas

I have been blessed with good health. I have been delivered from depression and recovered from pneumonia, learned to manage my arthritis, and have had good reports in my routine check ups. I have also learned to pace myself for the age I am now and not the age I used to be. I have an active life style.

I lost my sister, my only sibling, to breast cancer twenty years ago. The difficulty now is managing and coping with the illnesses of two close friends who are suffering from cancer. I work hard to provide good emotional support: Encouraging them, visiting, calling, texting and telling them I love them, making it clear that they are under no obligation to respond.

Threatened with the prospect of the loss of their company, I've had moments of insecurity, already feeling the loss of their companionship and what used to be. I have felt so helpless as I watch them gallantly fight for their survival. I've also felt anger because it is so painful to see beautiful people suffer so.

I am empowered and strengthened by my faith. I believe in the power of prayer, therefore I pray daily for their complete healing. Prayer helps me to help them and makes me feel as though I am part of the fight!



## Cathleen McCoy Bristol



*Denial: Turning My Back on Death*  
Acrylic on canvas

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*Anger: Why My Child?*  
Acrylic on canvas

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## Gail Pedesclaux-Muckle



### *Stimuli for the Brain*

Mixed media

Art opens the door for exploration into the mind, body and soul wellness and the connection to the complex brain. Diagnosed with MS in 1994 the creative arts, especially the visual arts allow me to escape the physical, and mental pain that trigger a decline in hope a necessary requirement for spiritual health. Tragedy and grief are also types of pain I am familiar with in my evolving life. In my world of pain and hope the physical, mental and spiritual are individual pieces that create a whole person.

Mixed media is my preferred choice of medium. Mixed media allows me to incorporate photography, water color, colored pencils, ink, and text into a collage format to stimulate the imagination. I envision how my brain is responding to the different creative stimuli. Using mixed media, I am able to trigger those joy endorphins providing temporary (hopefully permanent someday) relief from any type of pain.



*Angels in Heaven and On Earth*  
Mixed media

Physical pain leads to mental anguish and spiritual emptiness. Utilization of the visual arts to create a piece of artwork that portrays Angels in heaven and Angels on earth who are on my team to provide support and help promote physical, mental and spiritual wellness. Gifts of the rainbow from each angel provide soothing colors to provide promises of healing love.

Mixed media allows me to incorporate drawings created on the computer with drawings created on paper to stimulate my imagination taking me on a journey to comfort scenes: observing the sky, refreshing water (going to the beach), soothing earth (walking in nature) or relaxing in my backyard on carpet like grass. At times, my physical pain may not allow me to venture to these places of comfort, but my art and guardian angels will take me to that place of pain free for a while.

## Jeff Pergament



*Hand and Heart*

Acrylic and graphite on hardboard with gesso surface, mounted on wood and wired for hanging

This was painted as a result of my emergency hospitalization in April/May 2010. I underwent emergency lung surgery and while recuperating, also suffered a heart attack. It was discovered through additional surgery (camera insertion) that my right coronary artery was blocked so I authorized an immediate stent installation. The painting, HAND AND HEART, was the result.



*Self*  
Mixed media

In 1966, at 15 years of age, I was riding a small “CC” motorcycle when a car crossed my lane, struck my right knee and my femur dislocated from the hip socket, fracturing the interior socket and pinching the sciatic nerve resulting in paralysis to my right leg and ending my varsity athletic career. The painting is a self-portrait that represents the pin traction I endured for 63 days following my admission into the hospital in October, 1966. Unfortunately AND fortunately, pain has always been a part of my life, and is something I work against to manifest my finished works of art. This painting was a sketch, then ripped, stitched and pinned to represent the traction and the impact and the resultant paralysis.

## Theda Sandiford



*Headache*

Aluminum Print, limited edition 3/5

My body is a finicky vessel. I was diagnosed with MS in 2009. I live with chronic nerve pain, fatigue and migraines which often leads to insomnia and cognitive dysfunction. I use art therapy to transform pain and fear into beauty. When asked what does your headache feel like or what does Insomnia look like, I can point to these images to illustrate my meaning when words fail me.



**Theda Sandiford**



*Insomnia*

Aluminum Print, limited edition 1/5

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## Alessandra Seggi



*No Children – Two*

Mixed media on canvas (shards of glass, iron nails, bronze screws...)

Devastating sorrow overwhelmed me when it became clear I was not going to have children. I think of it as sharp objects, like screws and shards of glass, that perforate and cut canvas. The stitches in *No children – Two* represent my attempt at patching the wounds and coping with the pain. The needle and thread hanging from the canvas hint to the unfinished nature of the patching.



*Pain*  
Oil on canvas

When I was too young to comprehend, I experienced my mother's sorrow from tragedies in her past. Once I realized I was not going to have children, their absence turned into a never-healing cut in my heart. As I age, I experience the unsettling pain of seeing elders get frail. As I learn more about the world, I feel the stifling pain of seeing suffering around me.

Through the thick spatula strokes, the artwork *Pain* captures how I experience emotional pain: the bleeding cuts that show up when I feel metaphorically slashed by pain and the thick, uneven, scars that later replace them.

## Sam Snyder



*3 AM*

Oil pastel, watercolor, ink

Frequent migraines interrupt life as usual for me, bringing visual auras, pounding headaches, nausea, vertigo, depression, and exhaustion. They come without warning. They stay for anywhere from 24 to 48 hours. They wreck me and leave me drained.

My artwork related to these painful experiences has evolved from primitive sad faces noting a migraine in my journal to cartoonish drawing and on to larger drawings and paintings in various media. The content of my artwork depicts the grinding pain, the weariness, the isolation, the violence I experience while ill. My styles are sometimes humorous, sometimes abstract, sometimes graphic.

Making art while suffering with a migraine has two benefits for me. It serves as a means of communicating my pain to others, but it also has a therapeutic benefit. It is my way of staring destruction in the face and creating something positive in spite of the pain. Sometimes the feeling of paint or pen on paper gives me comfort and a sense that the darkness shall pass.



*Rough Around the Edges*  
Watercolor, charcoal

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## Sam Snyder



*Sleep with Migraine, a Still Life*  
Watercolor, charcoal

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## **Pain Management Resources**

### **Chronic Pain Support Group (American Chronic Pain Association)**

First Monday of every month, 5:30 to 7:00pm

Overlook Medical Center, Fifth Floor, Neuroscience Community  
Conference Room

99 Beauvoir Avenue, Summit, NJ 07901

FREE. For more information and to register, please call 908-665-1988.

### **Paint Your Pain Art Therapy Group for Adults with Chronic Pain**

Thursday evenings, 5:00 to 6:00pm

Atlantic Rehabilitation, Thebaud Building, 3rd Floor, Creative Open Studio  
95 Mt. Kemble Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960

FREE. For more information and to register, please call 973-660-3533.

### **Morristown Medical Center Pain Management Center**

95 Madison Avenue (across the street from the hospital), Suite 402,  
Fourth Floor, Morristown, NJ 07960

973-971-6824

### **Overlook Medical Center Pain Management Center**

Medical Arts Center (MAC II), 11 Overlook Road, Suite B110,  
Summit, NJ 07901

908-522-6980





The arts are an essential component to health, healing and well-being. The Healing Arts Program at Atlantic Health System provides opportunities to experience health and well-being by bringing literary, performing and visual arts to our patients, staff and the communities we serve.

We aim to:

- Enhance the healing culture of our facilities through the arts
- Facilitate and encourage participation in the healing arts for those who are ill and their caregivers
- Support and advance research exploring the benefits and role of the arts in health, healing and well-being
- Embrace and foster artistic collaborations within Atlantic Health System and through community partnerships

Healing Arts offers over 30 programs and events for patients, staff, family, and community members, reaching over 8,000 people annually. We offer programs and therapies in literary, visual, and performing arts in both clinical and community settings.

To learn more about the Healing Arts Program, contact:

[healingarts@atlantichealth.org](mailto:healingarts@atlantichealth.org)

[atlantichealth.org/healingarts](http://atlantichealth.org/healingarts)

973-660-3533



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