

Bone Deep: Where Art and Illness Intersect

By Otto Kamensek

My images are an expression of my relationship with my chronic illness; for 40 years I have been living with a type of inflammatory arthritis known as juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA). It has given me unexpected gifts and much aggravation over those years.

My systemic JIA has taken a toll on my body over the years, including total hip and knee replacements and the lifestyle modifications that eventually came as well. This toll on my physical body forced me to look at my working life and contemplate a disability pension. Though this meant defeat and that the disease was winning, it was the correct choice and a new path of arthritis advocacy began.

Volunteering for 10 years has given me unexpected gifts, a sense of control over my illness that I had not experience prior. Though I know it is only a sense, that sense makes my life a bit more colourful. I believe that this sense stem from a few sources; certainly, it comes from a greater

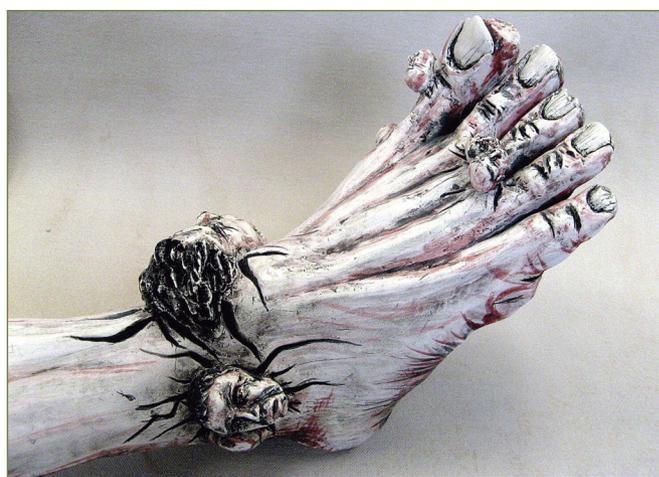
understanding of my situation and trying to be part of the solution. Using my arthritic findings as a resource, sharing my tribulations allows for new healthcare professionals to experience first-hand what arthritis can do to a body and explain what living with it is like. These experiences are shared through Patient Partners in Arthritis. The Arthritis Research



Close up of *An Angry Joint*. Clay, stain, glaze.



Burning Man. Clay, stain, glaze.



An Angry Joint. Clay, stain, glaze.

Centre (ARC) of Canada has given me the opportunity to be part of their research process as a consumer (patient) collaborator, where I have contributed to the creation of an abstract, dissemination of research materials, and worked as an advocate speaker.

Retirement from the working world permitted time to explore



Postshock of Diagnosis. Clay, stain, glaze.



Fog of Fatigue. Clay, stain, glaze.



Healed. Clay, stain, glaze.



A Glimmer of Hope. Clay, stain, glaze.

an old hobby I enjoyed as a child and young adult, namely visual art. Over the same 10-year period of arthritis volunteerism, I was honing my skills as a ceramic sculptor. I decided that I would let these two worlds collide and created a 16 piece solo show called "Shards, Bone Deep". This body of work (pun intended) explores the many different relationships with my arthritis.

A final wish of mine is to have my installation displayed at the many medical training universities across Canada. The hope is to catch people off guard with the rawness of my work and create a lasting impression on those who study chronic rheumatic illness.

Suggested Readings

1. Anita C. Otto Kamensek's "Arthritis Still Life" shines a glimpse of hope. Available at: www.arthritisbroadcastnetwork.org/2014/05/otto-kamensek-arthritis-still-life-shines-a-glimpse-of-hope/.
2. Maloney C. Art and Arthritis: Shards, Bone Deep. Available at: www.arthritisresearch.ca/newsletter-art-and-arthritis.
3. Warren J. Four decades of chronic pain. Available at: www.tricitynews.com/entertainment/257024131.html.

*Otto Kamensek
Artist-in-
Residence,
Port Moody
Arts Centre
Port Moody,
British Columbia*

CRA: CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

You are invited to submit abstracts for presentation during the 2015 CRA Annual Scientific Meeting and AHPA Annual Meeting!

Deadline for submissions is Monday, October 20th. Details are available at www.rheum.ca or www.owpm.net/abstracts/CRA/.