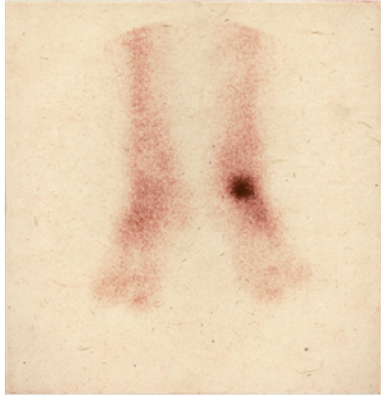


# *Visual Empathy*



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*An artistic development project based at Valand School of Fine Arts, Göteborg University in collaboration with the Multidisciplinary Pain Centre, Sahlgrenska University Hospital/Östra.*

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*Clas Mannheimer  
Professor, Senior Physician  
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SU/Östra*

*Most of us have two things in common - most of us have two feet.  
Most of us don't even think about it, taking it for granted.*

*But what happens when that which we take for granted, lets us  
down?*

*How do we react, which thoughts pervade and how do we deal  
with it?*



*Sitting in various waiting rooms in hospitals, we are often left feeling extremely vulnerable. Many feel confused, frustrated, anxious and melancholic. The surroundings are unfamiliar and contrasts vastly with the security and warmth of the environments that we are used to.*

*Often, the décor of outpatients' clinics, emergency departments and hospital wards leaves a lot to be desired. One reason for this may be that regulations concerning décor are extremely specific since they are to be used by many people – i.e. all states of mind, ages and cultures.*

*When Senior Lecturer Börje Almqvist contacted me and talked through his ideas for the project 'Visual Empathy', I immediately thought it seemed both exciting and relevant. When I saw the results I became even more enthusiastic.*

*Clas Mannheimer*

*'Visual Empathy' is a project based on a personal journey through the events, which have affected both myself and my feet during recent years, that is to say, stress fractures caused by osteoporosis and the wear and tear of ankle muscle and tissue. The idea was to rework these, completely new experiences into something visual, an art project. I wanted to give the images a latent visual quality, and in so doing reveal the empathy, pain and fragility, which is sometimes felt within us all.*

*I applied for an artistic development project grant at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, Göteborg University.*

*In February 2007, I contacted Professor Clas Mannheimer, the Head of The Multidisciplinary Pain Centre at SU/Östra and presented my project for him. It became apparent rather quickly that both Clas Mannheimer and the hospital were very interested in the project. We spoke about the visual as a possible element in the healing process, that visible impression can influence thought process in a positive way. The playfulness in the visual imagery hopefully reveals new dimensions for the observer, patient, doctor or other personnel alike.*







*Two years ago, I began to work with the image material I had collected thus far. Very quickly I found myself at a dead-end. I realized, which I was, in fact already aware of, that this image material was never intended to be the bearer of some poetic message; the purpose of this material is to attain a diagnosis based on medical/scientific facts. However, I fought with the idea of how I could transform this material into becoming exactly that - the bearer of a poetic message. In August of 2007, I found the answer to my aesthetic dilemma. I started to produce handmade paper, sheet after sheet. I even ground the paper pulp for the sheets myself.*

*The aesthetics involved in the making of handmade paper can, in a way, describe humanity. On the surface, all sheets of paper appear alike, but on closer inspection no two sheets are the same.*

*Paper is, in effect, an organic material. The art of papermaking was discovered in China, about two thousand years ago.*

*A sheet of paper is also something we take for granted, without thinking about - a surface.*

*The sheets of paper I have produced to use for printing these images are made of Daphne fibre (the inner bark of a bush, cultivated in Asia for the sole purpose of papermaking), and these have come to symbolize something much more than a surface for me! They have in a way come to represent human skin, describing human fragility. The images are designed to meet a public, which finds itself in a vulnerable situation, a waiting room in a hospital and focus on the human aspect of finding oneself in such an environment. I hope that these images give rise to new and unexpected thoughts in the observer.*

*They are in no way disturbing images, but are rather to be perceived as both beautiful and playful.*

*Börje Almqvist, November 2007*

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*Each image in 'Visual Empathy' is made in an edition of 22.*

I-III      *Photopolymer gravure of Isotopic imaging on handmade Daphne paper.*

IV-VI     *Silkscreen of Isotopic imaging.*

VII-XI    *Photopolymer gravure of CT imaging on handmade Daphne paper.*

XII-XVII *Photopolymer gravure of X-ray imaging on handmade Daphne paper.*

XVIII     *Photopolymer gravure of Skeletal Scintigraphy imaging on handmade Daphne paper.*

*Translation by Debbie Almqvist*