



# The 'Patient' exhibition brings art and illness together to discuss difficult subjects

The World Today By Imogen Brennan

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PHOTO: Narratives of Dis-ease: Included, 1990, collaboration with Tim Sheard. (Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery, London)

**A new exhibition combines art and illness by exploring the meaning of the word "patient", hoping to create space for discussion on difficult topics.**

The exhibition opens in Sydney at UNSW Galleries and explores the experience of being a "patient" — both the clinical context and the sense of having to wait, without complaint.

Bec Dean, the curator, said she wanted to create an opportunity for people to come together and have a conversation about difficult subjects, like illness.

"We will all be a patient at some point and if we are lucky enough not to be, we will probably be looking after someone who is," she said.

"The first work that you actually come to is by Canadian artist called, Ingrid Bachmann and it's quite a tactile work," Ms Dean said.

The artwork almost resembles a sea urchin, and Ms Dean said there were bone transducers attached to yellow cords.

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**PHOTO:** Curator Bec Dean tries out Ingrid Bachmann's artwork. (ABC News: Imogen Brennan)

"And what you do is you put them up to your head and place them next to a sort of bone that juts out of your head and they will actually transmit voices directly into your head."

She said the artwork uses vibrations which travel through the person's bones so they can hear the voices, while never at any point having sound going into their ears.

**GRAPHIC WARNING: Some of the images below contain nudity.**

Transplants, by John Wynne and Tim Wainwright, is a screen where visitors can see photos of transplant patients and hear them speaking about their experiences.



**PHOTO:** John Wynne and Tim Wainwright Transplant, 2006 (Photograph by Tim Wainwright, courtesy of the artists)

One of the patients can be heard saying; "I didn't even think about the operation. It was like a journey of blind faith. I though 'I'll be alright, you're in safe hands' or like lying on a floating mattress in the middle of a nice water, a nice sort of swimming pool on a nice bed.

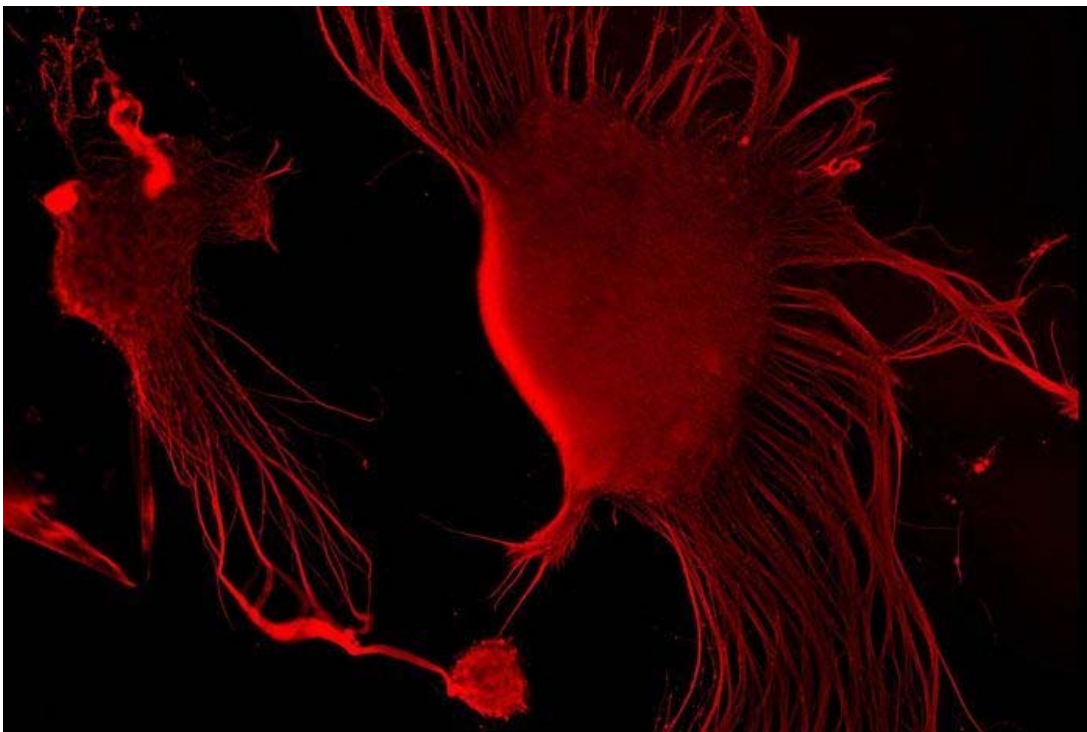
"Anyway they put a nice music on. They said 'it's just going to be a small prick in your arm and you float off' and then I woke up again and it was like somebody had cut you in half with a chain saw and your body is like you're cut in half."



**PHOTO:** The curator says she wanted to create a space for people to come together and have a conversation about subjects that are difficult. (ABC News: Imogen Brennan)

Jo Spence from London has a series of five photographs called "Disease" featuring four naked women, who each have suffered from some sort of illness.

One woman looks as though she has had part of her breast removed as a result of breast cancer, while another woman cries while holding a teddy bear.



**PHOTO:** Guy Ben-Ary's work is a video documenting the creation of the cybernetic synthesiser, cellF, controlled by stem cells harvested from the artist's body. (Supplied by the artists)

Guy Ben-Ary's work is a video documenting the creation of the cybernetic synthesiser, cellF, controlled by stem cells harvested from the artist's body.

One of the artists involved, Eugenie Lee, suffered from chronic pain syndrome, said Ms Dean.

"And chronic pain is, I think, one of the most misunderstood illnesses that people have because it's very hard to communicate your pain to another person," Ms Dean said.

"Basically she's created this box that you go inside."

The box is the size of a bathroom and the door is cushioned to resemble the inside of a mental asylum.

"Because I think that Eugenie is really wanting to disquieten [sic] people and so basically in this machine, you put on a oculus rift... Which is a virtual reality headset, and you are taken into a space that looks like this room, but then coils of barbed wire will start to come towards you [through the virtual reality]... and make you perhaps feel their presence in your body," Ms Dean said.

John A Douglas's work Circles of Fire expresses his experiences as a renal patient and organ transplant recipient.



**PHOTO:** Circles of Fire, 2015 (Courtesy of Chalkhorse Gallery, Sydney)

**Topics:** contemporary-art, arts-and-entertainment, visual-art, mental-health, diseases-and-disorders, sydney-2000, nsw, australia, university-of-new-south-wales-2052