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A TABLE OF METAPHORS:  
THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION  
OF CHRONIC ILLNESS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of

Masters of Arts  
In  
Social Anthropology

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## ABSTRACT

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For people who live with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Multiple Chemical Sensitivity syndrome illness is a hidden construct. The body does not display the chronicity of the internal experience. This thesis removes the barrier between what is experienced and what is visible by creating visual means of communicating the body's hidden experience. The place of the viewer is part of this discussion. Through visual methods digital photographic techniques and the current interest in sensory anthropology the embodied sensory chronic illness experience is explored. The hidden experiences were made visual creating "MeBoxes" and masks which showed both the external and embodied internal experiences of chronic illness.

As the process of working with and walking beside the participants developed, I found that the discourse on imaging within the literature was inadequate to show the real lived experiences of those with chronic illness. My interactions with the people of this thesis and the process of honouring their experiences required a model that would encourage the viewer to new and perhaps unrealised depths of participation to understand the participant's multi-faceted and multi-layered experiences. Part of the discussion is the ability of images to communicate sensory experience as is the case with Munch's *The Scream* and Picasso's *Guernica*. Through the use of a hypertextual self-scape I show how participants created access to their experiences through their visual representations and through a collaborative approach became composite hypertextual self-scape metaphors.

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