

**Wood, the Process, and I**

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## **Abstract**

This paper provides an overview of my personal relationship with trees and tree-related materials that I collect, conserve and transform. The focus of the paper, which is a support to the thesis exhibition, is on the process of making sculptures which are part of the thesis exhibition. The experience of the collected found tree forms becomes a metaphor for my chronic illness, a painful condition of the spine that results in the degeneration of the intervertebral disks. The sculptural forms I create represent the frozen moments of restriction and deformation that result in the process of making them. These sculptural forms mimic the restrictions that are the result of the disease as it spreads throughout the body. Artists Eva Hesse, Mark Dion, and Tony Cragg become significant inspirations in understanding the meaning and knowledge behind the materials in their art practices. All of us conserve, reclaim, and reconceptualize in various ways through our material use. The imaginative and physical activity of reconstructing the tree forms informs my relationship with the unseen forms of the spine within me.

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## Introduction

I walk through the Meadowvale Credit Valley Conservation Area in Mississauga; a space surrounded by dense forest and in a community that values conservation.

Encountering a large gathering of trees that existed long before I did, I sense a desire to connect with each segmented piece of wood I find on the ground. Whether it is a branch, a stump, a cluster of roots, or a collection of twigs, I notice it and consider collecting and making something with it. “We experience nature as modified by human beings or in conjunction with artefacts.”<sup>1</sup> The tree and the life cycle of the tree becomes a symbol of my body, modified by disease. I feel connected to the tree for its material presence and as a structure that is reminiscent of my backbone, which has been slowly invaded by a chronic illness that affects the mobility of my spine. The reclaimed wood I collect and change creates an intimate relationship between the tree and I. I—the creator—look at my selected material mediums as a part of conservation, reclamation, and recontextualization in my art making process. My imagination, which perceives the material in terms of symbols and archetypal imagery, constitutes an essential part of my own identity. To me, the tree and the sculptures that I make are alive, and I identify deeply with the tree and wood. I am the tree; the tree is I.

In this thesis exhibition “*Wood, the Process, and I*” my chronic condition is explored through the expressive rendition of wood and wire sculptures which I produce with the reclaimed wood. It is accompanied by a selection of drawings of my impression

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<sup>1</sup> Crawford, Donald. *Nature and art: Some dialectical relationships*. Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. Pg. 49. 1983.

of wood-like textures that are all preserved in a given space. The wood and these sculptures become a metaphor for the restrictions and deformation of my body over time. I orient myself, creating sculptures that capture narratives of the effects of the disease and how it impacts my life, in a space I, the maker, fabricate and alter the way the wood is used and interpreted. The experience of the disease, and the existence of the work, reflects a point of departure from reality and through my art practice, it extends into a deeper sympathy for human suffering. To me, wood is a purely pleasing material that increases in value through the action of my making. For my thesis exhibition, I am fabricating a series of assemblages reflecting different materials and methods in each of the processes I take part in, called *Spondylosis (spon-dy-lo-sis) – sculptures*, *Vertebrae – sculptures*, and *Malformed Silhouettes – drawings*. These assemblages represent elements of the transition that mimics the internal illness that is gradually taking over my body, a painful condition of the spine that results in the degeneration of the intervertebral disks. While the illness progresses, essentially attacking the core structure of my spine, obstacles are created that limit me and cause restrictions, affecting the momentum of my functionality in constructing each sculpture or drawing. An innovation and a continuation of the development process that reflects the direct response I have of this disease by the use of different materials. Simply by the physical dimension of a given interaction that is best understood when a specific physical feature and particular perception of its meaning and interactive potential is achieved.<sup>2</sup> In the visualization of each sculpture and drawing I

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<sup>2</sup> Gross, S., Bardzell, J. & Bardzell, S. *Structures, forms, and stuff: the materiality and medium of interaction*. Pers Ubiquit Comput. Vol.18, No. 3. Pg. 637. 2014.

make, I uncover innovative creations that present and interpret structures reminiscent of the body, especially the fundamental form that holds the body together known as the spine.

The found tree stumps I use range in a variety of size and shape; for example, an organic free form shaped by nature captures the essence of time. I collect by selecting various types of woods, many with imperfections that once were a part of a whole tree but are now disconnected from it. The narrative suggested by each piece of wood inspires a direction for my gestures. Through the way I arrange and combine this reclaimed material, I construct in proportion to my body. Being capable of creating these sculptures through manipulating the materials, allows me to feel intact and untouched by this disease that progresses within me internally. I perform the action of bending wire, as I incorporate wire armatures that I shape into organic and inorganic forms by melding the materials together to establish a harmonious balance. The reclamation of materials from a setting like nature provides the model for artistic composition.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as I make each sculpture or drawing, I sense opposing forces of tension created by dynamic interactions between I, the materials and space. To me, the materials I use seem to talk back by the communicative and expressive ways each interacts. Each particular material I use contributes towards the progress of creating a meaningful artifact of my spine.

The linear metallic wire becomes a thread that sketches the construction in space. In the making, each sculpture is worked on in intervals based on my necessity to take regular breaks. I work on each sculpture by making it on the floor. I constantly shift

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<sup>3</sup> Crawford, Donald. Pg 49.

positions; trying to find comfort for my body from the constant discomforting feelings of stiffness, pain, and occasional inflammatory flare-ups that affect my mobility. I connect myself to the strength of trees, deeply rooted in the earth. When chronic symptoms attempt to gain control over my conscious self and body, I sense that trees are sentient beings just like us, that they feel pain and hurt. So I feel a deep connection to them. The feeling I sense that pulses throughout my body as the disease lives on within is represented by the shadows cast by the wall sculptures and illuminated by a bronze gold pigment that I add to select sculptures creating chiaroscuro in every composition. I paint a blue green substance that glows on some sculptures. The glow emerges from the wood core as it journeys along the strands of nerve-like fibers, enhancing the power and liveliness throughout the wood in each structured sculpture form. A dialogue is stimulated between material and me and the idea of chronic illness. I am the impact over the materials and making of the form as the impact of the disease has over my body structure.

I consider expressing materiality largely in terms of the tightly coupled relationships among physical forms, information representation, and functionality.<sup>4</sup> I select my medium to preserve and reclaim its form through a process of creating the recontextualized wood sculptures. An expression of my spinal transformation develops through my contact and intimate relationship with each material I set out to use.

“Different materials give different emotional experiences, both for the artist and for us as

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<sup>4</sup> Gross, S., Bardzell, J. & Bardzell, S. Pg. 639.

observers.”<sup>5</sup> For me, each material I use such as wood, wire, burlap, Powetex to list a few, become significant as I develop my making process and the way I think the form of my spine will change, shown in my sculptures. The different properties of a material produce different ideas and the visual relationships between the materials and the formal elements. Within the space of the studio, a notion is developed of how the unseen forms of my own body can be experienced by the tangible interaction with materials.

In the making of my sculptures, I use burlap, which is a strong, coarse heavy woven cloth made of fibers used to manufacture bags or for interior decoration. I repurpose the rough fabric which is collected from recycling facilities that use the material for other reclaimed purposes. Each piece of burlap is different. As part of my process, it is made for a particular purpose and cut into a variety of strips ranging in colour, heaviness, and size. My hands then manipulate the raw strands of burlap by using a Powertex textile hardener, a bronze solution, to coat and perform the action of the wrapping around over a constructed armature. It is important to me to use Powertex because it is an environmentally friendly, water-based medium that hardens most natural fibers and dries slowly over several hours. This allows me plenty of time to create each sculpture with the form and movement that I imagine. Before the hardener makes the burlap stiff, the tree’s powerful vibrational energy is felt transitioning through the armatures. An imprint of my feelings and movement during that instant of making is embedded within. Simply by the act of pinching, folding, wrapping, or draping of the impregnated cloth, I can form and reform the sculpture.

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<sup>5</sup> *Tony Cragg New Sculptures*. Malmo Konsthall. Website.

To perform these actions, a task that may seem simple to others can quickly become a challenge for me. Once the repair is made, the fracture between wood and the wire armatures covered in burlap is seamlessly joined together. I surgically align all materials by manipulating its form, connecting sections intentionally to mimic the imagined impact the chronic illness may have over my body, visually articulating it by reference to the structure of trees. Once I am satisfied with the gesture of the burlap and wire against the stiff and sturdy wood sculpture, I place each sculpture back to a vertical stance. Then I seamlessly mount it onto the wall. It looks like tree or vertebrae that expresses movement. I agree with philosopher Donald Crawford's that nature and artifacts commonly appear together, and not infrequently artistic constructions are intentionally placed in natural settings. In a variety of ways, then the appreciation of nature often involves the artifactual.<sup>6</sup> I take the wood and preserve it into a reclaimed artifact of various surface differences that are a space of wonder and awe of how this disease within me transforms and can be translated by materials to generate a tactile experience. I install several of these deformed structures, ranging in various shapes and sizes, with an altered amount of materials visible that suggest the movement and progression of my chronic condition. The process of imaginative reconstruction is guided largely by what meets the eye.<sup>7</sup> The contour lines that capture the change occurring as each wire armature is made where a rendering in space enlivens the dark expressive forms.

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<sup>6</sup> Crawford, Donald. Pg. 49.

<sup>7</sup> Crawford, Donald. Pg. 54.

It is understood that the act of making sculptures is a study of how material and material forms affect and form out ideas and emotions.<sup>8</sup> With these sculptural forms, I am drawing attention to the many traits of a single tree that also reflect the process of transformation and change that inhabits my body. I think of the sculptures becoming an infestation of a space. They suggest the battle I struggle with in maintaining a healthy back. Installed together the sculptural figures on white walls force its way into the space like an invasion of the disease over a healthy formation of a body. I am creating an installation of sculptures that expresses my internal experience of what my body forms will look like as it changes and degenerates as time progresses and the illness spreads throughout my body. I try to understand what is happening inside my body using the materials of tree, wire, burlap fibers, and a hardener solution in exploring the disfigurements that occur as I search for the direct causes of my flares and pain. Through each sculpture I make, I find hours of relief, not that I have been totally pain free while I created. One's attention is not confined to the properties of the material fragments but expands to the ideational level.<sup>9</sup> All sculpture works and drawings create a gesture of contour lines that structure and shape the materials of malformed bodies lingering within a confined space. I am aware that materials I use are deliberately insignificant, but I focus on the creation and expressiveness I can achieve in the process of bringing meaning through them. In my ongoing investigation with materiality and me, I strengthen and clarify the aspects of my chronic illness through material use. Through the materials and

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<sup>8</sup> *Tony Cragg*. Lisson Gallery. Website.

<sup>9</sup> Crawford, Donald. Pg. 54.

forms, I freeze the restricted and deformed structure of what my own body may generate as its form becomes limited.

## Spondylitis



Fig. 1: Monica Bujas. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculptures.  
(a) *Bandage*. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculpture 1/5.

## *Bandage*

Bark with scar marks and unique knots characterize each piece of found wood I select. I observe it as if it were the bone fragments that still have a breath of life left within. Each piece contains a story of its own just like my own human body made up of the DNA that makes me who I am. The vertical stump begins with outgrowths of burlap-wrapped wire armatures forming geometric triangular shapes that capture the dark deformations of root-like abnormalities. I suppose this is how the first impact of the disease would be on the internal forms of my body where the complex network of nerves restrict the normal construction of a backbone. The burlap wrapped around the flexible wires becomes a bandage that aids in the physical act of reinforcing the strength of the material used. It becomes strong, sturdy, and hard, almost like a bone or the wood of the tree, becoming a solid structure with limitation.

Immobilized, the sculpture becomes a moment of what I may experience within my internal self as the chronic condition invades. The fractured wood section that been chopped suggests a wound of pain, disconnected yet reclaimed in the process of change. Illuminated and hung on a white wall, the bronze sections contrast in colour with the natural wood layers and textures. The dimmed warm light projects on the sculpture, only to cast shadows that multiply the accumulation of a form that develops the experience of the structures infesting the space. While the energy spreads throughout its composition, a sense of life is embedded within the dark sculpture. Almost as if the materials became mummified by me to protect and preserve what I have reclaimed within. Components that

have been collected create this experience of what my body may encounter as it changes internally. Artist, Eva Hesse who constantly worked with fiberglass as her selected material for her art practice always encountered the temporariness of art, the fact that many of her fragile material will likely decompose with age.<sup>10</sup> The sculpture I make capture a deformed moment in time. It still will shift and change as the wood encounters its surrounding conditions as natural material still changes its form. An accumulation of the sculptures resembling deformed structures coming out of a wall in a moderately lit gallery space, allows the viewer to engage with the occurrence of disturbing deranged forms. Installation artist, Mark Dion has committed to a methodology in which the form and content of what he makes are determined by the conditions of the site.<sup>11</sup> I create an experience of something that is metaphysical and unseen in reality. This disease that affects the form of the spine influences my use of materials and directs the way I perceive what is occurring within my body as I created this piece.

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<sup>10</sup> Davis, A. Carol. *Eva Hesse Material: A memoir*. The American Poetry Review. Vol. 44. No. 6. Pg. 45. 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Dion, Mark. *Media Study: Mark Dion*. Artforum International. Academic OneFile. Pg. 441. 2012.



Fig. 1: Monica Bujas. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculptures.  
b) *Amalgam*. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculpture 2/5.

### *Amalgam*

Collected and extracted from its forest sanctuary, the aesthetically pleasing free form is reminiscent of a taxidermied animal. I prioritize the physical installation of my

work and feel it is best experienced in the shared time and space, while being surrounded by it, to be affected by its scale.<sup>12</sup> Here, the material and things I have gathered to make this piece by the investment of time and my handmade process is used to communicate the concrete form of how the disease encounters the spine. The twists and turns of material I make represent an infestation growing out off the aged wood. The reclaimed trunk installed flat against the white wall pierces the space. I create a suggestion of intertwined neurological strands that are compressed together in a bundle, as they extend out in a direct bulge from the stump. I perceive this as a route of networks, an infinite cycle that comes to a halt by the compression of tension between materials. The systematic approach of making the sculpture is what I imagine I will encounter with the progression of this chronic condition raise obstacles. Perhaps, this structure harnesses the visual appeal for others and me in particular, as an aid to learn, accept and cope with the changes to come in the near future. I treat this form as a commemoration of the past sculpture structure. (a) *Bandaged* It is a phase of outgrowths of sharp strands, suggestive of the degeneration act performed at that particular moment.

The wire armatures bend, outreach like branches of a tree or corrupted nerves of split ends searching for its contact back in the core to regenerate its transition within the body. Wrapped in burlap in a tight, close manner along the strands of wire, I coat it with Powertex hardener. The sculpture becomes an artifact as it, is fossilized. The dark forms of deranged shapes have an expressive, vibrant energy. The forms I make seem spineless yet, holds its shape in a peculiar way, almost like it was a part of a tree all along.

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<sup>12</sup> Dion, M. Pg. 441.



Fig. 1: Monica Bujas. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculptures.  
c) *Splice*. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculpture 3/5.

## *Splice*

The slouched, rippled stump with scraped bark markings and imperfections that I see become aesthetically pleasing to me. Spread from various angles, the forms I make curve throughout the wooden base that I perceive as bone. The vine like form lingers along the white walls of a low-lit space. Twists turn into distorted shapes extending from the natural wooden trunk. It reaches out of its boundaries and borders that intersects the how I see the materials expressing my own body transformation. An experience of the gesture I create becomes an attribute of a system that functions in a way a vertebra may when impacted by disease. After a function is given to the tree by human manipulation, a purpose is given by the necessities of culture.<sup>13</sup> The sculptures as artifact are like an infestation of cells produced by the chronic illness and convey a story of how the process cannot be stopped, nor can it be reversed after the sculpture piece take form and solidify.

The wrapped burlap enfolded along the wire armature constantly pushes and pulls the material as I assemble the sculpture. The tension of this action can be felt visually by each element of the materials interplay with one another. Just like Tony Cragg has created a relationship with his materials, and the handmade nature of his work through experimental approaches.<sup>14</sup> I strive to find a physical reference of the unseen forms generated within my body to share the transformation that are caused by the disease present within me.

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<sup>13</sup> *Braiding Roots*. Pg. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ure-Smith, J. *Material world: Tony Cragg at Yorkshire Sculpture Park*. London. Pg. 1. 2017.



Fig. 1: Monica Bujas. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculptures.  
d) *Fuse*. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculpture 4/5.

### *Fuse*

The language proclaimed through the material of wood and the thought process in creating a sculpture is an interpretation of my spine changing its form as disease transitions within it. My selection of oversized tree trunks that grew for ages before being reclaimed by me is chosen as a characterization of my spinal body form. There is an awareness of the industrially made objects and the way that humans use materials as an

extension of themselves. Most of the material we use in our everyday lives has a utilitarian function.<sup>15</sup> Using wood pieces to make a sculpture that encompasses the similar structure of bone is composed of multiple layers to protect the central core, keeping its shape sturdy and strong. The material used is a way for me to inform myself of how the tree is similarly constructed to the form of my own body. The wire armatures that are used and wrapped in burlap fabric transfer from one section of the wooden stump to the other. Piercing through the center of the degenerated core of the wood, the wire creates a frame around the intriguing detail of deranged forms growing out of the wood into our space. My insensibility to what my spine will look like in a month, in six months, or a year's time, is unknown as this chronic illness generates differently in every body it touches. I concentrate on how materials characterize what the unforeseen form of my backbone may look like. I put energy and insightful intelligence in understanding the meaning behind something that so closely represents me and I connect with a tree.

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<sup>15</sup> Austen, Kat. *Sculpting what isn't there*. New Scientist, Vol. 211, No. 2823. Pg. 1. 2011.



Fig. 1: Monica Bujas. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculptures.  
e) *Mend*. *Spondylitis*. Series. Sculpture 5/5.

## *Mend*

Mended, a log separated into two with knots of outgrowths exemplify the shape of bone when pieces are joined and stiff, restricting the function of movement as the bone fuses together limiting mobility. I use the two logs with naturally created imperfection and dark charred natural colors that suggest the invisible disease. While I make the armature that is later stiffened into a compact form, it became preserved. Mark Dion, an artist with interest in material and meaning, creates works thinking about nature as a process within a given space. While I use material extracted from a space of nature and bring it into a confined setting. The use of trees in his work looks at the process of decay. The tree supports a living bio-system from single-cell organisms all the way up to vertebrates.<sup>16</sup> I take selected pieces of wood and recontextualize it into an indoor space, giving the viewer an enhancement of nature and a way of looking at the form as a spine. The materials that hold the wonder of a complex diversity within its own structure become acknowledged in the sculptures. Installed on the wall, the form looks monstrous and violent, wrapped and stiffened, restricted in further generating gestures. As shadows reflect a rendition of the past full of mourning and melancholy of a tree that once stood tall functioning within its natural setting now used as an artifact portraying my impression of a spine. The use of light suggests hope that overcomes the dark sculptural constructed figures. To artist Eva Hesse, “maybe the dark does beautiful things. Light and dark are both essential to its anatomy. To separate the two is to be less than direct.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Neukom Vivarium*. Art in the Twenty-First Century. Season 4 episode. Ecology. Segment: Mark Dion. Art21 Inc. Pg. 1. 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, A. Carol. Pg. 45. 2015.

From the initial process and to the time of installing my sculpture onto the wall, the constant transition between the light and dark play a fundamental role as I learn to cope and learn more about this invisible chronic condition within me.

## Vertebrae



Figure 2: Monica Bujas. *Vertebrae*. Series. Sculptures. 3/3.  
Left to Right: a) *Early Decay*. b) *Mid Deteriorate*. c) *Late Deformity*.

## *Early Decay*

Here, I connect to the pieces of wood transferring energy from its inner core signifying and holding the knowledge of the earth and the land. It shares with us everything it has ever seen and all the experiences it may have encountered. The markings are created by various creatures that may have lived within become a part of the aesthetics of the form. Only I take each selected piece and arrange it in an order that mimics the form of vertebrae bones; these are objects that appeared untouched by human hands and are letting others overtake their production<sup>18</sup> While, each of my sculptures suggest my human touch in the process of making it. There is an unforeseen amount of labor in the construction of each form, I make to share my experience of an alignment of bones affecting me in the process I set out to take when creating the sculpture piece. A smooth surface where some bark is skinned off and changes in colour suggests the beginning of an infestation taking over something that used to be one with the earth known as a tree. I observe disease generated by nature indicated within the details of its visible markings that look like drawings engraved and of different lines taking form on each section of the wood I use. The strands of wire wrapped in a flexible wood textile, captures the sway of direction that threads every piece of wood together into a whole form. Eva Hesse, made sculpture and artworks while living with a tumor, that affected the ways she perceived her art practice. Her sense of her sculpture's value remains closely tied to the countless hours of effort she invested in it—effort that, she believed, “attracts energy to it,” from the viewer in turn. “Putting energy into the piece” amounts to

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<sup>18</sup> Chave, A. C. *Sculpture, Gender, and the Value of Labor*. American Art. Vol. 24, No. 1. Pg. 28. 2010.

a “caring process,” to “affection” and “commitment”; “It’s simply having put in the time, like a life,” observed the sculptor.<sup>19</sup> While, in my artwork the material becomes reminiscent of how I feel internally by the way I manipulate the material throughout the process of making. The bend and twist each tube like form makes becomes a path for the source to transmit the internal energy of its core to move throughout each wooden piece of what I perceive as the bone. The glow, an illuminated blue-green florescent fluid painted on by brush, creates an expression of energy responding, as I feel the energy generating and moving throughout the fragile vulnerable shape I make of a backbone. It is almost as if you feel the beginning of this chronic condition stimulating as it becomes a part of the form. I sense the sculpture bring emotion in the way I see and learn about the multiple restrictions and deformations that may arise as the disease lives on within me. The use of materials that become a symbol of my spine allows me to connect with each piece acknowledging the messages received and shared as we bond. The central core surrounded by a layer of tree rings protect the fundamental source of power beginning from the middle as it works it way outward toward the tube- like strands that further direct liveliness within the form. I continue this process sending my own energy into the making and combining of materials. I feel the power stretching as it sends and receives back and forth from end to end of the form. This is where I become one with the form as we create and encounter a moment of what it is like being affected while we change in form, communicating in the process the attachment a material has between one another and me as I make the sculpture.

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<sup>19</sup> Chave, A. C. Pg. 28.

*Mid Deteriorate.*

The crust-like bark, with multiple cracks, and hints of contrasts in colour reveals the many changes to its form. I focus on making my connection stronger with the wood I collected and assembled. I interact with the materials used in a way the disease does over the form of my own physical body. Lending me support with compassion and joy each material connects me in the process as I sink my own energy into the making of this sculpture. The dark charred discolorations capture the worsening alterations the form can encounter as it ages. Each wooden piece has obvious traumatic markings that share with us the connection of what it may have felt, as it became the form it is now. A span of a various sizes of wood is arranged in a linear manner linked by curves of tube-like passages that direct the flow of energy throughout each piece of wood. This painted on glow link of powerful energy is sent to journey through the three wire strands that are layered with a wood fabric, binding together the sculpture form. The lengths of each wire contact with the wood joins closer into contact with one another suggesting the erosion of the in-between that structure the form itself. I leave the gaps between the span of the wood fragments as the materials guide me in the use of them. In making this sculpture, I sense the vibration of my mental energy on the form.

*Late Deformity.*

Figure 2: c) *Late Deformity.* Detail. *Vertebrae.* Series. – The blue glow of energy pulsing through the wood pieces within a dim light space.



Just like a tree, my life narrative is like a quick time-lapse of transformation of what I have seen as seasons gone by and the people I encounter. The thicker log with hollow warts that grow along the outer layers of the wood reflect the late impact of the chronic illness which already made its way within the wood. While the colour generates certain ringlets of vivid hues of rouge that enact the invasion that has reached the inner core and energy, suggestions of pain it may have felt as it progresses and changed. The structure it is now. Only to create the malformations the form of materials causes.

Limited the combination of material are arranged in shorter spans between the orders of each wood piece as the link of tri pathways further transmit energy in to each segment. I sense this sculpture begins to explain things of my personal life using this materiality I select to explore the impact I encounter through a disease altering the form of my backbone within me. I claim who I am as I acknowledge the unknown and try to understand the very essence of my existence that's conserved within me of who I am as a human being. The glow that is shared throughout, to expand and to grow captures characteristics of a tree. There is wonder in this creation, beyond the limiting human mind in understanding what I have made. The potential of inventive visual encounter of what goes on within the body brings out the surreal expressions generated by I who live with the chronic condition present within me.

## Malformed Silhouettes



Fig 3: Monica Bujas. *Malformed Silhouettes*. Drawings. 3/3.

In my drawings, the emergence of line, colour, and shapes captures the moments investigating the expressions of tree forms that continue to decay and transform in nature. In my drawings, my renditions extract the impression of wood and investigate the boundaries set out by the materials I use. The collection of wood I choose, I preserve in drawings. I draw the structures reminiscent of the body, which suggest its pause from further deformities. The contrast of vivid oil pastel and black ink along the paper surface restricts the interactions occurring between each drawing but engages me in understanding the limitations of each drawing as I compose. Outlined with a black frame, I imagine these drawings as x-ray records of a constructed silhouette that takes the form that resembles the human body similar to the ways material is used in Mark Dion's *2011*

*installation An Archeology of Knowledge*. My sculptures and drawings reveal the many layers each object accumulates when preserved history is placed into a meaningful assemblage. In my drawings, I convey moments of deformity limited within its composition as it takes its form on the paper. Artist Mark Dion has been interested in the meaning and knowledge that is structured and communicated through objects within an installation. Using everyday objects and artifacts, he encounters each as iconic status associated with the other objects. Visual meaning is established in much the same way that a natural history collection might reveal information about the specimens it contains.<sup>20</sup> The characteristics of a tree become an experience of bones and human like body constructions of the backbone in the making process. Each material compact with history joined into a complete visual narrative of different gestures of a spine.

The deep empathy I sense between the trees and me is reflected in my drawing, as I experience living with a chronic condition that sets out to gain control over my functionality. The expression of different renditions of wood using oil pastel represented in a variety of angles on the paper becomes the starting point where I manipulate the medium and materials. The pastel enhances a memory of the wood I observed within the conservation area. I attempt to express the characteristics of its form while it was still in the state of transition within its sanctuary. The expansive visual impression that evokes wonder stimulates curiosity, and produces knowledge through a direct and variegated

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<sup>20</sup> Talasek, J. D. *Mark Dion: An Archeology of Knowledge*. *Issues in Science and Technology*, vol. 31, no. 1. Pg. 7-9. 2014.

encounter with the physical world.<sup>21</sup> The black ink brushed on in a gentle manner creates designs expressive of how something painful can transform and become aesthetically appealing through the ways I look and my sensibility to materials. I aspire to open the paths for others so that the materials and forms I create can aid in the expansion of who I am and what I can share with the viewer.

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<sup>21</sup> Talasek, J. D. Pg. 11-13.

## Conclusion

Overall, the sculptures accompanied with some drawings contain a language of what I want to communicate with my art. Yet, not everything that comes out of it will be understood as what I see in the materials I selected and set out to use in portraying the chronic condition that lives on within me. Like memory or the unseen, my spine is what I know is being affected and my art is what I can know as to how it may be. As an artist, I envision the invisible transformation in an intimate relationship between the tree and me; my life, my feeling, my thoughts all conserved within each of my works of art. In the *Wood, Process, and Me* exhibit, I am a tree, the material of wood silent yet reclaimed and compact with meaning. The wood becomes a metaphor for the restrictions I will face and the deformations that may form the structure of my body over time. At some point, I will no longer do the physical work required in making as I age and transform just like a tree breakdowns and decays. When illness prevents me, the shadows on the walls and the glow of energy from the core will tell the narratives that are characterized within each gesture and form. My history and my chronic condition are part of my art. I am a tree; the tree is me. What happens to me happens to it. The process is never a walk into the unknown, but a spark to what may become. My ideas, my state of mind, making processes and materials permeate my sculptures and drawings, making the invisible illness visible to all

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