



Epilepsy and art: Windows into complexity and comorbidities



Steven C. Schachter *

Consortia for Improving Medicine with Innovation & Technology, Boston, MA, USA

Departments of Neurology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 14 December 2015

Available online 13 January 2016

Keywords:

Art
Epilepsy
Seizure
Quality of life
Depression
Anxiety

ABSTRACT

The views of artists with epilepsy as expressed through their art provide unique opportunities to gain understanding of the experiences of living with epilepsy and related comorbidities. This paper provides a glimpse into art collected from an international group of artists with epilepsy, focusing on ictal and postictal experiences, psychiatric comorbidities, and social aspects of epilepsy. The art serves to enhance understanding among clinicians and neuroscientists of what it means to have epilepsy as well as to reduce misunderstanding and stigma among the public. It may also inspire neuroscientists to further explore the underlying neurological basis to the rich tapestries of ictal, postictal, and interictal experiences of persons with epilepsy.

This article is part of a Special Issue entitled “Epilepsy, Art, and Creativity”.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The perspectives of artists living with epilepsy represent a unique resource for all clinicians, scientists, and laypersons interested in the personal impact of epilepsy, as illustrated by this paper, which starts with an overview of the relevance of this topic and then highlights examples of art from an international group of artists living with epilepsy.

Why is the art created by persons with epilepsy of interest to healthcare professionals and scientists? First, and perhaps most importantly, the art provides insights into the experience of having seizures, the psychosocial consequences of living with epilepsy, and the associated comorbidities. As stated over 60 years ago by Lennox and Markham, physicians who treat patients with epilepsy must “match modern drug and surgical therapy with practical sociopsychological therapy” and be “concerned not only with turbulent brain waves but with disturbed emotions...” [1]. Indeed, while in the past, the treatment of epilepsy focused primarily on controlling seizures, over time, the focus has broadened to include the side effects of therapy, the systemic and psychiatric comorbidities of epilepsy, and the psychosocial consequences of living with epilepsy. In short, the therapeutic goal has evolved from controlling seizures, at whatever cost, to enabling patients with epilepsy to lead lifestyles that are consistent with their capabilities, ideally free of seizures, medication side effects, and comorbidities [2]. A major factor in this shift of perspective has been increased awareness and interest in the comorbidities of epilepsy, as exemplified by the NINDS-sponsored Curing Epilepsy conference [3,4] and the Institute of Medicine’s 2012 report “Epilepsy across the spectrum” [5]. This landmark volume called for further epidemiological research and

prevention efforts targeted at the comorbidities of epilepsy to counter the impact these medical, neurological, and psychiatric conditions have on the lives of people with epilepsy [6]. The work of artists with epilepsy demonstrates both the barriers to this broadened therapeutic goal as well as what may be possible once this goal is attained. Second,



Fig. 1. Brainstorm #20, Craig Getzlaff. Reprinted from [7] with permission.

* 125 Nashua Street, Room 3228, Boston, Massachusetts 02114, USA. Tel.: +1 617 643 3835.

E-mail address: sschacht@bidmc.harvard.edu.



Fig. 2. Transcending, Jennifer Hall. Reprinted from [7] with permission.

studying the art produced by persons with epilepsy may reveal relationships between specific aspects of brain function and artistic abilities, which is a fertile area for further exploration.

I became involved with epilepsy and art in 1992 through my interactions with an artist with epilepsy in Boston. She owned a local art gallery and had organized a support group for nearby artists with epilepsy to provide a forum for sharing issues and concerns. As an outgrowth of

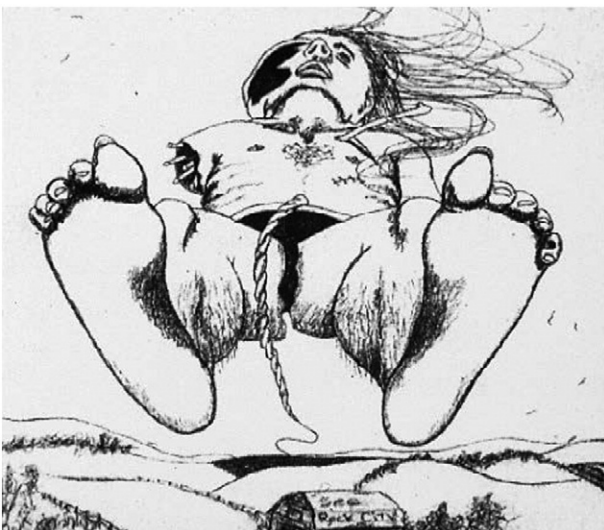


Fig. 3. Postictal, Jacqui Streeton. Reprinted from [7] with permission.

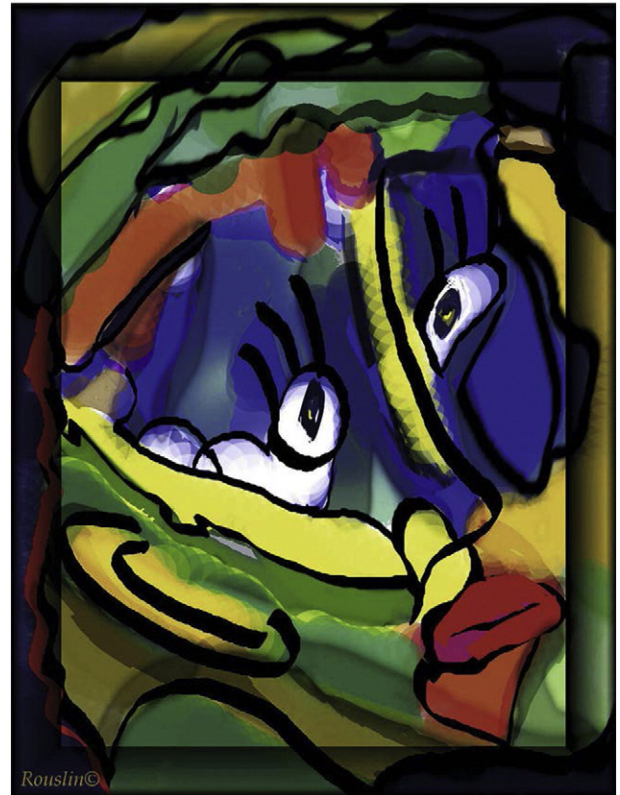


Fig. 4. Abstract Face, Jude Rouslin. Reprinted from [7] with permission.

the group's meetings, she organized an exhibition featuring the artwork of 27 artists with epilepsy called, "From the Storm" (<http://www.dowhile.org/physical/overview/presentations/asci/storm.html>). After a successful run in Boston, the art collection was shown at numerous venues across the U.S. and Canada and, ultimately, was displayed at a museum in conjunction with the 1995 International Epilepsy Congress in Sydney, Australia.

Being involved in this exhibition galvanized my interest. I began to reach out to artists with epilepsy around the world, and they began to send me their work, which I have featured over the years in numerous ways, including a book of art [7], calendars, book covers, and dozens of covers of *Epilepsy & Behavior* [8].

Based on my evaluation of the hundreds of pieces sent to me over 20 years, there appear to be four distinct themes in the art: ictal and

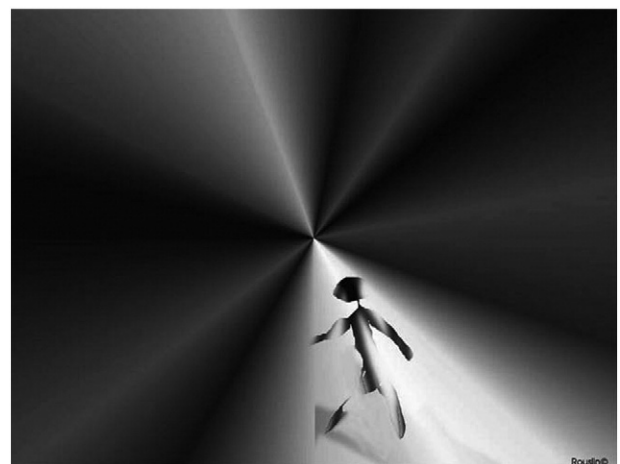


Fig. 5. Grey Abstract, Jude Rouslin. Reprinted from [7] with permission.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/3049574>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/3049574>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)