

**ART OF MEDICINE**

**Moral Distress Containment Through an Artist's and Art Psychotherapist's Lens**

Georgina Morley, PhD, MSc, RN and Annie Sharon Fox, MA

**Abstract**

This series of 3 paintings of figures in a bath explores emotional responses of persons experiencing or responding to others' moral distress. Intricately tied together and connected through time and space, the bodies represented suggest a complex web of relationships between clinicians and patients.

**Figure 1.** *Containment 1*



**Figure 2.** *Containment 2*



**Figure 3.** *Containment 3*



## Media

Oil paint on clear Perspex®.

The first contributor (GM) commissioned the second contributor (ASF), an artist and art psychotherapist, to paint a series of works representing GM's doctoral explorations of moral distress based on interviews with critical care nurses. The series of paintings was commissioned to visually augment the "encounters with experience"<sup>1</sup> the nurses offered. The visuals provide a nontextual way to explore themes of balance, relationships, and responsibility that recurred in the interviews, which informed the nurses' conceptions of moral distress.

In a bath, the figures balance one another and work together to avoid sinking. The figures represent clinicians, patients, and family members intimately connected in professional and personal relationships that exert various pulls of responsibility. Portrait form is used to help convey the figures' vulnerability, most directly represented in their nakedness, paralleling the interviewees' vulnerability in retelling their stories and navigating ethically complex experiences in health care settings.

## References

1. Ives J. "Encounters with experience": empirical bioethics and the future. *Health Care Anal.* 2008;16(1):1-6.

**Georgina Morley, PhD, MSc, RN** conducted the present work while a doctoral student at the University of Bristol Centre for Ethics in Medicine in the United Kingdom, where she earned a PhD in bioethics. Georgina is a critical care nurse and most recently worked in cardiac intensive care. She holds an MSc in nursing and BA in philosophy from King's College London.

**Annie Sharon Fox, MA** is a mixed-media artist based in Melbourne, Australia. Her artwork aims to capture and explore the vulnerability, truth, and beauty of human nature in idiosyncratic movements. She received a first-class honors degree in fine art from Aberystwyth University School of Art and a master's degree in art psychotherapy from the University of Roehampton.

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**Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

The author(s) had no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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