

Curiosities

# Scarred for Life

**Wanna See My Scar?** Few people (aside from President Lyndon B. Johnson) consider scars worthy of public exhibit or admiration. The National Museum of Health and Medicine is out to change that. A new exhibit, "Scarred for Life," includes more than 30 images of scars — painted in shades of red, blue, orange and green — left by such varied experiences as heart surgery, liver replacement, eye socket repair, a mastectomy and a bullet wound.

**Artistic Influence** Los Angeles-based artist Ted Meyer said his nongory, almost abstract paintings were inspired by his own scars from Gaucher disease, a rare, inherited enzyme deficiency disorder, and his encounter with a woman scarred from a fall from a tree. He said there's an "emotional value" to viewing another's scars. All but one of the people whose scars are displayed asked to be part of the project, he said.

"They show me their scars and tell me their stories," he said. "The idea is . . . that something that they didn't really want in the first place and are stuck with can be of some

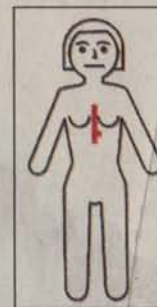
value for someone else."

Adrienne Noe, director of the museum, said she hopes the exhibit will help bridge the gap between the medical and artistic museum experience. Many people are comfortable with a visit to an art museum because they know what to expect, she said, but "sometimes people aren't certain what they'll find when they come to a medical museum."

**Thanks, Doc** About a third of the patients whose scars are depicted chose to give copies of the paintings to the doctors who performed the procedures that left them scarred, Meyer said. They share the images "because they're very thankful to their doctor. These are all very critical points in their life," Meyer said. Sharing the images, he said, allows the patient to say to the doctor, "Here's sort of a memento that you pulled me through."

**Find It** National Museum of Health and Medicine, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, 6900 Georgia Ave. at Elder Street NW; [www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum](http://www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum).

— January W. Payne



FROM "SCARRED FOR LIFE"

**Surgery for an aortic aneurysm produced the scar depicted at left. The catalog for artist Ted Meyer's exhibit includes figures showing the site of each operation.**