

ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine

Editorial

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This issue of ATOL is given over to the publication of the conference proceedings from the conference 'Finding Spaces, Making Places – Exploring social and cultural space in contemporary Art Therapy practice' held at Goldsmiths, University of London 13th April 2016 to 16th April 2016.

This conference builds on the previous international conference, 'Finding a voice, Making your Mark' held at Goldsmiths in April 2013 [see ATOL 5 (1) 2014], which sought to explore the boundaries of art therapy practice. The organisers were interested in the differences and commonalities in the practices that are called Art Therapy. As well as exploring the effects that ideologies had on the core values of the profession, there was also a desire, in the conference, to explore the creation of contexts, spaces and places where clients can be seen and understood, where what is made can be explored.

From the previous conference we discovered that Art Therapists, around the world, are enterprising in finding spaces, both physical and virtual, and in these spaces Art Therapists had created places for creative thinking and imaginative explorations. In this conference we wanted to develop our collective insights in relation to space and place. The title of the conference, 'Finding Spaces, Making Places', we understood to refer to the physical and

material setting, the place of the Art Therapist in organisations where they work, and the boundaries within which therapeutic work can be facilitated. The title also relates to the psychological realm, and the social, cultural and political are implicated. This conference, we felt, represented a struggle for space and the resources of place. We were organising the conference and advertising places for delegates and speakers during the imposition of austerity policies in health and education, and when finance could quickly be withdrawn from the voluntary sector. At this time when thinking about space and place seemed to be particularly relevant it became ever more difficult for therapists to find the time, and the money, to enable them to meet and contribute to creative thinking about the problems of spaces and places as it affects our clients. In Europe the austerity programme was accompanied by the refugee crisis, a crisis that continues, and this highlighted for us the geo-political importance of space and place. Does space and place now have a different meaning, and how should Art Therapists respond to the current political, social and cultural environment?

As before we wanted the conference to offer a place for delegates to engage in creative thinking through the use of materials and in presentation and debate. For the opening evening of the conference we wanted to engage a keynote speaker from the contemporary art world who was sympathetic to our work, and a speaker from the world of psychotherapy. We were lucky in being able to attract the artist Grayson Perry and the psychoanalyst Patrick Casement, who together got us off to a stimulating start. Grayson enabled us to think about identity in spatial and geographical explorations that were facilitated through an engagement in material cultures and making. Patrick emphasised how art production as communication, in the psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytical space, could contain strong feeling, facilitating sensitive explorations of otherness and the emergence of unconscious thinking.

After the opening evening and keynotes each day was begun with a panel of two speakers. Dr Chris Wood and Dr Hayley Berman on the first day, Dr Patricia Fenner and Dr Fausto Sergej Sommer on the second day, and

Penelope Best and Dr Sally Skaife on the last day. Dr Hayley Berman has provided in this conference issue a written account of her courageous search for places in a 'fragile and tenuous South African Society' where she has, through her psychoanalytically informed Art Therapy, combining visual research with social action, addressed the transmission of trauma and Xenophobia. Dr Patricia Fenner describes the setting or room where Art Therapy takes place. Conceptualizing the place as an 'intense sensory, affective and meaning-filled site or placeworld', she explores the ways in which, in the dynamic of the setting where multiple forces are at play, matter has agency. Penny Best is a Dance Movement Psychotherapist and she has provided an account of how she saw space as a relational entity, 'full of embodied possibility' and she stimulated us to think about how 'we are shaped and shape others'. Dr Sally Skaife has presented us with a reflection on the 'public/private binary in Art Therapy' when art produced in the therapeutic setting is exhibited in order to promote Art Therapy, or gain support for those who are using it.

In the morning of each day, after the panel speakers, the conference offered workshops. Bruce Currie, Kristen Catchpole and Jon Martyn provided small experiential Art Therapy Groups, an art making space in which to explore and reflect on the conference in a small closed group setting. For the conference proceedings Kristen has provided some photographs of her ceramics, a making that enabled her to explore her conference experiences as a group facilitator, and Jon has presented his reflections in relation to the small groups and the Art Therapy Large Group in a written form. A Social Dreaming Matrix was provided by Francesca La Nave, Art Psychotherapist and Caroline Frizzel, Dance Movement Psychotherapist. Francesca has provided us with an account of the exploration of the conference matrix, which the meeting to share dreams during the conference facilitated. Fiona Hoo provided a Dance Movement Psychotherapy group which explored the dialectic of inner and outer. A Collective Body Mapping Ritual was provided by Annette Schwalbe, Christina Greenland, Sue Curtis and Penny Best, they have generously

shared their collective experience through the writing and photographs they have provided for these conference proceedings.

In recognition of the radically shifting and changing spaces of Art Therapy Lesley Morris and Dr Jill Westwood offered delegates the opportunity to join them in the construction of a site specific art installation on the College Lawn and in the Whitehead Building. This encampment of tents and assembled structures was complimented and enhanced by the work of Anita Lever and Professor Sheridan Linnell from Australia who linked the work on the lawn to their own installation using plumb bobs and builder's string. A photo essay of the installation and the contribution made by delegates to this venture is provided by Lesley and Jill. Anita and Sheridan have given a stimulating report on their conference presentation and reflections on space, geography and place through the use of the builder's materials.

The afternoons in the conference were given over to paper presentations, a Film Space, and further workshops. Each day ended with the Art Therapy Large Group. On the Wednesday and Thursday of the conference 32 papers were presented by delegates. As well as afternoon papers there were workshops exploring conflict, performance as narrative, parting, and weaving, from which delegates could choose. A Film Space was also provided with screening followed by discussion. So there was a lot going on. We are in position of being able to publish thirteen of the paper presentations, three papers arising from the workshops, and a paper arising from the Film Space. One of the films shown was made by Kate Rothwell and Emer Douglas, which has been previously published by us [see ATOL 5 (2) 2014]. The papers give a good feeling for the international nature of the conference, as we have contributions from Art Therapists in the USA, Holland, Australia, Singapore, Greece, Israel and Jordan as well as the UK. The papers have been very carefully put together and they represent a range of stimulating ideas in relation to our theme. We believe that the papers provide a rich account of current Art Therapy practice and thinking, an account that has emerged from

a broad geography of settings, and from particular experiences with different client groups.

We have presented an account of the Art Therapy Large Group, which is introduced by the facilitators, but also contains contributions from delegates who attended.

Overall we think this issue will interest those who attended the conference as well as those who want to find out what happened and what ideas were shared, what thinking and creative explorations emerged in the setting. We did find spaces for imaginative exchanges with others, places where we could share the things we held in common, and places where difference could be productively explored, through making and the performative, and through speech and presentations. We may not have solved the problems of Space and Place for Art Therapy, but we have certainly extended our thinking.

The tutors on the MA in Art Psychotherapy at Goldsmiths have been the instigators of this conference, and have created the programme. We have also been lucky to have contributions from the tutors on the MA in Dance Movement Psychotherapy, Caroline Frizell, Fiona Hoo and Sue Curtis. Important financial advice, organisational and administrative support was provided by: Dr Keren Cohen, Head of Therapeutic Studies; Sandra Marcantuono, Departmental Business Manager; Jennifer Mayo-Deman, Sabrina Jackson, Susan Williams, and Michela Goddard.

Below is a photograph of the conference reception desk. Dr Sally Skaife is collecting her conference literature, and Sandra Marcantuono, Michela Goddard and Sabrina Jackson, are completing the registration and advising her. In the background is the MA Staff Team. They are sitting in the Freud Museum – another kind of space!



Finally, I would like acknowledge that this issue of the journal would not have been possible without the essential editorial assistance of Christopher Brown and Dr Patricia Fenner.

We would also like to bring our readers attention to the publication of the Collected Works (CW) of D. W. Winnicott. He has been such an influential figure in the theoretical and clinical development of art therapy. His ideas regarding the understanding of mother-child relating have promoted ideas such as transitional objects, creative play, capacity to be alone etc. His seminal book *Playing and Reality* is essential reading for all art therapists. Further information, including a link to the entire audio section of the CW, can be found in this issue under Publishing Event.

