

# ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine

## Editorial

### Tessa Dalley and Barrie Damarell

The three theoretical papers and an interview with an experienced American art therapist by a leading art therapist from the Czech Republic provide strong international contributions with diverse and different approaches in this issue. Interesting and enlightening, using some rich images, there is a shared theme of self-reflection and, to some extent, self-discovery. Each of the papers explores some aspect of a personal experience and how this contributes to clinical experience and professional understanding. Counter transference response to the dynamics within the therapeutic relationship and the art work made in the sessions forms one of the cornerstones of our work as art therapists. These papers highlight the importance of being open to explore personal responses and experience using the art work and how this adds to the capacity for containment and emotional resonance with our clients and patients.

The Others by Bronwen Gray is a personal account of early experience and trauma and her work in communities on projects that relate to them collectively. Drawing on her experience of working in the Maori community in South Auckland she describes how she uses Autoethnography as a post modern, self focused form of research that uses creativity and embodied knowledge to examine assumptions. In her paper Therapeutic practice: a personal account of an arts based activity, Jose Van Den Akker explores the

process and outcomes of engaging in an art therapy activity involved in the examination of her own childhood and early adolescent experience and defense mechanisms at the time which intensified later in life. As an art therapist, educator and academic, the author explores different ways of engaging research by making a painting remembering body sensations and experiences at the time. This is a detailed description of her personal process and the painting produced was created through the dialogue between two inner voices and the art work. Using her left hand, which represented the child's voice as the depicted young person and right hand as the voice in the present, some insightful and important aspects to this dialogue to capture her experience and resolution.

Clare Dickson is also an art educator and art therapist. Her paper *Congruence of Professional Values: An Exploration of the Reciprocity between Art Teaching and Art Therapy* describes the overlapping paradigm that exists with art therapy and art teaching. The vehicle deployed to articulate these is the Critical Incident Technique developed as a training tool for teachers. Different approaches to reflective practice, supervision and experiential learning are explored alongside the identity of the art therapist and art teacher and the impact on experiential work in relation to pragmatic issues in art such as participation demonstration and collaboration where creative input of the profession is involved.

Lucia Simoncicova's interview with Dr Klorer, an experienced art therapist in the USA, describes her attachment focused art therapy work. The transcript of this skype interview gives an in-depth understanding of the nature of her approach.

The review of *Psychodynamic Art therapy Practice with people on the Autistic Spectrum* (eds. Dolphin, M, Byers, A, Goldsmith, A and Jones, R) Routledge 2014 by Diana Collins describes how the authors survey each contributors' journey over the years towards new, more current understandings. The review reminds us how working with people on the autistic spectrum elicits powerful responses and counter transference material to be worked with.

The next issue of ATOL Art Therapy On-Line will, as part of its content, have a focus on the topic of psychosis. The editors will be Barrie Damarell and Chris Wood and the editorial board welcomes submissions on the subject of psychosis for this special issue. Another important forthcoming event is the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Art Therapy Conference entitled 'Finding Spaces, Making Places: exploring social and cultural space in contemporary art therapy practice' to be held at Goldsmiths College University of London – Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Readers are encouraged to book early as this will be a most interesting international conference with contributions from those working in the field of research, theory and clinical practice.

Finally, as part of the Festival of the Unconscious at the Freud Museum, London (24<sup>th</sup> June- 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015), tutors on the MA Art Psychotherapy, Goldsmiths, are exhibiting a group installation that is part of their on-going research 'the unconscious project'.