

# ENVISAGE

The Canadian Art Therapy Association Online Magazine Volume 2, Issue 2



## EXTRA-ORDINARY

>> **Creative persistence:** Acts of everyday striving through art-making. >> **Mindfulness:** Rediscovering the moment and what inspires us. >> **New!** Social justice column

ENVISAGE SPRING 2019

Showcasing the visions, insights, and innovations of art therapists in Canada and beyond.





Miniature Workshops at Sanctuary in downtown Toronto, ON. Read more about the creative community at Sanctuary in Melodie Ng's article on p. 21.

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**COVER ART:**  
*IMMIGRANT WOMAN*



**Marcela Boechat**  
Toronto, ON

*Immigrant Woman* is a collage made in a multicultural group meeting in Toronto, ON. Collaging enables conversations between imaginary and real layers intrinsic to the migration process. (Read **Marcela Boechat's** article on art therapy and immigration on p. 25)

# President's Message



**Amanda Gee BFA,  
DTATI, RCAT, RP  
Interim President  
Toronto, ON**

Dear CATA-ACAT members and friends,

Hello again and happy spring! I hope this finds you well and that spring has finally sprung in your part of the country.

At the end of April the board of directors came together for a retreat in Hamilton, Ontario. It was quite the productive weekend. We had anti-oppression trainers come in to work with us and to help us look at where we need to go with our policies and board structure in regards to diversity and inclusion. We also worked on strategic planning and succession planning. We are always working towards the future of the Canadian Art Therapy Association.

Conference planning is in full swing for the 40th annual CATA-ACAT conference in Calgary, Alberta. *Weaving Community Through Creative Expression* will run from October 25th to the 27th, 2019 at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. A big thanks to Dorothy MacKintosh and the conference planning committee for all of their work in planning this. I am looking forward to it.

As always I want to thank all of our incredible, dedicated volunteers who put together this magazine, run our social media, sit on committees, and to the board of directors as well. All of your hard work keeps CATA-ACAT moving forward. We couldn't do it without all of you.

I will leave you with these pictures from the board retreat. We worked hard, but we also had a little fun. ●



# Editor's Note



**Patricia Ki** RCAT,  
RSW, PhD Cand.  
Editor/Designer  
Toronto, ON

Over the last decade my work in art therapy primarily involves facilitating expressive arts groups in the community. Just today I worked alongside a group of seniors making lanterns with mason jars, tissue paper, paint, feathers, and many stories about the things that we love, the things that challenge us, and the things that are important to us. As we wrapped up the time of art-making, folks in the group spontaneously pushed their lanterns forward to the centre of the table around which we sat, so everyone could see each other's work. My co-facilitator dimmed the overhead fluorescent lights. For a moment everyone was silent, basking in the sense of togetherness that is held by the circle of glowing lanterns (albeit lit by battery-operated candles rather than the warm flames of wax candles). To me, it was the most beautiful moment of connection and belonging, the kind of moments that remind me over and over again why I do this work.

It very much resonates with me when Dr. Chioma Anah writes in her article that we live in a very challenging time. CATA-ACAT is an organization of practitioners who are committed to anti-oppressive and social justice work. So we are very grateful that Dr. Anah has agreed to contribute to a regular column in our magazine, which encourages us to regularly make space for critical reflections and conversations about the historical contexts and sociopolitical conditions that inevitably shape our perceptions and approaches as they impact the material realities and well-being of those we support.

Sometimes what we understand broadly as social justice work may feel unsurmountable, especially in the context of widespread oppression, discrimination, and violence. Using

different creative means, a number of writers and artists in this issue have discussed the importance of connecting with each other and ourselves, while building a sense of community and belonging, through simple gestures of kindness, gatherings in public spaces such as the backyard and library, and attending to what may seem mundane and ordinary, such as a red leaf on the sidewalk, or where the breath sits in the body as we inhale and exhale. Our contributors remind us that, as we become more mindful and intentional in our own ways of being, we can continue to expand in our efforts to support others' well-being and resistance against injustices. I am encouraged by Dr. Helene Burt's report on how new graduates are not only advancing the art therapy profession, but also continually extending the use of creativity in supporting individuals and communities to respond to challenges and violence.

I will end with this quote from Melodie Ng's article (p. 21), which speaks beautifully to a very important part of our work together:

*"I've been invited along on a journey calling for creative persistence. Together, we reach for aliveness. It is as simple as choosing a small bird to hot glue onto a sculpture, and as complex as people who have experienced terrible violence in their lives taking a few hours for themselves to make something beautiful... In the face of isolation, oppression and exclusion, we gather in the backyard and choose relationship, creativity and community."*

May the warmth and sunshine of spring and summer bring you a continual sense of renewed energy for the very important work that you do. ●

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## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS: *ENVISAGE* FALL 2019

*Envisage* is published online three times a year, coordinated by a team of dedicated CATA volunteers, with rich and engaging contributions from the Canadian and international art therapy community. The magazine is not only a vibrant platform for art therapists to be recognized for their work and learn from each others' diverse practices, it is also a valuable tool to promote the innovative work of art therapists in other professional fields and communities. Please feel free to send us your work anytime, or if you have an idea for contribution but have questions, please don't hesitate to email us, we would be happy to collaborate.

**We are seeking articles and artwork for the Fall 2019 issue,** scheduled to be published in June. Please follow the guidelines below.

We welcome contributions on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Articles on art therapy programs or projects
- Reflections on art therapy theories, approaches, practice experience, therapists' own art-making process
- Book reviews
- Artwork and poetry
- News from CATA committees, art therapy schools, and affiliated organizations
- **Have a great project to share but no time to write?** We'd love to learn more about your work and interview you!

### **For Articles / Written Work:**

- Maximum 1500 words
- Submissions in French are welcome!
- Please send files in Word format (avoid sending PDFs)

### **For Artwork:**

- Please send images in JPEG format
- Please include a short statement with the artwork
- Please ensure that the files are clearly labelled with the titles of the artwork

### **Photography:**

We're always looking for images to accompany articles (e.g. abstract, texture, landscapes, weather, bokeh, etc. See the following pages for examples!). Send us your photos in JPEG format, when they're used you'll be fully credited as contributor.

### **For All Submissions:**

Please send a photo of you, along with your credentials (as you'd like to be recognized), and where you're located.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE: September 10, 2019**

Please email [magazine@canadianarttherapy.org](mailto:magazine@canadianarttherapy.org)



# les pas d'hier



yesterday's  
footprints

BY CHRISTINE  
BRIÈRE-TREMBLAY

Herbes blondes et  
sauvages

Jaillissent du manteau  
blanc de l'hiver

Parées de paillettes d'or

Des pas sur la neige

Souvenirs des marcheurs  
d'hier

Sur le sentier, le crissement  
de mes bottes

Wild golden grass

Spring from the white coat  
of winter

Adorned of gold sequins

Footprints in the snow

Memories of yesterday's  
walkers

On the trail, the crunch of  
my boots

>>>



**Les pas d'hier**, Toile, 9x12 po., Acrylique. 15 décembre 2017

**Yesterday's footprints**, Canvas, 9x12 in., Acrylic, December 15, 2017

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Cette peinture et ces poèmes ont été créés lorsque je complétais une recherche heuristique dans le cadre de la maîtrise en art-thérapie de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscaminque. Cette recherche portait sur mon vécu, à savoir si la création d'images à la suite de méditations de pleine conscience pourrait améliorer mon bien-être. Les résultats ont démontré que cela m'avait permis d'affronter des peurs et traumatismes de l'enfance, de les examiner et de transformer mon mal-être tout en savourant les moments positifs de mon existence.

This painting and the poems were created while I was completing a heuristic research study as part of the master's program in art therapy at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscaminque. This research examined if the creation of images following mindfulness meditation would increase my well-being. Results revealed that it enabled me to confront childhood fears and traumas, to examine them and to transform my lack of well-being while being able to enjoy positive moments of my life.



**Christine  
Brière-Tremblay**  
Ottawa, ON

**Christine Brière-Tremblay** détient une Maîtrise en art-thérapie de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscaminque, une Maîtrise en counseling éducationnel et un Baccalauréat en psychologie de l'Université d'Ottawa. Fonctionnaire fédéral à la retraite, elle va offrir des sessions d'art-thérapie de groupe à temps partiel auprès d'adultes étant aux prises avec de la douleur chronique.

**Christine Brière-Tremblay** holds a master's degree in art therapy from l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscaminque, a master's degree in educational counselling, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Ottawa. As a retired federal public servant, she provides group art-therapy sessions to adults who suffer from chronic pain. ●

# REFLECTIONS ON Firelei Báez

BY ARA PARKER

*"I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend — to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing... Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end."*

— bell hooks (1991)





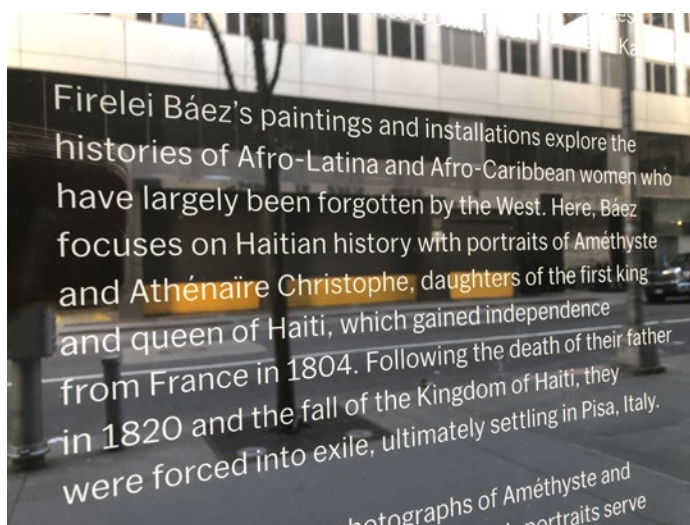


**Ara Parker**  
 DMin (Cand), MA,  
 RCAT, RP, CCC  
 Cambridge, MA

I was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York on March 16, 2019 for the second Critical Pedagogy in the Arts Therapies Conference. Inspired by the discussion around themes of social justice, representation, and inclusion, and bell hooks' article,\* I couldn't help but reflect on this

artwork by Firelei Báez (see curated statement in photo below), commissioned for the exterior windows of the Museum of Modern Art. Curated for exhibition outside this venerable institution (which like the MET houses collections of appropriated and colonized culture), this work surfaced and spoke to me through content and context about invisibility and acknowledgement.

\*hooks, bell (1991). Theory as liberatory practice. *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism*, 4(1), 1-12. ●





# *Opening Within*

BY VALERIE MATY

**Previous page: *Opening Within*, 2016,**  
digital photograph.

This image reflects the many blessings one experiences when a door opened welcomes in the unknown.

**Right: *Soul Retreat*, 2017, mixed media on**  
papier-mâché.

This artwork was created during an arts-based doctoral research study entitled: Art Therapy as Spiritual Care: Walking as Witness with Adults in Practice. It reveals the importance of honoring one's unique artistic path on the journey.

**Left, top: *Peaceful Stars*, 2016, digital photograph.**

This image captures the beauty of the Nicaraguan landscape during a doctoral art therapy internship.

**Left, below: *Mosaic Labyrinth*, 2016,**  
digital photograph.

This image reminds us that when we walk the labyrinth, we never truly walk alone.



**Valerie Maty DAT,**  
ATR-BC, LCPC, SEP  
Naperville, IL

Valerie Maty is an art therapist and psychotherapist in private practice at Labyrinth Counseling Center in Naperville, Illinois, USA. ●



# SEA TO SKY

BY JESS WINNICKI



**Jess Winnicki BA,  
BSW, RSW, DKATI  
Winnipeg, MB**

**Previous page: *Sea to Sky***

This tapestry was created January 25, 2018. It was during my second last semester at KATI. I had been learning weaving on a lap loom over the last few years and had been enjoying working with yarn. My grandmothers and mother all worked with textiles: knitting, quilting, and sewing. Working with yarn feels grounding to me, like I am connecting with them on a deep emotional and cellular level. Though my grandmothers have gone before me I feel connected to them when I work in this way. This piece hangs in my home as a reminder of my time in Nelson as well as my family and how we are all connected, from sea to sky.

**Top: *Blue Heron***

The heron piece of art was created when I was in the waves of my thesis, in the current, trying to find my way, looking for a beacon to light the way. There were times during the process when I felt overwhelmed and defeated, like the entire thesis would swallow me whole and I would be stuck in the belly of the whale. During this time, I took a breath, took a moment and created again, first a background with watercolours, calming and peaceful. I then added the blue heron. This is an animal I have been working with since the start of the second semester at KATI, I continued to come back to the characteristics of this animal, characteristics I am working on embodying; patience, versatility, longevity, determination, resourcefulness, and adaptability. These are also characteristics I see in the clients-artists I had the honour to write about in my thesis. Taking the time to create this image and reflect upon it helped me to refocus my energies and embody my writing more fully. At the time I submitted this write-up my thesis is currently with my second reader, well on its way to being completed. ●



M. Winkel, *Flight and freedom*, 2019, Venetian plaster on board.

## CATA-ACAT Journal Call for Submission

# Art Therapy

## EXPANDING BORDERS & BOUNDARIES



**Haley Toll** BFA, MA, CCC,  
RCAT, RP (inactive)  
CATA-ACAT Journal Editor  
St. John's NF

### We invite authors to submit research articles on the following themes:

- Art therapy expanding borders and boundaries
- Collaborative practices between art therapists, participants, and other professionals
- Art therapy practice and research informed by post-colonial, feminist, anti-oppressive, critical race, and critical Indigenous theories
- Art therapy in participatory community research and projects
- Art(s)-based and transformative research
- Reflexive art therapy and autoethnography
- Innovative arts modalities in art therapy practice, education, and research
- Eco-art therapy and art therapy in the environment
- New technologies and art therapy
- Art therapy and Indigenous research and teachings
- International and intercultural art therapy
- Art therapy collaborations with arts in medicine, health, and well-being initiatives
- Art therapy informing public policy and community development

The Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal invites you to submit diverse research articles to our upcoming open issue, **Art Therapy: Expanding Borders and Boundaries**. Our journal is seeking to publish articles that extend and expand the theme of mending to include concepts of the unbound. The journal is looking for manuscripts that address multidisciplinary research and interprofessional collaborations, innovative approaches to participatory and transformative research and practice, anti-oppressive practices, international collaborations, and Indigenous research methodologies, among other topics. We invite art therapy authors to critically look at the relationship between and beyond our national, academic, practice, and individual boundaries and borders.

[See next page for submission instructions >>>](#)



# *Art Therapy: Expanding Borders and Boundaries*

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**SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JULY 10, 2019**

## **Types of articles:**

Our journal accepts diverse forms of research from our authors that are guided by our Ethical Standards of Practice, including:

**Art Therapy Research Articles:** Articles that have a clear research methodological base and theoretical orientation. Length: 2000-4000 words, including captions for photographs.

**Art Therapy in Practice:** Practical applications and tools of art therapy practice, based in contemporary literature and a theoretical orientation. Length: 2000-3000 words, including captions for photographs.

**Art Therapy Approaches:** Theoretical contemplations and inquiries based on historical and contemporary research. Length: 2000-3000 words, including captions for photographs.

**Soundings:** Perspectives, opinions, proposals, and artistic responses. This research must also include theoretical orientation and relevant literature. Length: 2000 words, including captions for photographs.

For more information, please see: [https://think.taylorandfrancis.com/canadian-art-therapy-borders-and-boundaries/?utm\\_source=CPB\\_think&utm\\_medium=cms&utm\\_campaign=JOE09653](https://think.taylorandfrancis.com/canadian-art-therapy-borders-and-boundaries/?utm_source=CPB_think&utm_medium=cms&utm_campaign=JOE09653)

## **Submission Instructions:**

Please submit your manuscript to the journal's editorial manager system: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/ucanf/default.aspx>

Submissions should be sent in Microsoft Word format and be blinded for peer review. Submissions should not include headers or footers or any other types of special formatting. All parts of the manuscript should be typewritten, double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch on all sides. Number manuscript pages consecutively throughout the paper. Each article should be summarized in an abstract between 100 and 250 words. Avoid abbreviations, diagrams, and reference to the text in the abstract. References, citations, and general style of manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition (APA format).

For more information on APA formatting, see: [https://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/style/reference/tf\\_APA.pdf](https://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/style/reference/tf_APA.pdf)

For more information on submission guidelines, see: <https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=ucanf20&page=instructions>

*Please note that the CATA-ACAT Journal also accepts submissions on an ongoing basis for upcoming publications. ●*

Lacey Ford, DTATI (left) and Pearl Lee, DTATI (right), co-founders of Full Circle Art Therapy Services in Toronto, ON.



## Toronto Art Therapy Institute

Celebrating the New Generation of Art Therapists in Canada

BY HELENE BURT



**Helene Burt DA,**  
RCAT, ATR, RP  
Toronto, ON

As an educator and administrator of a training program, I often find myself thanking the Universe for being in this constantly changing but hugely gratifying position. What I am most excited about these days is the chance I have to be involved in the lives and careers of new art therapists as they grow this field and bring innovation and new thinking to more and more communities. I know that when I was at that early stage in my career, I spent so much of my time promoting and educating and

doing art therapy that I didn't ever stop to think, "hey, this is amazing!" But it really is amazing what we do, and I would like to highlight some of the many graduates from Toronto Art Therapy Institute (TATI) who are doing amazing work in the field and whose efforts to make our profession grow in Canada are truly paying off.

I can see that our profession is growing just by the many TATI graduates who are working in the field and the constant requests we get to provide art therapy services through student practicum from more and more organizations and from a wider range of agencies. There are many indicators, but just recently I was pleased when the *CBC News* website I go to every morning, just for a quick look at headlines, included a story about the results of a study of people with cancer (Zafar, 2019). It showed that those who had experienced and had been treated for mental health issues had a greater risk of dying than those who did not. The article advocated, therefore, for the treatment of mental health issues for people with cancer, and the author went on to say, "for example, social workers, music and *art therapists*, psychologists and psychiatrists may offer counseling and therapies to help the patient and their family cope with cancer, reduce stress and improve emotional well-being" (emphasis mine). Wow! It's nice to be right out there in everyone's faces! It's all our great graduates from all our training programs across Canada who are out there making this happen, but today I'll just share about a few TATI graduates, their accomplishments in research and innovative work in the field. >>>





Laura Browich, DTATI, RCAT, RP at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, ON.

Recently two TATI graduates from one of the 2012 cohorts were able to house their non-profit organization and become a registered charity, Full Circle, in a wonderful bright space right on Toronto's well-known Danforth Ave. Open to the public and providing a collective space to many of their colleagues, **Lacey Ford and Pearl Lee have accomplished their dream which they started talking about many years ago—to create a non-profit charitable agency dedicated to bringing art therapy to the public and enhancing community wellness, and working collaboratively with their colleagues and peers to expand the profession in a highly visible way.**

For years they have worked and fundraised and done numerous free info sessions about art therapy and I want to celebrate their commitment and determination! Full Circle's milestones include becoming a registered non-profit organization in 2014, opening its first office in 2018, and becoming a registered charity organization in 2019. Since 2015 the organization has provided art therapy services at The Gatehouse with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, York University Centre for Sexual Violence, YWCA Elm Centre with women experiencing mental health and substance use issues, and Egale Youth Outreach with LTBTQ2S-identified youth. Moreover, Full Circle has organized numerous art exhibits, fundraising campaigns and awareness-raising events with its partner agencies. Pearl and Lacey, you truly amaze us all!

Another amazing TATI graduate whose practicum turned into a position is Laura Bromwich, who works as an art therapist in the Mood Disorders Program at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. She has been working there full-time since 2015, prior to this the hospital developed a part-time position for her when she finished her practicum. **Laura leads the Art Therapy Program for the Mood Disorders Program and provides art therapy both individually and through group formats. She collaborates with other allied health staff, TATI students and McMaster PhD students as well**

**as hospital volunteers to provide unique programming.**

This includes a series of commissioned murals for the hospital. Working with clients, Laura and her team have designed and painted three separate large-scale murals. These murals focus on themes of recovery, hope and support. The photo above shows one of the murals, titled *Window of Opportunity*, which is located in the Mood Disorders Inpatient Unit.

The majority of her time is spent providing art therapy directly to clients and painting these murals is only a small part of her job. In addition to the mural project Laura has been working with the hospital's psychology team and research students to write a program evaluation of art therapy in the Mood Disorders Clinic, which they hope to publish further down the road. In addition, Laura is currently in the midst of organizing a large-scale project for the hospital's Seniors Behavioural Mental Health Unit. She leads a committee comprised of art therapy students, artists and research students and they have been working collaboratively on designing the unit to engage clients in positive, supportive and meaningful ways through interactive art pieces. This project will be implemented in phases throughout 2019. She even secured funding to provide opportunities to TATI students who are art committee members.

Outside of her hospital position she has facilitated art therapy workshops for Hamilton's Family Health Team's annual mental health retreat and worked with not-for profit Youth organizations in her community, offering art therapy programming and culminating art shows to continue to provide art therapy and educate on its benefits.

All three of these TATI graduates provide wonderful learning opportunities to TATI students in practicum and, along with the many other equally exceptional TATI graduates, are truly our new leaders in the field! Thank-you TATI graduates everywhere for making a difference in so many peoples' lives! >>>

Each year at the graduation celebration, TATI awards one **Dr. Martin A. Fischer Award for Best Thesis** and one **Gilda Grossman Award for Best Major Project**. Each award comes with a gold-plated medal and \$1000.00. The theses and major projects are reviewed by Karen Anderson, PhD, Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at York University. Below are her reviews of the best thesis and major project this year. In addition, this year we also had a Special Mentions for two other theses.

**Best Thesis:** *Art Therapy on a Stem Cell Transplant Unit: The Case Study of an Engineer Fighting Burkitt Lymphoma* by Christina Lee

Christina Lee's thesis presents a "single-case phenomenological narrative study" of a 59-year old male patient undergoing autologous stem cell transplant. Lee's sensitively presented study convincingly shows how, as a "psychosocial intervention using visual narrative in a therapeutic process," art therapy provides "symbolic distance for the patient to express difficult emotions... and to discover inner strengths and resilience."

The thesis provides compelling and affirmative answers to the research questions that shaped her inquiry: **"Can art therapy be effective with patients who are weakened and fatigued from disease and treatments? How can art improve the quality of hospitalization? What is the significance of art at the end of life?"** As Lee demonstrates, art therapy, when undertaken by a mindful and caring therapist, can provide the means through which powerful and complex emotions can be expressed in ways that exceed limitations inherent in language.

Lee begins her thesis by addressing issues and concerns specific to cancer care, noting their complexity and that the effective treatment of cancer patients calls for the integration of multiple disciplines and approaches. Pointing to literature on the trauma experienced upon receiving a cancer diagnosis and when undergoing treatment, she observes that a trauma-informed practice is an essential tool for therapists who work with cancer patients.

The review of literature is extensive and covers art therapy and the treatment of cancer patients and the use of art therapy with terminally ill clients. The review focuses on establishing best practices for therapists, and on the benefits of art therapy for patients (and patients' loved ones) who are dealing with pain and with coming to terms with the process of dying. Additionally, Lee's literature review addresses the issue of art objects as tangible legacies that offer a way for dying patients to leave behind pieces of themselves to commemorate their lives.

Lee's discussion of the single case study format as a qualitative research method demonstrates a clear understanding of the phenomenological approach to research. Lee also demonstrates her understanding of narrative inquiry involving collaboration between researchers and research participants as a research method. The thesis also provides a very good discussion of art therapy's application within the context of clinical neuroscience.

Lee has demonstrated a laudable capacity to be inspired by, and curious about, a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives. As she notes, it was through "repeated interactions" with diverse professionals, that she learned "to continually question my own assumptions and biases, to bracket previous knowledge and experiences, and to dissect the choices I made as a therapist".

Her summary discussion of the themes that emerged during 11 sessions with Mr L., her client, are clearly and effectively supported by examples that permit the reader to enter into some of the emotional aspects of the sessions. Particularly insightful is her discussion of how her approach to discussing art therapy with staff at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre differed significantly depending on the staff member's professional role, as are her discussions of how her own personality traits, biases and cultural upbringing influenced her own behavior with respect to dealing with other staff members.

Finally, Lee's conclusion is indicative of her careful and mature abilities as a therapist. As she tells us, although working with cancer patients presents art therapists with many challenges, those challenges are outweighed by the "opportunity to witness the remarkable strength of the human spirit, the will to survive and to live fully in the present".

**Best Major Project:** *Two Palettes, One Canvas: A Conversation about Art Therapy and Comic (Sequential) Art Through a Graphic Novel Journal* by Chantal Taylor

Chantal Taylor's paper reports on her **assessment of the efficacy of creating and exhibiting a graphic novel journal that chronicled her journey of healing from grief to inform viewers about the therapeutic benefits of combining art therapy with the 'transgressive format' of graphic novel journaling.** One of the major issues addressed in this paper was overcoming what Taylor identified as the negative reputation of comic art (childish entertainment) and instead highlighting its potential use in a therapeutic context.

The paper contains a review of Jungian psychology, narrative theory and the Life Story Model. It draws on these theoretical perspectives, along with heuristic inquiry as a method to frame the analysis presented in the paper. Taylor's paper makes an original contribution to art therapy literature. As Taylor points out, there are very few studies that address the use of comic art in therapeutic practice.

An important part of Taylor's project was to present her work in three public exhibitions. One outcome of this was that she was able to reassess her theoretical and methodological frameworks at the conclusion of the exhibits. This reassessment provided an opportunity to develop further insights into her audiences' accessibility to her emotional states through their viewing of her exhibited graphic novel journal. On the basis of viewers' feedback, Taylor concludes that her exhibited graphic novel journal was successful in communicating her emotional states to the viewing public. Positive feedback from exhibit viewers allowed Taylor to feel that her intention to 'prove that comic art has a place within the art therapy modality' was validated.

**Special Mention:** *National Member Survey of Brazilian Art Therapy Associations* by Marcela B. T. de Oliveira

Oliveira's thesis, **analyzing demographic and professional trends of registered art therapists in Brazil,** makes an important contribution to art therapy not only in Brazil, but world-wide. The thesis provides original and important insight into the demographic characteristics of professional art therapists and their clients, as well as the professional activities of art therapists in Brazil. This is a valuable study that can help to shape both the present and future of art therapy in Brazil.

**Special Mention:** *Art Images Created by Geriatric Rehabilitation Patients Provide an Understanding of Their Experiences of Quality of Life* by Teresa Petosa

Petosa's **phenomenological inquiry into art therapy and geriatric rehabilitation patients makes an important and original contribution to Quality of Life research.** Of the five QoL domains identified by the WHO, Environment and Social Relationship domains have been least studied, and it is precisely these domains that Petosa's research addresses. Her research findings are all the more important as the Western world faces a rapidly aging population, with increasing healthcare demands. ●

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#### Reference

Zafar, A. (2019, March 28). *Cancer patients treated for mental health conditions have greater risk of dying, study finds.* Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/cancer-patients-mental-health-study-1.5072439>

## Making Space: Art and Social Justice Advocacy with Dr. Anah

# A Call to Action: Social Justice Advocacy is Fundamental to Art Therapy and Counseling

BY CHIOMA ANAH



**Chioma Anah ATR,**  
LCPC-S, NCC, ACS  
Towson, MD

*Editor's note: We are grateful to Dr. Chioma Anah for sharing her insights and knowledge with us as a guest writer for this ongoing column. Dr. Anah is the founder and CEO of PerceptA Therapeutic and Training Center located in Towson, Maryland, USA. She has over 15 years of counseling and art therapy experience, specifically using art with clients as part of a healing approach and intervention to cultural and racial oppression. Dr. Anah's research interests are in social justice advocacy, racial micro-aggressions, psychology of racism, and art and creativity as tools for healing. She is a founding member and the first president (2018-2019) of Maryland Counselors for Social Justice (MCSJ), and a proud alumna of the Johns Hopkins University School of Education in Maryland. She can be reached on Twitter @DrChiomaAnah and on Instagram @chiomaanahart*

MY FELLOW ARTISTS, art therapists, counsellors, and activists: it gives me so much hope, honor and grace, to serve as a guest writer of this groundbreaking column *Making Space: Art and Social Justice Advocacy with Dr. Anah*, dedicated solely to issues of social justice advocacy in our profession and society. My deepest thanks to CATA Envisage for recognizing the relevance of social justice advocacy in our time and collaborating with me in an effort to further conversations on this topic.

It is no secret that the current ethos of the world has significantly spiked the anxiety levels of many people. The continued barrage of reports highlighting human rights violations is devastating and unbearable to watch. Sadly, many are feeling social trauma and psychological distress. In addition, there seems to be an ongoing attack on truth, diversity, human dignity and rights, which has disproportionately affected historically oppressed groups, many disenfranchised individuals, and communities living on the margins. The realities we live in today's society make social activism even more relevant to us as members of the human family, and particularly as counsellors and art therapists with social activism as a fundamental part of our professions. During these challenging times, there is a greater need for people in our professions to advocate with and support the empowerment of those who are most vulnerable. The two pieces of artwork presented here are reflections and social commentary on the importance of social justice advocacy. The first piece highlights the importance of embracing, celebrating and growing from our differences, and the second piece reflects the importance of equal access, opportunities, and power for ALL. >>>

*"In our work and in our living, we must recognize that difference is a reason for celebration and growth, rather than a reason for destruction."*

— Audre Lorde



**OTHER: Difference is a Reason for Celebration, not an Excuse for Destruction**, 2016, acrylic on paper, 11"x14"



**REAL CHANGE: Access, Opportunity, and Power**, 2016, mixed media on paper, 11"x14"

Albert Einstein said it best when he stated, "Striving for social justice is the most valuable thing to do in life." With this in mind, here is a **Call to Action** to all art therapists and counsellors towards their efforts in working to break down systemic barriers and making lasting differences in the lives of clients:

- The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is an important document for everyone, especially art therapists and counsellors, to read. Amongst many other agreements, it clearly articulates that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". These are principles to live by, lest we forget.
- As art therapists and counsellors, in establishing and maintaining successful counseling relationships with clients from diverse backgrounds and cultural context, **we should be aware of our own biases, assumptions, stereotypes and worldviews, as well as the worldviews and social justice needs of our clients**, in an effort to champion their rights, which are critical to their dignity and therapeutic change.
- Issues of social justice advocacy are important in art therapy and counselling because **our clients inherently**

**exist within social and cultural systems and contexts.**

We should work towards being socially conscious by becoming conversant with domestic/local and global issues, expand our knowledge base regarding different cultures, and work towards being free from bias. We are in positions to be the voice for those historically marginalized, and we should **strive to work from a social justice advocacy and empowerment perspective** during these times of uncertainty and high anxiety. Addressing the clients' experiences of oppression, powerlessness, and marginalization, and offering coping resources to challenge inequities to help our clients strive towards healing are fundamental.

- Lastly, we should be more active, more vocal, and join organizations that focus on human rights and social justice advocacy causes. **Keep using your art and voice** to speak out against injustices and effect real change.

To all my fellow social justice advocates out there, your efforts matter. Continue to show up, and press on, even through challenges. I hope that this column serves as the beginning of a soul-expanding space for all to gather, listen, connect, and strive to make the world a better place. ●



# Together, We Reach for Aliveness

## Miniatures, Meaning, and Community

BY MELODIE NG



**Melodie Ng** RP, DTATI  
Toronto, ON

CENTRE ISLAND. Chess boards. Swamps and bogs. One's own room after being homeless for a time. An art studio, complete with an easel and a mess of paints.

It's a sunny summer day, and in the midst of a dense downtown cacophony of jackhammering, trucks rumbling and occasional siren scream, a small but mighty group of people gather in a quiet backyard to make art. Tiny wooden shapes, bright snippets of Japanese paper, pieces of clay, little trinkets culled from ornaments and Dollarama. Ruth invites us to each take a turn to share about our favourite place in Toronto. We listen to each other and the diverse loves that we have for well-known and unknown corners of this city. Then we set about filling in booklets that invite us to flesh out the stories behind our favourite places. We poke through the supplies and begin building

our miniatures. Two hours fly by, our creativity wrapped in an oasis of green trees and summer haze.

Sanctuary is a church and non-profit organization in downtown Toronto. Located on a street that has recently sprouted towering condos, the sturdy brick building has provided a place of gathering and healing for many who have no access to the burgeoning wealth. Gathering takes place in a variety of ways: smaller gatherings of the weekly open studio and women's group, larger ones of the drop-in meals and church service. We gather to dance and celebrate, munch on harvest corn and mark holidays. There are difficult but necessary gatherings of ritual and remembrance when we come together to grieve our friends who have died. >>>



**Previous page:** Miniature Workshop took place over four days in Sanctuary's backyard, connecting through art-making and storytelling.

**Left: Froggie's miniature of her favourite place:** anywhere frogs and toads live.

*People were invited to come outside to create a miniature of their favourite place. Magic happened. There is something absolutely delightful about working at the miniature scale. We dropped down into focused and whimsical play, creating tiny worlds that had specific meaning for each of us.*

At Sanctuary, we strive to be a place of welcome, particularly for those in our city who experience poverty and homelessness. I've been involved in this community for a decade and half, 11 of those years on staff as artist-in-residence and art therapist. With the community, I've engaged with art in different ways: structured art therapy groups, community art projects, Arts Extravaganza shows, and our mainstay: open art studio. I'd like to share with you some reflections on a special project that we embarked on last summer.

My co-worker Lyf Stolte (actor-in-residence) and I wanted to combine our various passions: storytelling, photography, and community building through art-making. We were intrigued by the question: "What's your favourite place in the city?" It was a gentle way to open up conversation about places of significance, treasured memories, and people's values. Oh, and it was a lot of fun! (Sometimes we forget that fun can be had in our work.) We interviewed those willing to collaborate and I then photographed portraits of participants in their favourite places. We compiled 14 stories and portraits into a book, titled *The Book of Places*.

But we weren't done yet with this theme of favourite places. Ruth Howard, Jamie-lee Oshkabewisens and Adrienne Marcus Raja from *Jumblies Theatre* partnered with us that summer, hosting a series of Miniatures Workshops in our backyard. During our drop-ins, people were invited to come outside to create a miniature of their favourite place. Magic happened. There is something absolutely delightful about working at the miniature scale. We dropped down into focused and whimsical play, creating tiny worlds that had specific meaning for each of us.

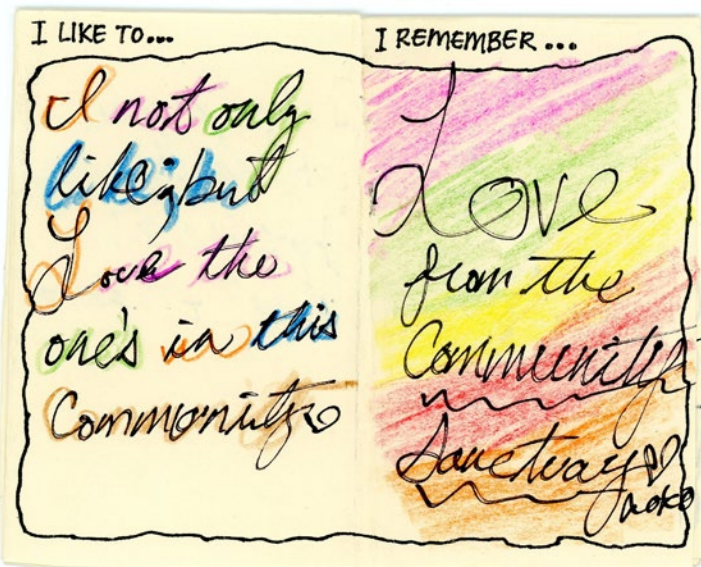
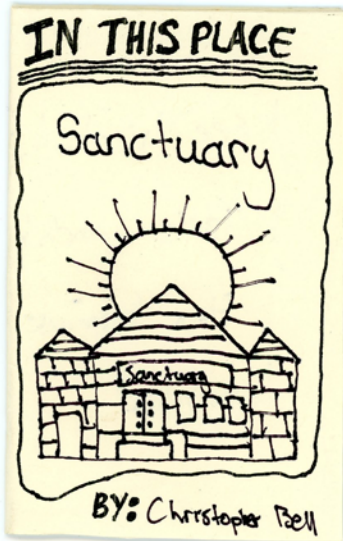
In my work at Sanctuary, I've often wondered about the value of art-making and fostering spaces for creativity, in light of the realities that our community faces. People are struggling with the basics of survival: food, shelter, and health care needs that are often critical. It can be hard to see what is the place of the arts when the situation is so dire. And yet, the arts provide a way for so much goodness to seep through. Connection. Expression. Beauty. Sharing of knowledge and skills. Acknowledgment in community. Fostering a creative identity. Space and time to experience life that's not just about survival. The pure enjoyment of making things.

Allan Wade (1997) asserts, "...alongside each history of violence and oppression, there runs a parallel history of prudent, creative, and determined resistance" (p. 23). At Sanctuary, a colourful, vibrant thread that runs through our history of resistance is that of the arts.

Writing about her work in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, Sabine Silberberg (2007) identifies community building as a "crucial therapeutic factor" (p. 31). She shares about her own participation in creating and connecting through art, and the need for flexibility: "Expressive arts therapies emerged to show adaptability to circumstance, and to join in the opportunity to, just as harm reduction philosophy proposes, meet people where they are... The expressive arts have been a flexible tool to reach and join, to make an offer of play" (p. 32).

These reflections connect with my own participation in community building and art-making over the years at Sanctuary. Practicality dictates that creative responses and invitations be flexible – open to the erratic flow of people who are struggling to survive from day to day. The Miniatures Workshops provided a space of curiosity, where people could look over others' shoulders and step in and out of the creative zone freely.

Sanctuary's backyard is a complicated space. On some hot, angry summer days, it's a reality that tensions boil over, and substances can amplify aggressive behaviour. Ideally we'd like our backyard to be a place of peace and safety for those who experience harassment and exclusion from broader society. When someone is on the margins of society—when they are oppressed >>>



**Miniature booklets:** Examples of the booklets that were created during the Miniatures Workshops. These booklets invited us to record sights, sounds and memories.

by soaring rental rates and lack of affordable housing—poverty limits what spaces you can access and inhabit with a sense of belonging. As a woman who has grown up middle class, I've never experienced this exclusion and regularly take for granted how many options I have for places to live, eat, rest and fill my leisure time. But for many in our community, it is common to be pushed out of city parks and public spaces, whether explicitly by security or law enforcement, or implicitly by the social class and income required to belong. Acts of exclusion are repeatedly experienced until the only places left to belong is a sidewalk grate or a back alley hidden

*It can be hard to see what is the place of the arts when the situation is so dire. And yet, the arts provide a way for so much goodness to seep through. Connection. Expression. Beauty. Sharing of knowledge and skills. Acknowledgment in community. Fostering a creative identity. Space and time to experience life that's not just about survival.*

from view. We struggle alongside our community as the ongoing experience of being pushed out manifests into self-harm, fistfights and overdoses. In communities like ours, hope is difficult to hold onto. Reynolds (2009) identifies burnout amongst counsellors in the Downtown Eastside as a result of systemic violence. She determines that sustainability must be a collective practice. At Sanctuary, our backyard is a microcosm of the challenges within and without our community. Reflecting on the Miniatures Workshops and how we communally transformed our backyard into a pocket of creativity, I see the project as our collective way of engaging in “small acts of living” (Wade, 1997, p. 32).

Resisting crushing circumstances in BC, Reynolds (2009) writes, “For me, sustainability refers to an ongoing aliveness, a genuine connectedness with people, and a presence of spirit... How can we be connected with this aliveness” (p. 6)? Silberberg (2007) shares her own encounters with aliveness: “What pulled me out of my own ruins many times were the unexpected encounters with what I experienced as beautiful. Here we are in this environment, surrounded by chaos, suffering, loss of sensuality or escape from sensory receptivity, and certain degrees of “sense-lessness”... Suddenly harmonica notes penetrated the soundscape of restlessness, a paragraph read out loud in the writing group makes everyone go quiet, and next to the food-line, the place where most fights occur in the Centre, some vibrant paintings juxtapose the tension (p. 32)”. >>>

I've been invited along on a journey calling for creative persistence. Together, we reach for aliveness. It is as simple as choosing a small bird to hot glue onto a sculpture, and as complex as people who have experienced terrible violence in their lives taking a few hours for themselves to make something beautiful... In the face of isolation, oppression and exclusion, we gather in the backyard and choose relationship, creativity and community.



**Miniature:** Richard's favourite place is the Canadian National Exhibition

Through the Miniatures Workshops and *The Book of Places*, I've experienced this profound collective stance of resistance. To be present as witness and co-creator alongside those who walk in the door at Sanctuary or wander into our backyard and reach into that basket of supplies, I've been invited along on a journey calling for creative persistence. Together, we reach for aliveness. It is as simple as choosing a small bird to hot glue onto a sculpture, and as complex as people who have experienced terrible violence in their lives taking a few hours for themselves to make something beautiful. We use our hands to colour, write, glue, and piece together images of places that matter to us. In the face of isolation, oppression and exclusion, we gather in the backyard and choose relationship, creativity and community.

On the last day of the Miniatures Workshops, we display our mini-worlds and celebrate with live music and food. Ruth joyfully guides us through the afternoon, inviting us to explore all the creations and speak aloud words from the stories that drew us together. The gathering is animated; indeed, full of aliveness. I couldn't sum it up in any better way than Ruth Howard (2011) already expressed: "Perhaps community arts, at its best, is about making what you're for, in the face of what you're against" (p. 8).

**Melodie Ng** is a graduate of the Toronto Art Therapy Institute. She is interested in how community, the arts, and justice can intersect in creative ways. Melodie has been part of the Sanctuary community for 15 years and is grateful for the many people who have befriended her there. She recently left the staff team and will be pursuing new directions in art-making, spirituality and ecology. To learn more about *The Book of Places*, visit: <http://sanctuarytoronto.ca/book-of-places/> ●

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# Art Therapy & Immigration

BY MARCELA BOECHAT



**Marcela Boechat**  
Toronto, ON

TORONTO IS OFTEN recognized as one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with over 230 different nationalities living within Ontario's capital city.

I came from Brazil to Toronto in 2015 to pursue my studies in art therapy. At the time I did not know much about all that this city

holds and projects into each person who decides to live here, whether they were born on this land or not.

Many recent studies explore the grief that many immigrants experience when they leave their original land. There is a lot to talk about creating and deconstructing experiences, but I did not foresee the portal that I chose to go through when I applied to the Toronto Art Therapy Institute.

Some say that existing within a new language brings new values and ideals that affect the solidification of one's identity. Imagine the experience of studying art therapy and working on self-discovery in another language.

During my studies at the Toronto Art Therapy Institute I proposed studying cultural identity and its transformations in the process of immigration. More precisely I wanted to shout to the world the AMAZING journey I was undertaking in this very specific situation.

Before Canada I had lived in India, the United States and Germany, but nothing compares to the

challenges of living in this hub of people that came from all around the globe to find a new flow in their lives. It is quite amazing to just take a moment and look at my surroundings in public transportation, supermarkets and streets.

A person can find books on mental health and multi-ethnic societies, loss of identity and trauma, immigration anxiety and so much more, but the art therapy that enabled immigrant Marcela to explore multi-layers of this reality will be forever with my practice and me.

In recent years I was working with different groups of women: women from different parts of the globe fleeing violence in their home countries, dealing with depression and immigration, loss, anxiety and low self-esteem. I have witnessed art therapy in its many different forms as a cross-cultural practice that promoted an anti-oppressive and inclusive practice, giving room to so many different levels and spheres of new life.

I arrived at Toronto Pearson Airport in September 2015 with two suitcases and a husband. I am now in my room at Dundas and Roncesvalles decorated with so many images made during my art therapy experiential classes, while I was unconsciously getting ready for a divorce and welcoming the power of being at home in the body. As an international student I still have the two suitcases on hold until I have navigated all the processes towards residence.

Again, it is not easy, but I see extreme beauty in this entire adventurous challenge. I invite you to welcome impermanence in your lives and to support it with a mindful art therapy practice. It can be quite extraordinary! ●



# How to Use Your Camera to Re-focus Yourself toward Happiness

BY DAVID BOUDREAU



**David Boudreau**  
MA, MSW  
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thing-and-expect-something-different pattern and actually stumbled on happiness by doing something different. It was a watershed moment but I really wouldn't recognize the full impact for months down the road.

Here's what happened.

I was at the desk of my home office, struggling to stay focused on a project with a deadline while the clock was ticking away reminding me of other time-sensitive priorities. I was quickly getting more stressed, aware that as my stress levels were increasing, my brain-power resources were heading in the other direction. Even though it was still early in the day, I felt brain-weary.

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE. That mid-afternoon energy slump or that low mood day. Maybe we're not getting anywhere with a work project or maybe we find ourselves worrying or ruminating about something and can't seem to let it go.

I'm certainly no stranger to that feeling.

I'm not exactly sure how or why this happened on one particular sunny autumn day, but I managed to change my usual do-the-same-

However, rather than my usual response of non-compassionately forcing myself to buckle down and plough through my low mood and low energy, I pushed myself away from the desk, grabbed my phone and jacket, and headed out the door.

I had no idea what I was going to do. My brain was simply barking out to me, "Get out of the house and get out of your head," although another voice was protesting, "You don't have time for this." As my feet touched down on the sidewalk of my street, I compromised and decided that I'd get out of the house and hopefully out of my head for 10 to 15 minutes with a walk around the block. Surely that would appease both of my needs.

I had the sense that this was an experiment. That was what I was telling myself. If getting out of the house and walking for 10-15 minutes did nothing for me, I would cross that off of my imagined list of stress busters.

I had learned, but hadn't really successfully practiced, the idea of taking a break from high brain-drain activities and interrupting self-talk by doing something different. Also, I expected the physical activity of going for a walk to give me a mood lift and maybe even relieve some of the anxiety and stress.

I didn't want to walk around the block and continue to ruminate about my project and my other unmet priorities on the horizon. Instead, I took out my mobile phone and turned on the camera. I must have been channeling my inner therapist because >>>



*I was re-discovering my world with what the Zen folks might call “beginner’s mind,” and it was exhilarating! Using the camera to focus my awareness was kind of like a guided mindfulness activity. Instead of focusing on my breath or sounds or sensations, I was focusing on the sights around me.*

I found myself giving myself another directive: “On this walk, find three things of beauty or three things that give you a sense of joy and take photos of them.”

Suddenly, I found myself snapping photos of the wonderful mature trees in the neighbourhood, flowers, even interesting garbage that people had left curbside. And I was also zooming in and out, taking photos of interesting colors, patterns, and textures all around me. I certainly wasn’t an artist or a photographer but once I got behind the camera, I felt like I was. Plus, I saw my neighborhood in a brand new way despite having lived there for twenty years!

I was re-discovering my world with what the Zen folks might call “beginner’s mind,” and it was exhilarating! Using the camera to focus my awareness was kind of like a guided mindfulness activity. Instead of focusing on my breath or sounds or sensations, I was focusing on the sights around me. And specifically, I was focusing on the sights around me that would normally go unseen during my usual short purposeful walks to the car or mailbox.

And of course, the physical exercise and fresh air from my walk further enhanced my happiness boost.

In the coming weeks and months, I persisted with my happiness walks and experimented further. I explored other streets, went on hiking trails, took more time when I could, and tried to

balance simply being present during these walks with my other self-directive of re-focusing my mind on the beauty around me.

And the good feelings didn’t just stop there.

I re-experienced the positive feelings from my photo walks later as I scrolled through the photo gallery on my phone. Looking at the photo captures, or “catch of the day” photos, as I came to refer to them, I was again able to re-experience a sense of joy, wonder, and positive energy. I was savoring these unexpected images of my neighborhood and the world around me, while also delighting in my newfound creativity.

And there was more to come.

By coincidence, my sister introduced me to some fairly simple and relatively straightforward photo-editing apps available on my mobile phone. I was instantly hooked!

Immediately, I could see the kaleidoscopic possibilities of further enjoying my photos by transforming them—changing the colors, re-shaping the images, and adding painterly effects.

Again, in the spirit of play, I began to experiment with making pleasing alternate versions of my original photos. I often found many different ways to see my original image. I was amazed to see that some of the transformed images were quite abstract compared to the original photo that I started with. This was fun!

The photo editing and the resulting feelings of

creativity, joy, and accomplishment brought me to a level of happiness that I couldn’t have imagined that first day when I hit the sidewalk looking for beauty in a 10 to 15 minute walk around the block with my camera phone.

When I started to share some of these images with family, friends, and colleagues and eventually post some of them to social media sites, I further enjoyed the feelings that emanated from the process of taking and transforming these photos. Sometimes other people were enjoying them as well, and I hoped in some small way that I was sparking a little joy and beauty in their day.

So this is what I learned that might be helpful to others.

Since a majority of us have a mobile phone within reach, re-creating my happiness walks and/or transforming these photos might prove to be at least an interesting experiment. I’ve learned that beauty and joy are really all around us but usually in those small, unnoticed, or seemingly unremarkable aspects of our everyday life. Given the brain’s wired-in insistence on focusing on the negative, happiness walks with the use of cameras can be a powerful way of re-focusing your mind, transforming your experience and re-orienting you towards happiness.

*Here’s how to do it:*

1. Get outside (if possible), although you can do this indoors if circumstances like extreme weather make a walk impossible. >>>

*I've learned that beauty and joy are really all around us but usually in those small, unnoticed, or seemingly unremarkable aspects of our everyday life... happiness walks with the use of cameras can be a powerful way of re-focusing your mind, transforming your experience and re-orienting you towards happiness.*



2. Grab your camera or camera phone. Focus your mind on looking for beauty, colour, and patterns. Imagine that you're an artist or photographer. Notice what you wouldn't usually notice.
3. Strive to be as physically present during your mindful walk as possible. In addition to the scenery, notice your breathing, the sounds around you, and the sensations and physical benefits of the movement and exercise during your walk.
4. Decide if you want to put a time limit on your walk or if you have the luxury of taking more time for yourself. Give yourself a direction or focus to these walks, such as finding three beautiful or interesting things on your walk, three red objects, etc. You can experiment with the numbers or the directive. Too few things to capture may end up in more mind-wandering, but too many things may create stress.
5. Remember to enjoy your photos in your photo gallery when you're done. Try to be mindful of your inner critic trying to evaluate or judge the artistic merit of the photos. Instead, try to connect with your experience of discovering the subject of that photo and the beauty or joy that it evokes for you.
6. If you're so inclined and have time later, you may want to download some photo editing apps and experiment with cropping or adjusting the photos with colors or special effects. Remember that you are not trying to create the perfect photo or work of art; you are experimenting, playing, and being creative with that photo.
7. Your photo gallery is a living and portable happiness booster for you. Check it often to savor those happiness walks and enjoy the artistic transformations of those images that you've created.

**David Boudreau** is an adjunct lecturer at the Toronto Art Therapy Institute for the course *Social and Cultural Issues in Art Therapy*. ●



## Mindfulness Practice: A Therapists' Best Friend

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BY MARIA ANDREEVA



**Maria Andreeva**  
Hon BA Psych, DTATI  
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THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE are gaining vast empirical evidence, and the list of the conditions where mindfulness can offer measurable positive results is growing: depression (Teasdale et al., 2000), anxiety (Baer, 2003), pain management (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1987) are just a few of many. Mindfulness has been increasingly implemented in private as well as clinical settings (McKay, Wood & Brantley, 2007). More and more therapists are seeking training in mindfulness and for good reasons.

Mindfulness is instrumental in developing an attuned relational presence in psychotherapy, it may aid the therapists in safely bringing more of their genuine selves into the therapeutic space and at the same time in building the therapeutic relational space of acceptance and non-judgment. Further, teaching mindfulness to clients may have a profound effect on their psychological flexibility, adaptability, empathy and a sense of well-being.

### **Mindfulness can help us be better therapists**

“The client-therapist relationship is the key determinant in the positive therapeutic outcome and is rooted in the therapist’s attuned self-presence as well as presence of the client” (Thompson, 2018). What constitutes therapeutic presence and how is mindfulness helpful?

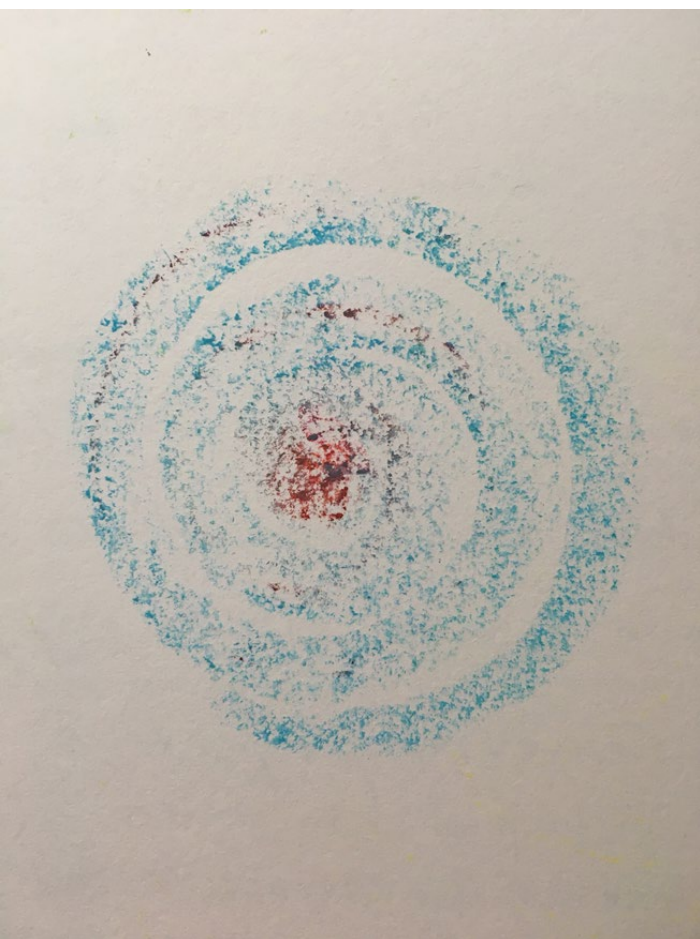
Geller and Greenberg (2012) define therapeutic presence as the therapist’s internal and interpersonal stance involving the therapist’s sensory, emotional and cognitive attention to themselves and the client in the present moment. This definition has a lot in common with the definition of mindfulness: “the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and actions – in the present moment – without judging or criticizing yourself or your experience” (McKay, Wood & Brantley, 2007, p. 64). The difference is that in mindfulness there is no judgment or criticizing of self or experience.

I suggest that, apart from the obvious enhancement in the ability to be aware in the present moment, it is the practice of non-judgment that offers potential enhancement to the attuned therapeutic presence. Not judging and not criticizing does not mean being indifferent, it means accepting something as it is, seeing it as a whole, without rejecting any part of it. I believe it is this stance of acceptance that is the key determinant of effective therapeutic presence. I believe we all can benefit from a little more acceptance, but in a therapeutic setting, it is the foundation upon which the practice of letting be and the possibility of change grows. >>>

**Previous page: Enzo Circle with bingo dabber, 2018.**

**Left, top: An art response to Rumis’ poem The Guest House**—a reflection on how all emotions we experience are to be welcomed and treated with respect and equanimity, as they may carry lessons, wisdom and blessings.

**Left, below: mindful exploration of oil pastel, 2019.**





**Above images: Mindful exploration of oil pastels, 2019.**

*Not judging and not criticizing does not mean being indifferent, it means accepting something as it is, seeing it as a whole, without rejecting any part of it. I believe it is this stance of acceptance that is the key determinant of effective therapeutic presence.*

As a therapist practices mindfulness, their self-acceptance grows, and this in turn enables them to bring more of their genuine self into the therapy space. Through the prism of post-modern theories of psychotherapy this can be seen as a way to a better therapeutic relationship. Being fully present in the therapeutic space allows us, as therapists, to be better attuned to our own emotions and thoughts in response to what the client brings into therapy. Being mindful also allows us to be able to better process our emotions and thoughts, thus decreasing the risks of unprocessed vicarious traumas, unrecognized counter-transferences, and burn-out. Robbins (1998) writes how his therapeutic stance evolved naturally over time from keeping certain more personal aspects of himself outside of the therapeutic space to being fully and genuinely present. Robbins suggests that this fuller presence allows therapists to use more of their creative energy, and “with this full engagement with our patients, therapy has far more energy, play and spirit” (p. 11).

By clearing their own mental chatter and by increasing their own awareness through mindfulness therapists are able to develop more attuned therapeutic presence. Through mindfulness, self-judgment and judgment in general decrease and therefore the therapist is able to be more receptive to themselves and to the client, at the same time offering an atmosphere where the client feels more accepted and is therefore able to explore their own issues more freely and is able to let go of rigid thoughts more easily.

#### **Why teach mindfulness to clients?**

Most of the empirical research has been focusing on the benefits of mindfulness practice for individuals. At this point, a brief scan of a database of peer-reviewed journals will offer articles about the positive effects of mindfulness in groups, in individual practice, and in a multitude of populations. There is now a neuroscientific base of research showing how practice of mindfulness is able to re-wire our brain and offer measurable positive effects (Siegel, 2009; Ives-Deliperi, Solms, Meintjes, 2011; Kong, Wang, Sing & Liu, 2016). >>>



Above: *Mindfulness*, 2016.

*There is a beautiful synergy between art and mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to be present to our creative flow and art invites us to connect deeper to ourselves.*

I find it fascinating that mindfulness has been praised and practiced for thousands of years and passed on through religious teachings and now it is finding its way into non-secular main-stream use and there is growing scientific evidence of its effectiveness. So why should an art therapist consider implementing teaching mindfulness to their clients in their practice?

There is a deep connection between art-making and mindfulness. So many artists have shared that their artistic energy flows best when they are in the moment, in the flow, where their ordinary self and their inner narrative quiets down or steps aside. There are art forms that are based entirely on mindful presence, such as in Zen Buddhism—the art of monochrome ink painting and the art of poetic word is based on deep mindful presence.

There is a beautiful synergy between art and mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to be present to our creative flow and art invites us to connect deeper to ourselves. Through this presence and deeper connection to themselves, clients gain fresher, wider perspective on their thoughts, emotions and behaviours and therefore gain more capacity to be psychologically flexible, to adapt, to empathize and to gain a sense of well-being.

### Art therapy and mindfulness

Art therapy offers a unique opportunity to implement mindfulness into the therapeutic setting and is of particular value when mindfulness is introduced in a relaxed and non-intimidating way.

In art therapy individuals are able to engage the senses (tactile, visual, auditory and even olfactory) in the present moment through mindful exploration of the art materials and art

making. Through gentle guidance clients may practice awareness of the immediate experience by simply paying attention to the senses in the process of exploring the materials or making art. The practice of acceptance and non-judgment can be explored through facilitating dialogues between the client and the artwork. Emotional awareness can be explored through creating art representations of an emotion, and many other directives. Equally, thought awareness and more advanced mindfulness skills can be introduced through the medium of art-making, offering a multi-sensory learning environment, which can ensure deeper understanding and better retention.

### Conclusion

Drawing both from the empirical evidence as well as from personal experience of practicing and teaching mindfulness, I would like to say that it is certainly worthwhile for anyone working with other sentient beings to seriously consider implementing mindfulness practice into their life, and introducing it to their clients. By learning to be more aware and present with ourselves we learn to be more present and attuned to others. By learning to release judgments and criticism we learn to let go more easily and to live happier lives as a result.

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BY COLM HOGAN

## The Efficacy of **Hospital Libraries as Healing Centers** through Non-Conventional Therapy Programming



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RECENT TECHNO-ECONOMIC PARADIGM SHIFTS have admittedly forced conventional public libraries to adapt and re-define themselves in a brave new world for survival. In order for a hospital library to thrive in a medical setting and remain relevant as a cultural hub, a multi-pronged system of non-conventional programs catering to individual client needs as diverse as an entire hospital's population is essential. If applied appropriately, a library may in fact successfully move beyond being an centre of information and transform into a healing center for mental health and substance use clients.

At the Queen Street West campus of Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) library, located on the ground floor in the Southern end of the sprawling complex, something interesting is happening. At first glance, the large bright room, illuminated by wide windows stretching out and facing west, appears as any other small library might. Books of various sizes fill the shelves on most walls from top to bottom. Mystery, fiction, sci-fi, periodicals, a robust DVD section sits midway. But at one of the several tables that splits the room down the middle, a number of people are sitting together, drawing quietly.

This is the expressive arts component of the library. It is largely informal, consisting of a number of tables featuring art and photography books for inspiration and reference. There are also colouring books, sketch pads, stacks of watercolour paper, brushes and coloured pencils. There are no organized workshops; the program is strictly intended as a base for art-making of any kind, like a community art hive. Although there are facilitators present, they function only as guides and not instructors. Some clients draw abstract, free associative art. Others paint or sketch figures or landscapes. Still others fervently fill in colouring books. >>>

**Above: CAMH library exterior.** ©CAMH. Used with permission.

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**Peacock, 2018.** ©Colm Hogan. Used with permission of artist.

A 2009 study on understanding how art-making can facilitate mental health recovery found “rich detailed accounts of the role of art making in psychosocial rehabilitation services from the perspective of art making facilitators. The data describe how art making offers an innovative approach to recovery that is self-empowering and benefits not only individual recovery, but enhances greater connection with others” (Van Lith, et al., 2009).

Mixed in with drawing-based expressive arts is a creative writing component on offer for those more comfortable with the written word. A client is supported to document her life story with the intention of publishing. Employing the use of expressive writing and sharing stories is therapeutic and often cathartic for many.

Several randomized control trial studies show that written accounts of traumatic events have led to statistically significant improvements in physical health, reduced doctor visits and better immune system functions. It also increases overall health and wellness (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). In Junghaenel et al. (2008), a study with fibromyalgia patients reported that through the use of expressive writing patients found improvements with their psychological well-being, and reduction in pain and fatigue. Pennebaker (1997), a leading researcher on journaling proposes that writing about difficult experiences can produce long term positive effects in both mood and health.

On a shelf closer to the rear end of the room, there is also an impressive array of board games on hand, along with a chess set and several decks of cards. They offer a chance for clients to interact with one another, sometimes along with a facilitator or two. The games help with concentration and offer recreational opportunities. The use of board games has been proven to facilitate conditional logic, distributed processing and algorithm building (Berland & Lee, 2011).

A recent addition to the CAMH library is a new pet therapy program. Each week at a regular scheduled time, a dog handler ushers in her mini black Labrador onto the premises. Clients and staff members interact with the dog directly. This is particularly significant for clients who may have trouble interacting with people on a day-to-day basis but are less intimidated and more comfortable approaching a completely judgement-free, non-biased canine. Often a client will approach the dog first. The handler will then engage the client, telling him or her about the dog, its history and background. The handler will then instruct and encourage the client on how best to interact with the dog.

This process helps empower to interact with others and forge new relationships. The pet therapy segment is also successful for attracting people into the library who might not otherwise enter its premises. In fact, this program is proving as popular for both the staff members and clients of CAMH. Pet therapy programs have been shown to produce a wide array of health benefits

for humans including lowered blood pressure, decreased loneliness, reduced risk of cardiac problems, increased social interaction, higher levels of relaxation and improved mood among its users (Brodie, et al., 1998).

All of these non-conventional therapies offered at the CAMH library have had remarkable effects on patients and staff. The transformative nature is apparent in how a client or staff member is greeted the first time they enter the door. In a world that is often cold or dismissive, a simple gesture of a greeting might well be the first time a client had been addressed that day by a member of his or her own community. For someone who might potentially be homeless or otherwise marginalized, a simple hello or goodbye can go a long way.

There are other small, almost imperceptible differences between a community library and CAMH's. A small portable radio on the main desk plays music. In a more traditional library setting where the rule is for everyone to be silent, the music at the CAMH library is meant to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Music is a social experience. Music therapy has been proven to decrease anxiety and restore emotional well being. It has also proven that it can alleviate chronic pain (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

Puzzles are also a very popular component to the library. On any given day, a large puzzle (often approximately 1000 pieces) is on the go at a table in the center of the library. >>>

In an otherwise nondescript concrete building in the middle of Toronto's downtown west neighborhood with the prophetic words, "I've Got Sunshine on A Cloudy Day" scrawled below the roof, the library's non-conventional therapeutic components make available safe, reliable links to the wider community.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11:00AM - 12:00PM	Cover Letter and Resume Building	Board Games and Puzzles	Board Games and Puzzles	Basic Computer Skills	Expressive Arts
12:00PM - 1:00PM	Pet Therapy with Cherry	Pet Therapy with Casey	Creative Arts	Pet Therapy with Ruby	Pet Therapy with Jackson
1:00PM - 2:00PM	Pet Therapy with Daisy	Pet Therapy with Dickens	Pet Therapy with Odie 1:30 - 2:30PM	Drama and Theatre Art	Board Games and Puzzles
2:00PM - 3:00PM	Board Games and Puzzles	Knitting 1:00 - 3:00PM	Board Games and Puzzles	Board Games and Puzzles	Board Games and Puzzles

CAMH library schedule, February, 2019.  
©CAMH. Used with permission.

It offers an important opportunity for anyone walking by to join in at any point. Puzzle work also gives people opportunity to interact with one another. The use of jigsaw puzzles is an affordable, motivating recreational activity that can be done alone or with others. These parameters helps to improve visuospatial functioning (Fissler et.al, 2017).

Like the books that line the walls, free for patients to borrow, there are also more conventional library features that the CAMH library offers. Two computers at individual desks with plug-in headphones are free for clients to use for research or recreational purposes. A separate media room offers a gaming system and DVD player for movie watching.

### Summary

While core aspects of CAMH's framework are essential to assist in maintaining and restoring clients' mental health and addiction needs in terms of conventional modalities such as medication and cognitive behavioural therapies, the library offers a crucial platform for clients and staff to take a quiet break for self-care, heal through self-expression, interact with each other and with animals. All of which can often initiate not just an elevation in mood, reduction in anxiety or chronic pain and improved physical and cognitive function, but often also facilitate a restorative feeling of self-worth and connection to the wider world around them.

Studies have linked marginalized communities with loneliness. Further to this, certain studies have linked loneliness as being as harmful as cigarette smoking or obesity (Holt-Lunstad, 2010). Cultural hubs like libraries are much more than institutions with diverse recreational programming. In an otherwise nondescript concrete building in the middle of Toronto's downtown west neighborhood with the prophetic words, "I've

Got Sunshine on A Cloudy Day" scrawled below the roof, the library's non-conventional therapeutic components make available safe, reliable links to the wider community, which might in fact be the most important value that it offers.

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**Colm Hogan** is a certified Therapeutic Arts Practitioner who studied with the Canadian International Institute of Art Therapy. His current practice at the CAMH library includes working with the Forensic Secured Unit under the Clinical Volunteer Program. Colm is also a documentary filmmaker. He has authored several books and edits an arts and culture blog. He lives and works in Toronto, ON. ●

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# CANADIAN ART THERAPY ASSOCIATION (CATA)

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We are the Canadian voice of art therapy. We bring together art therapists to raise standards and advance the profession.

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*Bringing together art therapists*

1. Network and connect members
2. Host an annual national convention
3. Support the creation of provincial chapters
4. Sponsor regional events and workshops

*Raising standards and advancing the profession*

1. Uphold ethical standards for professional accreditation and designation for art therapists
2. Encourage educational standards for art therapists
3. Publish a tri-annual online magazine and a biannual journal
4. Support and encourage scientific and arts-based research
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