**Public Relations: Art Therapy Pedagogy Out of Bounds**

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**Abstract**

Art therapy pedagogy associated with the Art Hives network at Concordia University (Montréal, Quebec) and cultural practicums at Ulster University (Belfast, Northern Ireland) share in common a movement to develop learning studios that encourage public relations—unscripted relational encounters with activists, artists, allied professionals and social practitioners that inform art therapy practice. The curriculum is composed through collaborations, with the art therapy educator becoming the curator of an educational assemblage that is beyond the boundaries of the university itself. This is pedagogy as civic practice, where knowledge parameters of the art therapy profession are transgressed and moved, as a choreography that extends beyond boundaries of habitual learning. This article encourages art therapy educators to devise multicentered learning studios (in public places) that support personal and social concerns. In this context art therapy education is constructed as a counterpoint to academic introversion. The proposal here is to mobilize art therapy education as an activist informed reciprocation of ideas, actions, and resources.

**Art Therapy Educator as Curator: Making a Scene in Public**

Art therapy curriculums are subject to regulation and assessment that examine content, outcomes, and professional requirements. The curriculum is informed by standards of proficiency that exert guidelines for educational achievements and consistency. And yet, art therapy’s relevance as a profession must surely also be informed by educational practices that include cultures, politics and social movements—pedagogy that occurs within the midst of civic life. In this regard, public practice art therapy is linked to community activated open studios as forms of art therapy education, where pedagogy is an encounter with society in the making (Timm-Bottos, 2017). Public practice art therapy calls for the creation of enabling spaces in which communities can develop their own solutions to tackle the challenges of our times. This is teaching out of bounds, where the artistry of curriculum is in the composition of encounters with ecologies of cultures, that take art therapy out of doors and into the arena of collaborative teaching. Here knowledge is debated and infused with contemporary art practices performed within society itself as an educational arena. The need for a culturally sensitive and responsive art therapy curriculum within academic institutions involves awareness, self-reflection, and knowledge of clients’ worldviews (Association des art-thérapeutes du Québec, 2019). According to Watzlawick (1980), individuals can modify their viewpoint of the world only after they have created a clear image of their actual perspective. The social agenda of art therapy teaching can encourage trainees to contribute to causes that reflect personal concerns. The expertise of art therapy students in the areas of art making, social practice, therapeutic interventions and interdisciplinary disciplines increases their involvement in collaborative teaching. Pedagogy requires a dynamic composition, the artistry of assembling many educational voices to enhance art therapy practice and relevance within a complex society. This is art therapy for active citizenship. It is directed towards concrete outcomes that impact upon inequitable social conditions. As allied educators art therapy students can energize a curriculum with collegial dialogue, innovations with materials, and the motivation to be influencers within the profession and beyond.

Working within the context of society through civic engagements and co-leadership, facilitates the potential for social activism within the art therapy curriculum. Art therapy learners can find a sense of identity and continuity through bringing together disparate aspects of selfhood into a cohesive subjectivity informed by multiple learning influences (McAdams, 2013). To promote civic responsibility art therapy education can involve unscripted encounters with off campus educational providers working in arts venues, cultural centers, outdoor environments and places where communities gather. This necessitates the contributions and expertise of cultural activists—artists, makers, engagement practitioners, and social visionaries who “model artistic approaches to learning” (Moon & Hoffman, 2014, p. 173). The versatility and portability of the art therapy curriculum should also be considered within multiple locations of expertise. Influenced by the portable studio (Kalmanowitz & Lloyd 1997; Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2011) this method of teaching is transportable and variable according to the characteristics of venues and the social agendas of collaborators. The art therapy educator is challenged to extend their own breadth of knowledge in accordance with the expertise of cultural and socially engaged partners. Art therapy pedagogy needs to keep up with the social issues, protests, and demonstrations happening outside its lecture rooms. Within this proposition there exists—“[t]he tension between predictability and the unexpected, control and spontaneity” (McNiff, 2018, p. xiii).

**The Art Therapy Curriculum: A World of Entangled Influences**

Not unlike a custodian of an art collection, art therapy pedagogy involves conveying an essence of care through community integration, particularly with regard to employing interrelated disciplines. As reported by Leigh (2018, p. 46), the training of an art therapist involves “an educational process of socialization into art therapy and the establishment of a professional identity, both of which are impacted by external societal conditions.” As educators and mentors, we are offered the opportunity to become curators of multicentered learning within a teaching composition of combined places (Lippard, 1997). Here both the educator and the learner travel through routes of simultaneous influences. There is a greater awareness of how to negotiate and incorporate differences through a rhizome that grows connections in all directions (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). This implies the necessity to develop an inclusive pedagogical practice for learners that enriches human and community engagement (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2014), therefore increasing awareness of social and physical environments, as well as opportunities for research projects that have social benefits. The need for creating a culturally complex learning environment is a shared responsibility with learners and educational allies (civic, cultural and socially engaged pedagogical partners). By engaging in personal reflection and working in alliance with community stakeholders, students will be better equipped to use a strengths-based model promoting multiplicity (in methods and materials) as an active pulse within the practice of art therapy.

Teaching in an Art Hive (a community art studio open to everyone, www.arthives.org) is an opportunity to embrace diversity and to transform classrooms into research and training sites where the neighbourhood is welcome (Rabinovitch, 2018). This learning style incorporates an open source ethos, whereby public collections of art are contributions by people bestowing relevancy to art therapy pedagogy through their own making. Cultural environments (galleries, museums, libraries, parks, public commons, sidewalks and community centres) can become studios for students to draw correspondences with diverse life experiences. Acquiring knowledge in a hands-on learning environment is an engagement with real-world situations that challenge an art therapy curriculum to become more versatile.

Students who partake in university classes taught in Art Hives often express how much they learn from being in the studio with participants from all backgrounds. This highlights a foundational principle of the Art Hives, that we each have something to learn and teach to each other. (R. Chainey, personal communication, July 5, 2019)

McNiff considers that actions taking place within a studio can shape the “social lives of individual participants who in turn influence others” (McNiff, 2011, p, 83). These movements towards one’s self and others form a somatic reasoning significant to an investigation of one’s positioning in society. The Art Hive model has incorporated the Feldenkrais Method ([www.feldenkrais-method.org](http://www.feldenkrais-method.org)) to examine the implications of movements that go against predictability. This method of corporeal *unlearning* aims to disrupt habitual patterns, and participants are encouraged to discover new ways of engaging with others and the environment. Timm-Bottos (2001) underlines four grounding principles of the method—connections with others, self-directed learning, self-awareness, and the importance of mutual respect. When applied to the Art Hive studio, the role of corporeal consciousness encourages trust and a welcoming environment that challenges limited patterns of physical and social engagement. Somatic education can inform academia, as it provides an opportunity for students to construct self-knowledge and become relational in their actions. Art therapy educators can underscore the significance of physical movements as expressions of activation that investigate subjectivity, space, relationships, and volition. Somatically informed education can also relate to being moved by therapeutic narratives and the social conditions informing these narratives.

Alternate learning spaces widen the lens to witness the breadth, depth, and diversity of society, pushing each of us out of our comfort zones, and inevitably increasing awareness of our own social locators. Almost without asking, the places themselves tell historical tales inviting critical reflections, uncovering old patterns and forming new models. (J. Timm-Bottos, personal communication, July 5, 2019)

The cultural practicums at Ulster University are also inspired by social movements as pathways that highlight kinaesthetic investigation. Cultural practicums are immersive involvements with cultural partners outside the university that produce “meaningful impact” (Ulster University, 2019). In this model, Laban Movement Analysis has been utilised to incorporate movement studies that act as scaffolding to support spatial investigation, perspective and mobility (Tsachor & Shafir, 2017). A physical processing of locations is an investigation into proprioceptive responses to stimuli—social, environmental, architectural, and the objects that surround us. The goal of moving students outside a classroom context is to encourage sequenced changes of perspective, orientation and range (Tsachor & Shafir, 2017). The intention of keeping learners in motion, is to engender responsiveness, analytical agility, and subjectivity-in-motion. The unpredictability of these physical and social encounters imbues art therapy with invigoration, performing knowledge that doesn’t lead to a destination, but another point of discovery.

**Immediacy with Juxtaposition**

Moon (2002) advocates for a service orientation within art therapy education based on social complexity. Service is the essential ethos of an art therapy pedagogy that reaches out to others. “In order to effectively address the needs of society, students must view it from a wider vantage point, one that takes into account how the strengths of art therapy intersect with the needs of the world” (Moon, 2002, p. 288). In accordance with this approach, teaching is directed towards meeting society’s challenges, by not only considering art therapy as a form of expression, but as a pragmatic and solution-oriented methodology. The potential, for example, to make public places better designed and more hospitable is one way to improve civic engagement through installations of art that create welcoming environments. A service-oriented curriculum does not impose, but listens and responds with ingenuity and potentially a range of artistry (design, performance, visual and material culture, creative technologies, etc.), which strive to improve communication between people, and enhance the conditions of their lives.

The term heterotopia was described by Michel Foucault as a configuration of influences. As a horizon, and an ensemble, the term could be applied to pedagogy as “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault, 1967). The combining of difference and the performance of learning as experiences within the world at large extends art therapy pedagogy outwards. The art therapy educator can coordinate diverse learning encounters within arts based social, political, and therapeutically informed communities at large. The goal is to orchestra immediacy, debate, and immersion into otherness. As a curatorial practice art therapy pedagogy is an agenda that includes allied educators that instruct through their own trend setting initiatives. In essence, these allied educators inform by sharing breaking news of projects, exhibitions, engagements, and events that influence the panorama of arts based therapeutic interventions. The role of the art therapy educator is to develop a schedule of learning that keeps up with social innovators. It is an extroverted art therapy curriculum, getting out of itself in order to meet the people who are tackling social concerns straight-on. These activists contribute something unique to art therapy as they challenge students to be of service, and to use art forms for specific social outcomes.

As artists, our historical roots are a source of inspirational reflection on the philosophy of cultural awareness and vicarious experiences. Utilizing the experiential approach of arts based studio practices, and multiple ways of learning (Duchastel, 2012), art therapy assembles spaces of self and societal investigation. The art therapy profession stems from the needs of each individual and then finds nourishment in the multifaceted nature of visual expression (Lusebrink, Mārtinsone, & Dzilna-Šilova, 2013). The Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) can be used as a foundational framework encouraging an understanding and use of media properties and ongoing assessment when implanting a sensitive social environment within art therapy training programs. Media are the vehicles for creative expression and non-verbal communication (Lusebrink, 2010). According to Lisa Hinz the “The ETC is a fundamental framework in teaching art therapy because it is inclusive of all the various ways that art making can be therapeutic. This theoretical framework encourages divergent rather than convergent thinking about expressive arts therapies” (personal communication, June 26, 2019). The effectiveness of an experiential teaching approach relating to how information is accessed and processed through the body, mind, and emotions is an overarching experience (Lusebrink, 1991). This manner of viewing interaction encourages learners to understand the processes taking place from a holistic point of view. As educators, it is essential to be committed to a view of creativity as a collective richness promoting social empowerment.

**We Breathe in Dissimilar Studios: Unscripted Encounters**

Gerber (2016, p. 794) highlights the significance of “emergent meaning-making along an educational continuum” involving dynamic cultural realities. This requires art therapy to be a curriculum that is out of bounds and engaged with the themes and issues of collaborators representing a diversity of concerns. This is team teaching where academia is not the authority, and where art therapy trainees are circulated through immersive spaces, which directly inform art therapy’s diversity, cultural humility and relevancy (Winkel, 2018; Har-Gil, 2010; Bal & Kaur, 2018). The overall aim is to craft a combined teaching schedule with complexity, participation and integrity.

Activist and community co-educators are not guest speakers but collaborators within relationships where pedagogy happens in studios of debate and engagement. The art therapy educator is the curator of these encounters, which take risks in their unscripted and in-the-moment forms of concurrence. “Learning opportunities that involve collaborative efforts with social agencies, consumers of art therapy services, arts organizations, people from diverse cultural groups, and activist organizations, enable art therapy students to experience first hand the relationship of our work to the larger community” (Moon, 2002, p. 292). Art therapy teaching should assert provocations that ignite critical evaluations. As a curator, the art therapy educator coordinates meeting places, to bring together complex and diverse forms of learning that examine unconscious biases within the teaching of art therapy. Such biases can relate to discriminations based on class, race, gender identity, age, disability, religious belief, political activity, cultural and national affiliations, and sexual orientation. This interrogation of art therapy aims to disrupt complacency. Curriculum is informed by multiformity and the art therapy educator is not the authority, but the coordinator of different routes into the world-at-large.

Underlying cultural humility is the knowledge that we are never finished—we do not arrive at a point when our cultural education is complete. We must be bold enough to look at ourselves critically, and acknowledge how understanding is only as powerful as the action that follows. (Winkel, 2018, p. 1)

Critical Pedagogy in the Arts Therapies (www.criticalpedagogyartstherapies.com) interrogates inequity and societal oppression within arts therapy education through social justice activism. “A social model of art therapy locates concepts of diversity at the center of its practice” (Talwar, 2019, p. 7). The civic collective can contribute expertise to the art therapy profession, through debates that both critique and enhance contemporary art therapy education. There are multiple realities present that exist simultaneously and with influence­—art therapy pedagogy can involve these concurrent perspectives combined within an ethos of “*response/ability*… that places emphasis on transparency, equity, diversity, contextuality, and mobility across a continuum of practice…” (Sajnani, Marxen & Zarate, 2017, p. 28). Social justice pedagogy interrogates discrimination through critical analysis that also supports new productions of subjectivity as forces of influence and innovation. Art therapy education can become more involved, more knowledgeable, and more encompassing of social realities that speak to us about nonconformity. “The intricacies of human experience cannot be reduced to categorical and predictable principles, and art is the timeless discipline for exploring, shaping and understanding these spontaneous realities” (McNiff, 2018, p. xii).

Art therapy pedagogy can be a form of street art that disrupts, while also providing opportunities to promote agency, representation, and public declarations (M. Riccardi, personal communication, June 23, 2019). Street art is a metaphor for pedagogical imperatives that relate to life on the streets as a commitment to social space as a social product (Lefebvre, 1991). Street art interrupts complacency and generates an alteration of civic space through spontaneity and bold actions. The yearning to create in a public space cultivates community connections, which promote dialogue, citizenship and serendipitous encounters (Singer, 2016). As a potential form of cultural mapping art therapy learning must acknowledge lives in action, incorporating perspectives that deviate and contradict taken for granted understanding. The continuing professional development of art therapists is rooted in social practice where *reaching-out* and *inviting-in* are the basis of research and pedagogy. Routing art therapy pedagogy through a variety of learning locations encourages inclusivity, studios of social encounter, and relational connections. Rather than becoming insular, locations are opportunities for adding on *intercontextuality* between the academy and attunement to heterogeneous forms of knowledge (Vadeboncoeur & Hanif-Shahban, 2015). In this sense team teaching involves the expertise of many to engender a duty of care.

**Overstepping Boundaries of Containment**

Art therapy pedagogy cannot be taught only within the walls of the academy, and must seek out its educators from a network of associations. “As art therapists, we do not have the luxury of simply concentrating on…either inside or outside—but are constantly alert to both, where they intertwine, and what emotional responses they could be eliciting” (Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2011, p. 125). The combination of inside and outside learning, negotiates and equalizes curriculums from within the academy and beyond its boundaries. The pedagogy of art therapy can navigate, mediate and intervene, as a training that involves rather than excludes. It is “beneficial to use all of our reasoning capabilities as art therapists, including a diversity of artistic ways of knowing, in order to understand clients’ creative expressions” (Moon & Hoffman, 2014, p. 177). Art therapy pedagogy should involve educational associates—service users, socially engaged artists, activists, arts and health practitioners, allied professionals, community mentors, social advocates, lobbyists, and pressure groups. Art therapy can be a catalyst for anti-oppressive practices that utilize artistic literacy to illuminate relations of power and oppression (Ontario & Canadian Art Therapy Association Conference, 2016, Art Therapy and Anti-Oppressive Practice). This is educating to serve social need and crisis, and to bestow upon the profession a need to publically declare injustice as an ethical imperative. To be “aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice” and to “practice in a non-discriminatory manner” (Health and Care Professions Council, 2019) are essential standards of proficiency for art therapists. The art therapist educator as curator is not an expert, but crafts a curriculum of associations that informs a critique of privilege. The multiplicity of subjectivities, both of educators and learners, is articulated within meeting places with associates and collaborators practicing outside of academia. As coordinators of these experiences (that are in-the-making) art therapy educators do not establish a curriculum, but open the door.

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