

Workshop 15:

## Practitioner perspectives on art therapy with couples in relational crisis: a qualitative exploration

Maria Fjellfeldt & Dalida Rokka

**Background:** Art therapy has been found to be beneficial when working to strengthen relationships in couples. For example, art therapy has been found to be beneficial where one of a couple has developed Alzheimer's disease (Couture et al., 2021). In this context, art therapy was found to have positive effects, such as providing pleasure, expressing emotions, assessing relational dynamics, and fostering empathy. Other studies (Hinz, 2020; Weeks, 2013) have shown that non-verbal communication used in art therapy offers couples opportunities to discover new aspects in their relationship. Creative interventions can also change the dynamics in relationships and offer a new and creative dimension within which to explore their concerns (Metzl, 2020). Art therapy improves communication skills and facilitates future problem solving for couples (Lin, 2015; Sanchez-Cruz, 2017). Art therapy can also increase understanding of the patterns and themes within a couple (Ricco, 2007).

**Aim:** The aim of our study was to explore art therapy used by couples in relational crisis, in the context of family counselling in Swedish Social Services.

**Method:** A qualitative study where seven persons who were both art therapists and family counsellors were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed using an inductive thematic analysis.

**Results:** The results in our study showed that, through non-verbal communication, art making facilitated clarification of situations, handling non-talkable concerns, and added playfulness to the relationship. Three crucial dimensions were identified in the family counselling context: (1) outer frames, i.e. room and material; (2) some special conditions, i.e. that they trusted each other and both wanted to repair their relationship, and the therapist's ability to assess this; and (3) art work techniques that all couples could master.

**Conclusions:** Our results showed that art therapy was a useful tool when working with couples in relational crisis. Non-verbal communication could help to handle things.

*Maria Fjellfeldt is a Researcher and Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Dalarna University, Sweden. She has a PhD in Social Work, and she has been awarded the Degree of Master of Art Therapy in 2007, at Umeå University, Sweden. As an Art Therapist, she is interested in using visual methods in her research context. Prior to her doctoral studies, she worked as a Social Worker and Art Therapist for ten years*

*Dalida Rokka is lic. Medical Social Worker, lic. Psychotherapist educated and trained Supervisor in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and has the Degree of Master of Medical Science in Art Therapy. Since 2019 she works in municipal family counselling in Mora, Sweden, with couples therapies and domestic violence. In her work as a family counsellor she applies art therapy and other creative techniques, such as mental imagery, clinical hypnosis and mindfulness-based cognitive art therapy.*

Workshop 16:

## TRINITY OF ART

Hannakaisa Hautamäki

Creative process flows through our bodies as it flows through our mind and hands, becoming expressions of creativity. In this workshop we start from body-mind connection, transitioning to dancing, from dancing to painting, from painting to writing – eagerly trying to catch all levels of our existence. Observing, expressing, and exploring of all these levels are important for both therapist and client.

My objective for this workshop, reflecting my educational background, is to give a possibility for participants to research their minds, bodies, and spirituality, which is the most complex layer, even though it's also the most interesting one. This is especially studied in the last part of the workshop on a writing session. All the exercises are based on my own experience as a dancer, dance-movement therapy practitioner, art therapist, artist, and pastoral care field practitioner.

Working as an art therapist can sometimes feel like a triathlon, where our own resources must be found very deep within ourselves. Those resources can't be described by others, but rather individually recognized and developed on our own, especially in spirituality. It requires space safe enough to search, find, create, and have resources as your own.

### **Hannakaisa Hautamäki**

*I have graduated as contemporary dancer in 2015 from Outokumpu dance education, as well as dance-movement therapy practitioner from Eino Roiha institute, Jyväskylä. I have taught dance, and dance-movement therapy for kids, teenagers, and adults.*

*I've also practiced as Pilates teacher with equipment and mat. I have studied Pastoral care and worked among different aged people in local Pentecostal church for 5 years (I graduated 2019 with that therapist education). I have performed as a dancer and artist for several projects, and I've studied visual arts for 3 years in public institute. Now I've almost completed my bachelor's degree with social care at Satakunta University of applied sciences, precising in art therapy. I'm also in the process of establishing my own company Rehb, to work as an art therapist.*

*My future dream is to study more in the field of art therapy, in parallel as practising it, continuing to finally achieve a PhD degree.*

## Workshop 17

# An Art Therapy Body of Knowledge within a Psychological Framework of Understanding

Lise Bjarkli

My thesis 'The power and possibilities of art therapy' shed light on art therapy used as supplement to psychodynamic talk therapy in case of relational trauma, dissociation and shame. I wanted to contribute to increased acceptance and use of art therapy in Norway. The theory section aimed to become a coherent whole, resulting in a Body of Knowledge Metamodel of Jung-based Art Therapy, within a Psychological Framework of Understanding. I present this framework, hoping it'll contribute to our profession's development, reputation and recognition.

Background: I was provoked by a parliamentary decision of reintroducing VAT on art therapy, experienced the psychology subject as fragmented, and missed overviews as found in STEM. I wanted to combine my engineering and leadership backgrounds to contribute to art therapy.

Aim of the framework: To offer holistic understanding, a multidisciplinary platform, where parts fit together in a larger perspective, from where one can delve into details without losing the overview. Provide a tool simplifying communication and coordination with partners, as well as analysis of client processes. To demystify art therapy and show how it may be considered a knowledge-based practice.

Development: The framework was built to consolidate my own professional platform and as part of research design: Collected data required sorting, structuring and documentation. The need for simplified representation led to modeling and metamodeling. I followed similar quality assurance, standardisation and best practice principles as in leadership and engineering, where one goal is a Body of Knowledge.

Presentation: The framework is introduced by explaining its logic and structure, going into specifics of art therapy, suggesting areas of use, and opening up for further dialogue on how it can contribute to reputation building, to strategic development and professional recognition of art therapy.

### **Lise Bjarkli**

*is an art therapist running her practice from a private therapy center near Oslo, Norway. She is leader of Kunstterapiforeningen Norge and Tekna Oslo's professional group for ethics and leadership (Tekna is Norway's largest union of STEM academics).*

*She has 30+ years of experience as leader and organisational development consultant for international businesses as well as NGOs. Since 2010 she's concentrated on leadership and self development services combined with board positions in various organisations. From 2013 she's gradually focused on depth psychology and art therapy, combining her skills to develop solid frameworks and roadmaps for personal development, and to provide individual therapy and coaching, couples therapy, creative self- and leadership development workshops, as well as talks.*

*Lise has an international, multicultural background. Her education includes a Diploma in Art Therapy, M.Sc. in Engineering, with additional education in leadership (M.Mngt) and Psychology.*

Paper & Workshop – workshop 18

# TEXTILE COMMUNITIES: Social impacts and psychological benefits of creating with textiles.

Jasmina Ferček & Zala Orel

**RESEARCH AIM:** To explore how textile communities function as spaces of political, cultural, and social change, with an emphasis on the personal, social and societal benefits they offer, and to derive new concepts or ideas from the stories and testimonies of individuals involved in these communities.

**BACKGROUND:** Throughout history, sewing in groups helped women to reduce pain, share burdens, and strengthen resistance. Group work strengthened their community. Because of the bonding nature of textiles, creating with textiles remains an appropriate way of collective care and nurturing.

**OBJECTIVE:** To research and categorize the social impacts and psychological benefits that derive from creating with textiles in the communities.

**METHODS:** Narrative text analysis of four semi-structured interviews and a panel with six participants, all selected by their practical and theoretical references in the field.

**FINDINGS:** The effects of textile creation often occur within specific spaces, which can be interpreted as physical, mental, or semantic spaces. Textile communities empower individuals by contributing to their self-actualization and self-realisation, enabling them to experience a sense of belonging, pride, self-worthy power, freedom, and identity. With text analysis, the research team has classified and categorized the collected data into three areas, labelling them as 1) Well-being, 2) Internal, and 3) External processes. Textile creation enhances physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and existential well-being and health. Here the spaces for (1.1) well-being and health and (1.2) meditation, self-exploration, and reflection have emerged. Internal processes are the field where (2.1) forming a new identity, both personal and collective, or strengthening an existing identity, occurs. It is also a space that can (2.2) support a healthy sociocultural transition for individuals who have experienced migration to a new cultural environment (immigrants) or another social space (prisoners). External processes address the characteristics of creating with textiles that enable textile communities to contribute to socio-cultural changes. When a textile community is open to the outside and communicates with the world, it can become the space of (3.1) equality, power, independence, and emancipation and even (3.2) activism and social change.

**NB!** For the workshop: all participants must bring a textile piece - a kitchen cloth - from their home country. This kind of workshop is not really a 'happening', it is quiet, contemplative and intimate. Together we will create an atmosphere where we can become a short-term textile community.

***Jasmina Ferček** is a textile artist and holds a master's degree in art therapy. She explores the significance of women's creative experiences with textiles. For 20 years, she has been involved in participatory and psychosocially engaged textile art as a member of the Oloop collective. She*

*researched the impact of textile creation on women's well-being and health in her master's thesis and subsequently wrote a book on the topic titled "The Power of Textiles" in 2022. She is a member of the Slovenian Association of Art Therapists (SZUT) and the European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT).*

**Zala Orel** has been developing the Textile Art Biennial BIEN as an executive producer and chief curator since 2019. Orel holds a master's degree in communication from the University of Ljubljana and is a doctoral candidate at Charles University in Prague, specializing in social geography and regional development.