

ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine

Editorial

Silke Hilgers and Ange Morgan

ISSN: 2044-7221

Date of Publication: 22 April 2024

Citation: Hilgers S.& Morgan A. (2024) *Editorial*. ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine 14(1)



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"Never evidence of a fixed position, art is an enquiry where the self is lost and found and lost again, over and over, and meaning is renewed in the process"

(Allen, 2008, p. 11).

As the ATOL editorial team gathered together before this issue was conceived, we found that we shared a common desire to spend more time in creative processes, as we considered matters arising from the inclusion of visual material within the journal generally, and more broadly, its representation within our published and presented work as clinicians and academics. As art therapists, lecturers, supervisors, researchers and artists ourselves, there was a shared longing for time to create and discover. The practice of the lecturers at Goldsmiths University, captured in "Art as thinking: MA Art Psychotherapy staff art making group in the context of the neoliberal university" (The MAAP Team 2023-24), of spending time together in the art studio creating, reflecting and sharing, inspired this editorial team in our early stages of identifying a focus for this issue. The contributors to this issue have shown us that an invitation to submit visual work appears to be a tempting one, and we now offer the fruits of this invitation.

Within this issue, there are fragments explored, sculpted, altered and woven; objects and items collected from near and far, the present and the past; materials with meaning immediately discovered or with no meaning at all; work made of studio floor fragments, objects and discarded rubbish in the immediate vicinity, works explored across and through multiple materials over time, work on film, 3D, 2D, photographed; results that are to their creator exciting, surprising, disappointing, transformative, challenging, beautiful, ugly and more. The art works in this issue's collection have functioned to foster reflection, connection, discovery, narrative and as witness to time and history; in the service of enriching the supervisory process or collegial reflection space; as a way to make sense of experiences beyond words. We wondered what it might be like to let the imagery do the talking, drop the pressure of academic formality and dive into visual expression and reflection with freedom and immersion. The images and texts we received show how subtle the encounters with the objects and

materials were, the stories that can unfold in them and the nuanced ways that the artists and authors are themselves reflected.

To accompany the visual submissions, Chris Wood provides an expansive reflection on *Art Psychotherapy Groups in the Hostile Environment of Neo-Liberalism: Collusion or Resistance?* edited by Sally Skaife and Jon Martyn (2022), Routledge. Wood's review offers us an important and richly detailed discussion of this book, leaving us with much to reflect upon in relation to our own practices and the impact of larger systems upon them.

Dave Edwards provides an engaging review that is deeply considered, offering a reflective stance as he discusses *The Gallery of Miracles and Madness: Insanity, Modernism, and Hitler's War on Art* by Charlie English (2021). As we examine our relationships to art and art making within a 21st century context with the small collection of artists and art therapists represented within this issue, Edwards review and its subject *The Gallery of Miracles and Madness*, reminds us of where we have come from less than 100 years ago. We are reminded in this of the shadow we and those we work with in our therapeutic settings are perhaps still navigating and emerging from in many ways, as we continue to grapple with experiences of stigma, oppression and the emerging spaces of new possibility within the various healing and support settings we inhabit today that engage with mental health recovery and care. We hope you will enjoy, feel inspired and perhaps mobilised by the presence of art within this issue and that it perhaps instigates fresh momentum in your practices, both personal and professional.

Allen, P. (2008). Commentary on community-based art studios: Underlying Principles. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 25 (1), 11-12.