

ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine

Art, health and community in Chile 1992-2012: an auto-ethnographic perspective.

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Abstract

This paper presents the preliminary findings of a qualitative research emanating from the perspective of the researcher as well as from her own self-observation. This reflection is being proposed in relation to 20 years of professional activity in the socio-community field, initially through the use of artistic resources, and later, as an art therapist in Chile. In this manner, using the *Emic* outlook as described by Kenneth Pike (1967), this research is a reflection on and a becoming aware of the development of the field of art therapy in this country.

The researcher/author has played different roles related to the field of arts in health, popular education, psychosocial intervention and art therapy. Thus, she has become an actor/researcher who has learned to be observant of her own culture, and who uses a constructivist perspective to discuss links between arts, health and community in Chile in between 1990-2012. She describes topics linked to health from a perspective of promotion and recovery, as well as its ties to creativity, popular art and the

reconstruction of the social fabric through the analysis of the experiences developed in Chile and their references to the traditional Latin American psychosocial work.

Keywords

Psychosocial support, creativity, popular education, art therapy, Latin America.

Presentation

Three broad topics intersect in this paper: art, health, and community. We will attempt to articulate them with reference to the following research question based on a historical and auto-ethnographic perspective:

What links can be established between art, health and community in Chile between the years 1992-2012?

To be able to answer this very ambitious question is a task that demands considerable research and reflection.

During the research process an attempt will be made to analyze and describe the notion of health, art and community in both an explicit and implicit manner from a set of experiences and practices selected from the areas of community and artistic health during a given historical period.

As a second line of research, we are proposing the description and analysis of a particular type of behavior and of the use of the artistic resources stemming from these practices for social, group and/or personal development objectives, favoring in each one of these experiences the establishment of multidisciplinary links between art and health.

In this paper we would like to share some concerns that have appeared at the beginning of this research process, and give a preliminary account of a first approach to these topics.

Initial contact between Art and Health

In 1992 my first approach to the field of art, health and community development was a two year collaboration with the Kintún Community Cultural Group, located in a marginal sector of Temuco in the south of Chile.

The place where this group resides is located along the banks of the Cautin River. Most of the population are farm workers and have ethnic Mapuche¹ origins; many of them are emigrants from the country to the city. The social economic level is low with poor indices of general school attendance.

A couple with an ethnic Mapuche background living in this community were the leaders of the Kintún Cultural Group². They were self-taught and had learned their craft through oral tradition, by cultivating Mapuche music, and by using the art of making Mapuche musical instruments. It is important to understand that within the indigenous worldview, musical instruments play a predominant role in diverse religious ceremonies, thus, in this sense, both (of these people) were very important to their ethnic community. There was great concern within the group about the loss of identity and the education of young Mapuche emigrants, many of whom were leaving the country for the city and did not recognize their cultural roots. Thus it was very important for the Group to conserve and foster the Mapuche culture, especially music, among the children and youth of the community. On the other hand, possibilities for participating in popular theatre were made available, with the idea of forming theatre monitors so that they could become agents for the multiplication of these activities in their communities.

In this manner, and in spite of the fact that our viewpoint clearly had some problems connected with it, we attempted to approach the youth culture of that community, as well as the role of youth within their community, by offering them a link to the Mapuche culture through the cultural group.

¹The Mapuche are a group of [indigenous](#) inhabitants of south-central [Chile](#) and southwestern [Argentina](#).

²They are Ramón Daza and Paula Pilquinao, popular artists and activists in favor of the cultural rights of the Mapuche people of Chile.

The most important process I experienced with them was the collective theatrical creation that was later presented to the community; the sequencing, selection, staging and performance of the theatrical work were run entirely by the young people.



Fig. 1 Cultural event in memory of the last Mapuche uprising, Tehualda trees. Temuco, Chile 1993.

This creation was an articulation of personal experiences, together with a denunciation of the economic and material conditions of the community, thus the theatre allowed them to personify, express, condemn and share experiences that were personal but social at the same time, reinforcing their own identity at the personal as well as the social level.

In this sense, we adopt the dialectical outlook formulated by nationalized Salvadorian psychologist Ignacio Martín Baró, who argued that conscience is not simply the private

domain of knowledge and of the subjective feeling of individuals but, above all, it is that environment wherein each person can find the impact reflected by their being and their doings in society, where they take on and develop knowledge about themselves and reality which allows them to be someone, to have a personal and social identity (Martín Baró, 1998).

This approach to art, mainly from the area of popular theatre and artistic practices, with a long tradition in Chile stemming from the 50's, reappeared strongly during the times of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende (1970-1973) and after the coup d'état that overturned Pinochet's dictatorship in 1993, expanded into organizations of resistance and political action (Non Governmental Organization (NGO), community organizations, etc.).

One of the most important resources proposed by popular theatre was a form of collective creation that articulated shared social and community experiences, that were then represented by actors who were mostly amateurs and members of the community.

The main current that guided these practices was the Theatre of the Oppressed developed mainly by the Brazilian director and playwright Augusto Boal. It is important to remember that the Theatre of the Oppressed is a technical formulation and an aesthetic method based on different forms of art and not only on theatre. It brings together a set of exercises, games and theatrical techniques that claim to bring about the de-mechanization of its adherents both physically and intellectually and the democratization of theatre. The objective is to analyze the theatre and dramatic techniques as an effective tool for the comprehension of and the search for, alternatives to social and inter-personal problems. Participants who are not actors are encouraged to express their daily living experiences of oppression through the theatre.

According to Boal (2013), this type of theatre has pedagogical, social, cultural, political and therapeutic implications because it aims to transform the spectator from a passive receptor to what he calls a 'spec-tator', the protagonist of dramatic action, by stimulating him or her to reflect on their past, modify reality in the present, and create the future. The spectator sees and attends a theatrical event; the 'spec-tator goes and acts', or

better said, goes to act out the scene and life. The aim of the Theatre of the Oppressed is for participants to reflect on relationships of power through the exploration and representation of stories about oppressors and the oppressed, the public attends and participates in the theatrical work.

Works for the theatre are put together by teams, using real facts and the typical problems of a community, such as discrimination, prejudice, violence, intolerance, etc. Above all, the Theatre of the Oppressed is a space for action that makes use of performance techniques in order to analyze and propose solutions for change in the face of the different types of oppression suffered by individuals and communities. The objective is to make it a dynamic process.

These types of collective work and analysis of the problems of social reality are shared with other artistic forms such as, for example, murals, which in Chile have had a broad and rich development, especially in community organizations.

Due to the presence of Mexican artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros, the social meaning of the mural in Chile has a historical background dating from the first half of the 20th Century, In the 1970`s the Muralist Brigades became political propaganda groups for the government of President Salvador Allende (Brigada Ramona Parra (B.R.P.), for the Communist Youth Brigade and the Elmo Catalán Brigade (B.E.C.) of the Socialist Party). During the dictatorship, these groups went into hiding to develop their actions in the towns. In this context the mural was used to encourage inhabitants to organize their self-defense, to praise the values of solidarity and, as part of a community, to sacrifice and to struggle. By directly joining the social organization, the central axis of the strength of the muralist brigades and their drawings were the inhabitants of the towns, who were guided by others with more experience and who, in some cases, had begun with preliminary art studies (Bellange, 1995).

In the 1990`s the so-called 'political transition' generated diverse tensions in a complex and contradictory social context that strengthened the neoliberal model together with the desire for a transformation leading to greater social justice.

For different reasons these groups began to disintegrate with the change of generations. Thus, we can identify the existence of many murals or graffiti at the beginning of this decade, which, by their presence, media and objectives, point to different topics including religion, culture, denunciation, and the creation of awareness concerning topics referring to the rights of citizens, where authorization and economic support could often be counted on from institutions linked mainly to the educational environment. Parallel to this, the expression of transgression takes on a new social imprint, not linked to any specific or defined party political posture, but rather to the broadest possible concept of independent social expressiveness. Thus, at this point, wall drawings and graffiti acquire a gesture-based, personal, artistic, and expressive framework (Bragassi, 2010).

The beginning of my first approach of health

Popular theatre as well as community murals based on community contexts, embody an ecological and holistic view of health, as especially represented by the notion of health promotion. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the promotion of health as the process that allows people to increase control over their health in order to improve it (PAHO, 2013).

The holistic dimension of health promotion implies the need for approaching the topic of community development as something essential, by favoring the cooperative action of the community and assuring equitable access to education, economic security and social support, in the context of public policies in accordance with the objectives of health (Sapag and Kawachi, 2007). In all of these activities, the relationship with aspects linked to the promotion of health and its relationship with so called social capital, that is, that quality in the social fabric that brings together shared sentiments, empowerment, participation and inter-sectoriality, becomes clear if we think about the objectives of creating collective feelings, and the strengthening of identity as previously mentioned (Sapag and Kawachi, 2007).

A study based on health promoting experiences in Latin America between 1990-1997 shows that one of the important programmes in this area is part of the view of social

change based on the political-pedagogical concept originating in the thought of Paulo Freire in the decade of the 1960`s (Sapag and Kawachi, 2007).

Links between Art Education and Popular Education

Some of the principles of Popular Education have to do with the articulation between theory and practice; the recognition of and the respect for popular wisdom, the collective construction of knowledge, the possibility of dialogue or dialogue itself as an educational principle, and student knowledge based on cultural identity. By placing the recognition of the world, and man in it in context, Popular Education aims to establish horizontal relationships based on humility, love and the commitment to the processes of change.

Furthermore, we can perceive an aesthetic attitude in Pablo Freire's dialogical outlook when, for example, he conceives of the teacher as a man or woman who has a creative, sensitive and receptive attitude about their role.

Since processes connected to art work are identified in education, the educator is conceived of as an aesthete who cultivates taste. Besides this aesthetical and political dimension of Freire's work, we can identify its ethical dimension regarding the recognition of the other and the limits of his or her experience. He emphasizes that the educator should respect the fears and he should also touch upon the fears like the therapist does. The educator is also an artist who remakes, re-paints, and re-enchants the world (Freire, 1997).

One of the philosophical influences in Freire's thinking is Emmanuel Lévinas, who confirms the emphasis given by Freire to inter-subjectivity and the recognition of the other. According to Levinas's ethics, one may not avoid responsibility toward others. So the way we feel about others is to say, the experience of the other is an essential part of this view. (Orange, 2012)

The views of Pablo Freire can be linked not only to practices in social organization and community action but also to artistic education in community contexts.

A paradigmatic case in Chile is the 'Cinema Appreciation Workshop' run since the 80's to the present by Professor Alicia Vega in a marginal community in Peñalolén, Santiago,

and widely disseminated by the documentary: 'One Hundred Children Waiting for a Train' by the Chilean director Ignacio Agüero (Vega, 2013).

In the beginning this workshop was part of the National Episcopal Movie Office. This seemingly simple activity in artistic education is offered through a simple neighborhood parish and it can be understood in the context of what is called 'formation of audiences for art today' (UNESCO, 2006)).

But in the social and historic context where the artistic work of this group was begun, children were able to be recognized and recognize each other through a collective experience, where learning is not related directly to the workshop, that is, making and learning about film-making, but is rather a tool for the children to learn about themselves and their surroundings, and at the same time release problematic content without any repression of what may emerge in that space, aside from content and affect. It is a testimony of the era because children say what they think and how they really feel about things through their drawings and their own film project, even from positions that would seem to be in open contradiction to their own reality. Through this experience with art these children have the possibility of sharing and recreating the violent world they live in.

In this experience it is possible to recognize the convergence of the approach of art education with the ideas of popular education regarding the notions of empowerment and control. Both the product and the production processes are controlled by the group of children, and the educator's role is always to promote the group's power to present their own version of reality (Vega, 2013).

Popular Art and Psychosocial Trauma: 'Arpilleras'³ from the Vicarage of Solidarity.

Perhaps the experience in Chile that most clearly embodies the links between art, collectiveness and health is the case of the 'Arpilleras' from the Vicarage of Solidarity. Although the beginning of these practices comes before the period being researched, it

³Arpilleras are three-dimensional appliqué textiles of Latin America.

is a relevant historical reference in the relationship between art and health and more specifically in the emergence of a practice in popular art linked to health.

The Vicarage of Solidarity was born in 1973 as an independent entity of the Catholic Church, with the mission of giving legal and social aid to victims of the extremely grave violations of human rights during the Pinochet dictatorship. One of the programmes for social aid was the programme for handicraft workshops for women with the objective of supporting and training groups of women in labour workshops where they embroidered sackcloth, which could then be sold.

Nevertheless, this programme turned into something much greater, when these women begin using their sackcloth to narrate and denounce their experiences of political repression. The tradition of sackcloth embroiderers in Chile can be found in the work of Violeta Parra (well known folklorist who did research on Chilean popular music) who embroidered scenes of people's daily lives on sackcloth.



Fig. 2 Arpillera. They Dance Alone (Marjorie Agosin Collection)

This work always had a connotation of vocation and economic survival. Nevertheless, the sackcloth embroidered by the women from the Vicarage of Solidarity workshops goes far beyond the activities of sustenance.

These workshops became a space for resistance and social denunciation of violations of human rights in Chile. The embroideries depict scenes from the embroiderers' lives such as torture, the lack of basic resources such as water, loneliness or exile. This activity, of handicrafts and manual arts, became a space for mutual support. Together with the embroidering and the creation of these pieces, women shared their lives and their experiences and the workshop became a network of support and social resistance (Agosin,1996).

Sackcloth embroidering also had important therapeutic value because it permitted the externalization and materialization of lived experiences, painful emotions and stories of repression. It was a manifestation of the rupture in our history and became an emotional outlet, a type of social, artistic and political expression, which made it possible to find again what had been lost, in the measure in which they were embroidering the past and favoring confidence and self esteem by embroidering hopes for the future (Bacic, 2008). These sackcloths are presently treasured as a testimony of the history of Chile, a testimony of how creation, handmade in this case, becomes transformed into a means of self-help and mutual support.

This relationship between popular art, mutual support and recovery in community contexts, represented by the work of the Sackcloth Embroiderers of the Vicarage of Solidarity in the first instance, can also be observed in the study of psycho-social trauma caused by natural disasters in community contexts, such as has been my experience these last three years.

The work on psychosocial trauma, especially linked to human rights situations, has an interesting development in Chile and Latin America. The extreme conditions of insecurity, for example, that developed psychotherapeutic processes influenced the

revision of therapeutic approaches in the sense of rethinking some of the conditions of neutrality established for traditional psychotherapeutic approaches (IIDH, 2007).

On the other hand, these same contextual factors facilitate the development of flexible psychotherapeutic approaches such as the use of creative or psycho-dramatic resources. Is possible to find in this field experiences using creative and artistic resources as a means of therapeutic intervention (Jorquera, Guajardo and Barraza, 1994).

In my experience, it is precisely this background, combined with the vision of popular education that influenced and inspired our work these last three years in the field of community art therapy.

Community Art Therapy in natural disaster contexts: recent experiences between art and health.

My first contact as an art therapist with the theme of natural disasters was in March 2010, after the second largest earthquake in the history of our country with a magnitude of 8.8 on the Richter Scale⁴.

As part of a volunteer group of the Ministry of Health we traveled to Dichato, a small town located in the south central coastal area of Chile, which was one of the places most violently hit by the earthquake and tsunami that destroyed most of the town and forced most people who still had homes to leave them and move to the higher areas of the sector. These processes of displacement had a significant impact on social dynamics and effects, aside from the effects of the earthquake itself.

As a workshop focused on emotional support for health workers, activity was begun began with non-verbal group dynamics to promote the creation of an emotional climate and support for sharing their painful experiences. Exercises, which involve body

⁴In its geology, Chile is a seismic country because is located over the Nazca Plate. In historical times the Chilean coast has suffered many megathrust earthquakes along this plate boundary. In 1960, the most energetic earthquake ever measured in the world affected Chile with a magnitude of 9.5 on the Richter Scale. [It is known as the Valdivia earthquake.](#)

language or shared movement, together with artistic activities, were employed, which facilitated participants to freely express their feelings and experiences.

This work made it possible to generate emotional support spaces and open the possibility for participants to share their experiences with colleagues and co-workers. During group experiences, integrated health teams of physicians, nurses, nursing assistants, among others, begin to verbalize their terrifying experiences as victims of nature, strengthening ties and resilient resources as teams as illustrated by the following testimony:

'The Sea pulled out the roots of the houses, it went up, forward and it sounded like a pack of noodles (pasta) breaking'

'In the darkness, the sea was moving forward and devoured a few houses and surrounded others round and round , wrapping up everything'

'I saw the sea surge forward three times'

'Those of us who live here in the village went to work immediately to help people' ... 'the first few hours we were alone and now we are together.'

'I'd rather be at work than in the house, where I open all the doors in case, I'm afraid to be in the house if other quakes come.'

Dichato, March 2010.



Fig. 3 Public health officer. Art Therapy Workshop. Dichato,2010.

These workshops were extended to other general health-care professionals and a mental health team of the area. We managed to make a total of six workshops between April, May and June of that year.

Health Approach

From a health perspective, our action in this type of intervention also brought us closer to various experiences that arose as a response to collective trauma care. The aim of these interventions has been to contribute to the reconstruction of the social fabric, based on evidence regarding the importance of social support to prevent post-traumatic stress symptoms. Creating safe spaces such as giving children the opportunity to play, make art and create can, as UNICEF (2004))has shown, contribute to the emotional and affective survival of communities (Kapitan, 2011).

It is precisely this view of health that allows us to establish links with the aforementioned community experiences, either from the viewpoint of artistic education or handicrafts, such as the sackcloth group from the Vicarage. In both cases, we could observe how the mobilization of resources and creative display was used to elaborate on the collective processing of experiences.

For the World Health Organization, emergencies and disasters create situations that bring unbalance to territories. Such situations create considerable upheaval and disruption in the daily life of communities and contribute to family instability, impairment of spiritual life, a sense of disharmony with nature and the environment; changes in feelings, emotions, thoughts and behavior (PAHO 2010).

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) estimates that, according to the magnitude of the disaster, between 30% and 50% of the exposed population show signs of psychological distress, such as grief and fear, and also tends to increase psychiatric problems. Other health problems emerge in the immediate aftermath and over the months following the event, although it should be noted that not all qualify as being pathological. Most should be understood as normal reactions to situations of great significance or impact. The most frequently found mental health consequences are; acute stress disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, major depression, the increased consumption of alcohol and drugs, other anxiety disorders and symptoms of somatization. It has also been shown that after the emergency itself the mental and health problems in survivors require attention during a prolonged period, when they have to face the task of rebuilding their lives (PAHO, 2010).

Socio-natural disasters and psychosocial support: an interdisciplinary perspective.

In the context described in 2010, the University of Chile has taken on the direct support of the communities affected, by establishing teams and multidisciplinary support centres

providing support and research, such as the Centre for Research in Socio- Natural Disaster and Vulnerability (CIVDES)⁵.

In April 2010, we started a Research Action Project involving the collaboration of the Departments of Arts and Social Sciences in rural areas affected by the earthquake through its programmes and departments of Art Therapy, Psychology and Anthropology. This project ran for one and a half years in the post-disaster period⁶.

One of the challenges we face in our interventions is that the context of socio-natural disasters requires us to act by facing reality and responding to the demands that arise during a situation of crisis. However, these actions are part of academic practices and, as such, involve building knowledge based on practice. Thus, following the Latin American tradition of popular education, our option was to understand the situation from the inside by means of intuition and empathy, rather than from the outside by means of observation and calculation (Martinez, 2006). In this sense, the methodological strategy selected for this project was the Participatory Action Research (Fals-Borda, 1985).

The experience briefly described below was developed in the town of Cutemu in the commune of Paredones, in the south-central part of Chile. This place is primarily an agricultural-rural sector. Its population is predominantly male, 70% live in rural areas, and illiteracy is 22.6%. Problems of vulnerability and unequal access to health are bound to high rates of poverty and unemployment. Significant aging can be observed in the population.

The first contacts and participatory assessments with communities through senior social organizations allows us to visualize various problems: issues related to the isolation of the community and its impact on their sense of security emerge as post-earthquake experiences of fear and helplessness in these localities. Through these seniors we have access to the local memory of the community. In the community meetings the life stories

⁵<http://civdes.uchile.cl/>

⁶This Research Project has been done in conjunction with Arts and Social Sciences Faculties. Professor Adriana Espinoza, Department of Psychology and Professor Paulina Osorio, Department of Anthropology. The Project was financed through internal funds of University of Chile.

of people living in a seismic territory emerge, previous traumatic events are shared, as is information relating to the way of life of the workers and peasants. Through these exchanges we identify their strengths as members of these communities linked to the culture and traditions of the Chilean countryside, particularly popular folk music.

A special feature of the creative therapies in psychosocial interventions, and for this particular project, was the openness and sensitivity inherent in its creative methodologies that allowed expressions of folk art, which in turn promoted a sense of health and resilience. The first contacts with the community and its history, reveal the importance of the divine song⁷, dance and folklore cuecas⁸ as a means of expression and as a means of oral history. The Song of the Divine, as remembered by some seniors groups in the community, relates the stories of earthquakes in the district, and becomes an important source of collective memory (Espinoza, Osorio, and Reyes, 2011).

Being familiar with these expressions allowed us to guide the art therapy workshops. This is the way we started working with the most vulnerable groups and we gave workshops based on music that began with the collective creation of décimas⁹. However, from a broader creative approach, we opened up activities creatively related in any way to them and their culture such as stories, cuecas, payas¹⁰, etc. There, in a playful spontaneous environment based on safety, we shared fears and from the point of view of art therapy, creative resources were mobilized, which in itself has a positive effect.

Following this first activity we undertook a second phase of workshops using plastic and visual materials. This activity was very new for these older adults whose education

⁷Singing of the divine (Canto a lo Divino): is a type of popular poetry sung that includes verses that play on religious themes. It is a Chilean tradition particularly.

⁸*Cueca* is a family of musical styles and associated dances from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru. In Chile, the *cueca* holds the status of national dance.

⁹ Décimas: Ten line stanza type of 10-line poem. Décima is one of the most established strophic forms and widely distributed throughout Latin America. It being particularly significant in rural and popular poetry.

¹⁰Payas: a kind of popular song, the singer, accompanist with a guitar, improvise different themes.

levels were very low and a percentage of them were illiterate. We started with individual creations then ended by creating a collective collage-mural. Observation of these groups evidenced a gradual commitment to the creative process and in some cases allowed for the symbolic representation of experiences of terror and fear after the earthquake. From a psychosocial perspective it allowed participants to integrate their personal experiences within a collective matrix.



Fig. 4 Elderly of Paredones preparing a collective mural-collage

Collective Memory

During the development of the workshops many seniors agreed that with the passage of time their generation (that are around 60 to 70 years old) will leave this world and with them many of the old traditions. Traditional customs such as songs (singing) to the divine, a large number of stories typical of each area, the *payas* and the old parties, are

in serious danger of disappearing over time, as new generations of young people have other interests and other ways to have fun (Espinoza, Osorio and Reyes, 2011).

We then turned our attention as researchers to the theme of collective memory, which has a strong tradition in Latin American Social Work. In popular education practitioners have employed creative resources such as images, drawings, stories, plays, and other creative modalities in addressing collective themes and issues. This collective research process involved the use of information, collected and systematized by the group, as a source of objective knowledge of facts and issues through community meetings, socio-dramas, artistic techniques and cultural gatherings. This participative methodology allows for the collective construction of knowledge and research; it facilitates critical insight into the history of the community and its recovery, respects popular wisdom and involves the return and dissemination of new knowledge (Fals -Borda, 1985).

The collective memory is commonly called 'collective memories' because the interpretations of specific events depend on the groups and communities that experience, interpret and make sense of those events (Mendoza, 2005).

In essence we understand the process of locating memory, contained in objects and spaces, as involving the act of re-living experiences and making them present. As memory is always new, an act of creativity aims to create the past and include it in the present of the community, so that it makes sense, thus giving reasons and justifications for planning the future (Fernández Christlieb 1994). This sort of intervention is based on the premise that memory phenomena are strictly constructions of reality, mediated by language and images in a process of interpersonal communication (Fernández Christlieb, 1994, Mendoza, 2005).

From this perspective the potential of art and collective creation processes can not only be employed as investigative tools but also as a trigger for processes of social reflexivity. This experience allows us to visualize the ideas proposed by art therapist Eva Marxen (2009) about ethnography through art. Unlike traditional visual anthropology '*ethnography through art*' is performed by '*active visual ethnography*', which delegates the production of images to another. This coincides with current

qualitative research methods in Arts-Based Research, which also implies the active inclusion of communities in the research process and thus a form of social relationship through art.

Art therapists share these approaches and the conviction that creativity possesses a real force for social transformation and the search that goes beyond aesthetic achievements. Aside from being a force for the benefit of communities and social improvement this approach is, above all, one that favours the collaboration and participation of the communities involved in carrying out the work.

Visual Arts in Chile 1992-2012

A problem plaguing our reflections makes reference to the relationship between art and professional artists and the community.

The practices described are mainly (except for the workshops on artistic education and movie appreciation) activities fostered by workers or social educators and/or health workers, and popular artists amongst others, who are not directly involved with artistic institutions.

In this sense we can ask how professional artists are linked to the field of social participation and health. What implications do these practices have for the development of art therapy in social-community contexts in Chile?

For art historian Guillermo Machuca (2006) Chilean art developed after the democratic recovery of 1989 and can be divided into two large periods; the first began in the present democratic system and lasted until the middle of the decade of the 90s; the second can be recognized as occurring during the last years of the former century and covers the latest generations of artists who have appeared during the present Century.

The first period (the first half of the decade of the 90s) is distinguished by a relative dependence with regards to art and the critical discourse developed in Chile during the decisive years of dictatorship, and the second, with some exceptions, is characterized by a sort of attitude of amnesia regarding history and memory of the past

This interesting proposition suggests to us a sort of distance taking from artistic practices with regards to topics linked to social change in the second half of the decade of the nineties.

It should be pointed out that recent student mobilization movements have changed this scene by making a new generation of young artists aware of social difficulties. This can be seen especially among the current generation of art students from the University of Chile.

Final Reflections

Given the preliminary nature of this paper, we have presented a set of initial issues that allow us to establish links between art, health and community in the period 1992-2012 in Chile.

One relevant issue in the development of art therapy in Chile that I would emphasize is the extensive development of popular education and socio-community practices that emerge from a transformative vision, which integrates action and reflection in its dialogical practice. Creative and artistic resources have been present throughout these developments, especially on the South American continent. In this sense we could hypothesize that in Chile, one of the most relevant references for using artistic resources in community health and psychosocial work is mainly inspired by popular education, which in turn suggests the need for a critical view of the history of art therapy in our country with its own reference points and context.

Another hypothesis revolves around the consideration that the pre-cursors in the development of art therapy in Chile emerge in relation to these psychosocial visions, unlike traditions of psychoanalysis from which art therapy has emerged in European countries and the United States.

In conclusion, in the sense of analyzing how my training as an art therapist has transformed or enriched my vision and practice in community work through art, I note a greater awareness of the non-verbal and relational processes in community practices

based on artistic resources, and a greater understanding of mentalization and symbolization through art.

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