Art Therapy in Other Cultures: Awareness of Self, Awareness of Others
by Heidi Bardot, Director, GW Art Therapy Program

The focus of this issue of Drawn from the Circle is on other cultures and learning about not only the other culture, but about ourselves reflected in that culture. Since the last newsletter, we have had students, faculty and alumni travel to South Dakota to an Indian Nation Reservation, the Ukraine, India, Grenada (for research), Haiti (for disaster relief) and Korea. Through these experiences, we have shared art therapy, thrown out what we know about westernized therapy and focused more on the inherent healing and communication of art itself, explored our own heritage, examined our biases and stereotypes, and in the end have become better, more self aware, and culturally sensitive current and future art therapists.

Additionally, in our incoming class, we have welcomed into our student body three students from Korea which broadens our diversity to include students from Korea, Taiwan, India, Canada, France, Ukraine, Puerto Rico, and Grenada. Because of our increased number of international students and the additional stressors that are part of moving to another country (i.e., new language and customs, homesickness, limited support system) we initiated an International Student Group within the Art Therapy Program. It has long been a goal of mine to provide international students additional support and a way to connect with others who have gone through the same experience. We appointed Elva Anderson, an adjunct faculty member and former PATA Multicultural Chair, as the mentor. Elva has already led two get together lunches and there are plans for activities during the holidays when many international students are left on their own as returning home may not be possible. We are hoping this may ease the transition of making GW and Washington, DC their new home, at least for the next few years.
Highlights of South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation
by LaToya Kinard, 2nd year

Being Immersed in Another Culture

Often times we as upper class Americans become so accustomed to a privileged lifestyle that we assume most live similarly and anything less is unacceptable and ignored. Such was the case during my voyage to South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation. In my youth, I would say, “When I get older I will never have this or that in my home because my home is my only safe haven and it has to be a certain way in order for me to feel safe and at peace.” However, upon arriving to Pine Ridge, I entered a home with floor boards as a foundation, no natural water supply, and doors leaning rather than closed against their frame. Upon seeing this, I was completely humbled. Believing that this family and many others did not chose to be in this situation but were making the best of what they were given. I found an entirely new appreciation for what I have despite it not meeting my prior high standards.

Taking our Privilege for Granted

As a visitor on this reservation, it was brought to my attention that I was one of the few African American women that the Lakota people see. As a result of the Lakota’s excitement, I received compliments, hugs, random acts of kindness, and more. I was completely amazed that a group of people would show such approval merely for the color of my skin. It was something new, a feeling I never experienced especially being a part of an American culture that classifies black at the bottom of the race pole. Nevertheless, it hit me, I realized that what I felt was a taste of the “privilege,” (i.e., the right to enter a room and not be looked down upon, the right to speak without a conscientious censor, the right to a historical past of leaders, money, land ownership, and freedom). What I felt was an alliance that cannot truly be discussed because “we have to pick our battles,” and in being black it is sometimes better to be silent than fitting the stereotype of appearing like “an angry black person.”

Art Therapy with Another Culture

In our directive driven sessions, it was significant for Kitty and me to include the cultural context of our site. For instance, prior to completing the silk hoops, which focused on the theme of experiencing changes without an ability to control the outcome of the situation (e.g., parent has a baby, environmental disaster), we had the children complete a nature walk in which they listened to and observed their natural environment. Afterward, the children used ink, a fluid substance, to paint on silk hoops, which were held up by the rocks collected from their nature walk.

We Brake and Maneuver Cautiously

Our vehicles yield to the wild horses as they roam their natural environment, free of inhibition, fear, and tribulation; they enjoy the land. The same can be said about therapy with diverse clients, you must adjust your reality to better understand your clients’.

“Sometimes the importance of someone’s culture lies in the history of their people. How much more effective could therapy be if we, the therapist, knew the history?”

Wounded Knee Massacre Burial Site
This is our land and we want it back,” came the statement I did not know I was waiting for. I stared at the speaker of these words: a woman, a mother, a grandmother, an artist, a descendent of Crazy Horse and then I shamefully looked away.

The mix of emotions I experienced once arriving on Pine Ridge Reservation, emotions I could not verbalize, began to divide and become clear. I felt immense guilt. Not only was I part of the culture who stripped this woman, her family and people of their land, but I helped to ruin, pollute, and destroy it and do not have the power to fix it. These feelings of guilt remained present throughout my time on the reservation. At times I felt like an intruder, a voyeur, and out of place as if I had no right to be there.

At the same time, I felt lucky to be in the presence of the many wonderful people I was able to meet and to fully immerse myself into Native culture and way of life. One of the most fascinating phenomena that will stay with me always is the concept of time. I began to notice that each morning I woke up determining the day of the week became an afterthought. Instead of listing in my head everything I was going to be doing that day and the times I needed to be doing them, I focused on the present moment with the comforting knowledge that I could simply let everything happen and unfold naturally. The concept of time began to fade and the result was a freeing and liberating experience. I felt more at peace, in my element, and calm.

“I focused on the present moment with the comforting knowledge that I could simply let everything happen and unfold naturally.”
Upon returning from India, people greeted me with, “You’re back! How was India?” I would respond with a very ambiguous “It was great, thanks” because honestly, trying to sum up the experience in a short phrase seems insurmountable as the right words just don’t seem to exist.

India began after a long flight by way of Qatar, which undoubtedly let me know that we were not in Kansas, or DC, anymore. Exiting the airport in Chennai, the heat, smells, and stares from the sardine-packed people were the first things to greet me. These became characteristics of daily life of India.

Of course there were difficulties in India. Seeing the poverty, and knowing how some of the people live was heart wrenching. The smells, dirt, heat, foreign viruses, squat toilets and the stares from locals can be taxing. None of this mattered though when I think of all the amazing moments that were spent with the other 17 incredible women on this trip. Not only did I grow closer to them by spending large amounts of time together and seeing the sights and shopping, but also as we served the people of Chennai in our respective internships, and then joined together and discussed the needs of the people and ourselves through our group supervisions.

I feel grateful to have been able to explore Chennai, to go camping in the Yercaud Mountains, to have swum in the Bay of Bengal, to wander the markets of Pondicherry, and to see ancient temples that tell so many stories. India is a vibrant and multifaceted nation where guests are considered gods. Every person I met gave so much to me while I was there. I am glad that I was able to give back to the people what I could through the joy of art therapy.
Seven Days in The Land of the Morning Calm
by Donna Betts, GW Art Therapy Faculty

During the week of June 22-28, I was honored to be the guest of Yeungnam University’s art therapy program, in Daegu, South Korea. “Developmental Disabilities and Art Therapy” was the subject of the three days of workshops I conducted with local art therapy students and professionals. From the moment I arrived in Daegu until the day that I left, I was humbled by the kindness of the art therapy program Director, Dr. Choi, her faculty and their friends who took me sightseeing, shopping, and dining (the food was fantastic), and ensured that I had a fabulous experience in their country. Which I certainly did!

I was very much impressed with the beauty of Gyeongju Bulguksa, a head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in the Gyeongsang province. The temple is home to seven national treasures of South Korea, including two gilt-bronze statues of Buddha. With the invaluable assistance of my translator Day Young Yun, my workshops at YU seemed to be well-received. Participants learned about developmental disabilities, including autism and mental retardation, and relevant art therapy approaches and evaluations. I was even able to integrate some assessment research into the packed schedule. Despite seven consecutive days of jet lag, I gained a deep appreciation for Korea’s gentle, effusive and passionate people during my unforgettable week in the Land of the Morning Calm.

Gyeongju Bulguksa Temple

Two New GW Online Resources

The International Art Therapy Research Database
by Donna Betts, GW Art Therapy Faculty

I have spent the past year planning and implementing a new resource for the art therapy community: The International Art Therapy Research Database (IATRD). As originally conceived by Linda Gantt, PhD, ATR-BC in 1992, the IATRD is an internet-accessible repository of artworks made by members of different social, national and/or diagnostic groups, with comments from the artists and art therapists, supplemented with pertinent demographic and diagnostic data. You can check out the IATRD in its preliminary phase and learn more about it at: www.arttherapyresearch.com

As the IARTD Director, I will continue to build and develop this resource, which should launch officially in 2011, with the support of IATRD Technical Director John Lorance, MS, ATR, and a student assistant.

The GW Art Therapy Blog
by Heidi Bardot, Director, GW Art Therapy Program

We have just launched the GW Art Therapy Blog. We will be using this blog to update and inform you of current news, events, and opportunities that are occurring in the Program. This will allow you to keep informed between the two yearly editions of Drawn from the Circle. Come and explore!

www.gwarttherapy.wordpress.com
Experience of Integrating Counseling Models Cross-Culturally: Eco Centered Art Therapy, US—Ukraine

by Iryna Natalushko, 3rd year, Fulbright Student

My return home to the Ukraine this summer presented an exceptional experiential opportunity. I was at the cross-roads of Slavic mentality and current integration into the American mode of thinking. Bridging academic and experiential training of the GW Art Therapy Program with Pavel Lushyn’s counseling program in ecofacilitation in the Ukraine, I paused to become fully present and aware of the nonlinear quality to my educational and professional development path. Pavel took on the role of a catalyst. As a visiting student guest to his program, he spontaneously suggested I do a session with a group of third-year students.

This was my first counseling experience in Ukraine after two years of studying in American art therapy as a Fulbright grantee. Feedback from my colleagues was controversial, ranging from “good job at preserving the core of ecofacilitation” to “now I see why Americans are more likely to seek help, it is so different.”

A further workshop was suggested and I defined my style of practice as eco-centered art therapy. Eco-centered art therapy is using art therapy’s clinical thinking and tools within a broader eco-centered frame of reference. Aspects of this approach are (1) development through crisis, where the latter is not pathological, but is a transitional formation targeted at creating new resources on both the individual and the systemic levels; (2) counseling as a systemically-distributed process of generating new self-regulating options for the client, the therapist, and the systems they are part of; (3) change shaped by the law of spontaneous self-development and self-regulation; and (4) individual responsibility for asking for help and what speaks to the client in the response, thus, help is embedded in the presenting problem.

Additionally, consciousness studies influence my practice and lifestyle through yoga and awareness.

In a small group of ecofacilitators and colleagues, I did a demonstration deeply rooted in the eco-centered model of transition. A short warm-up in group work was followed by two demonstrations of individual sessions. Art-making was unquestionably ecological.

On a personal note, working in Ukraine this summer, I witnessed how the parts of my undetermined, unclarified, and unintegrated past, connected and completed each other. Two-semesters of training at the school of ecofacilitation were applied to clinical practice. American art psychotherapy was justified. Visual art resonated cross-culturally. And yoga and awareness strengthened their presence.

Extracting the juice of this experience and channeling Mahatma Gandhi in turning to my past, present, and future self, I’d like to say: “Be the change you want to see in the world,” speaking from the heart of ecofacilitation—“Be the change,” and the sound of awareness—just “Be.”

I extend words of appreciation to the dedicated professors and supervisors of the GW Art Therapy Program, particularly to Heidi Bardot, Lisa Garlock, Jean McCaw, Ezekiel Rothman, Tally Tripp, and Elizabeth Warson for nurturing an incredible experimental spirit in the Art Therapy Program.
Thank you to my GW art therapy peer, Iryna Natalushko, and the ways of this small world, I had the pleasure of presenting about art therapy in August in Kyiv, Ukraine, to a group of professionals and students in the mental health field.

Having traveled to Ukraine several times to visit family, incorporating my professional side into this visit was a new experience for me. I was aware that art therapy does not yet exist in Ukraine in the standardized format in the USA and is usually viewed as a specialty under psychology; however, art is everywhere. Art is woven into the culture in architecture, religion, history, performances, advertising, and fashion.

As Iryna translated to the group as I gave a brief overview of art therapy, I wondered how this two-step communication would work during the experiential portion with the attendees, as I was so used to communicating directly with others.

The group consisted of thirteen women and two men, most of whom had at least basic knowledge about the idea of art therapy and some who had previously used art techniques in their own work. During the introductions, most participants expressed the desire to learn more about art therapy because they were in the mental health field and had witnessed art as healing or were simply curious to learn more. In keeping with a workshop-focused group, I asked the attendees to focus on their interactions with others, such as clients or colleagues, and structured the art experiential as a way to help attendees better understand how art therapists use art making to express and communicate. The attendees dove right into the art making, using acrylic paints, oil pastels, chalk pastels, pencils, markers, on white paper. Silence took over the room except for the sound of art making.

During the discussion of the artwork and art making process, I felt my concerns about translation and communication diminish and give way to the flow of observing and sharing of artwork. As I had seen so often in the USA, the artwork shared something that words cannot always articulate as richly.

One of the interesting parts of the discussion was the focus from some attendees on wanting me to “explain their artwork.” I clarified several times about my philosophy of the artist as expert of his or her own artwork and the role of the art therapist to guide the individual in further artistic exploration by asking questions and suggesting materials or projects. I experienced firsthand the tendency for individuals in a Ukrainian psychology workshop or class to blur boundaries from educational to therapeutic. I was thankful for my training and experience to help me navigate this new process.

The curiosity and enthusiasm of the attendees was contagious and I realized that in addition to learning about art therapy, they also desired to communicate their knowledge and experience in the mental health field to a professional from another culture.

This workshop opportunity illuminated differences in approaches but also the many similarities that exist between mental health professionals across the world. For me, the experience was an introduction and opportunity to teach and learn and I hope to return and continue building connections with the professionals in Ukraine so that knowledge can be shared and art therapy developed in the most beneficial way possible.
The Power of Countertransference Art
by Lauren Hayes, 2nd year

As therapists, we have the unique opportunity to be invited into our client's worlds. We are encouraged to be supportive of our patients, and treat them with unconditional positive regard. But what if we have a negative feeling like anger, or an overwhelming positive emotion like love in reaction to our clients? This is called countertransference and it is the feelings that we experience in response to our interactions with clients. These feelings are real, and they can derive from experiences of past interactions we have had. When these feelings arise, it is important to explore how the current interaction with your client is affecting you, and the good news is that as art therapists, we have an amazing tool: ART!

I discovered the power of countertransference art when I used it after a difficult group session. Countertransference art was something I had always been encouraged to do, but had never tried. During one of my group sessions, I was experiencing feelings of anger towards a client, and I was so confused as to why. Needless to say, these feelings were very troubling and new to me, and I needed a way to explore them. With my supervisor out for the day, and nobody to process this interaction with, I decided to try countertransference art. The results were fantastic, and I was able to come to a greater understanding of myself in that moment, as it related to past experiences. I found that there really is a connection between our past interactions, and how we will continue to react if we don't take the time to understand them.

Countertransference art for me, allowed me to find closure and understanding with this type of interaction. Rather then mulling over this exchange, picking it apart and worrying about my feelings for days, the art allowed me an outlet for exploration, and a method for closure. I would encourage everyone to use our most wonderful gift as artists whenever possible; and countertransference is just one more way we can further illuminate the path towards becoming better art therapists.
GWISH: Summer Institute Art Therapy Presentation
by Bette Peabody, 2nd year

Art Therapy was well received as one of six patient interventions presented to sixty health care and pastoral care professionals attending The George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health (GWISH) a five-day summer institute in Washington, DC. Other interventions included Mindfulness/Relaxation Response, Compassionate Presence, Meaning-Centered Therapy, Narratives/Journaling, and Spiritual Counseling.

Focusing on art therapy and spirituality, I addressed the benefits of art therapy, the mind-body-spirit influences of art interventions, tools and techniques, Carl Jung's lasting influence on the arts and healing model, theoretical approaches of art therapists in the arts/spirituality arena (Mimi Farrelly-Hansen, Shaun McNiff, and Pat Allen), case study highlights, and advantages of art therapy with palliative care patients.

During a reception afterwards, several participants asked how they might use art with their pastoral care clients. I connected with the Narratives/Journaling presenter, Linda Raphael, Ph.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of Medical Humanities/Director of Track in Medical Humanities, The George Washington University School of Medicine. We discussed the similarities between her approach and the concepts Carol Cox presented in her Therapeutic Journaling class. I was excited when Dr. Raphael asked if I would like to give my art therapy presentation to her medical students and collaborate on a joint art therapy/journaling intervention.

Despite being a little nervous about giving a power point presentation to such a large group of professionals, I was pleased for the opportunity to tout the many merits of art therapy.

Self Care! Self Care! Self Care!
by Nina Dalangin, 2nd year

“What do you do for self-care?!”

Self-care is one of the most important aspects of being a therapist. When I entered the art therapy program, I had no idea what self-care truly meant, or how important self-care is. But as the year progressed and life became a ball of chaos, I learned just how much I needed to embrace and practice self-care. Of course like many others, I felt like I had no time to sit still and focus on my personal needs. Attending grad school full-time, working part-time, and going to my internship 16 hours a week, life became suffocating. I felt like I barely had time to breathe! I had to find motivation in something that I enjoy, something that relaxes my mind and body, and something to make me feel free.

I finally figured it out! Running! I have always enjoyed running and being outside, but what I really needed was something to give me that extra push to make sure I was running, or “practicing” self-care more often. I decided to sign up for my third half-marathon, October 16. People think I am absolutely crazy for putting myself through such “torture,” but to me, running is self-care. The feeling of running through the wind and having all of your thoughts swept away, the feeling of accomplishment, and the feeling of being able to take a deep, fresh breath in a wide open space. For me, there is no other feeling of freedom such as this; the ability to feel stress-free for a few moments out of my week makes a difference.

With that said, I encourage everyone to find that one enjoyable, relaxing activity and become more conscious of practicing self-care. Do not be afraid to let go once in a while, and take care of the most important person in your life: Yourself!
Arts + Health Month Activities at First Year Site
by Sara Oppelt, 1st year

Arts + Health Month begins this November, and the Goodwin House, a local retirement and long term care community will be partnering with the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) and The Phillips Collection to promote and increase awareness of the necessity of the arts in an elder population.

The mission of Goodwin House, Inc. is to support, honor, and uplift the lives of older adults and the people who care for them through a faith-based, nonprofit organization affiliated with the Episcopal Church. Maintaining independence and security, expressing individuality and fellowship, and celebrating life through every stage of aging are the core values of the local organization. Pauline Daniels, Goodwin House Alexandria’s Creative Center Coordinator, has been working to ensure an active, thriving and accessible creative community for all the residents.

Daniels will be working closely with NCCA executive director, Gay Powell Hanna, PhD, MFA and The Phillips Collection’s Anita Bowles, to ensure the positive impact of the Creative Arts Program at Goodwin House. The NCCA is an interdisciplinary non-profit organization dedicated to fostering an understanding of the vital relationship between creative expression and the quality of life for older people regardless of the ethnic, economic status or level of physical or cognitive functioning. NCCA provides professional development and technical assistance including service as a clearinghouse for best practices, research and policy development to encourage and sustain arts and humanities programs in various settings.

It is with this intentional vision, that Daniels has dedicated the entire month of November to Arts + Health awareness. The first week of the month will commence with a screening of the critically acclaimed documentary, “I Remember Better When I Paint.” The first international documentary about the positive impact of art and other creative therapies on people with Alzheimer’s and how these approaches can change what is known about the disease. Goodwin House Alexandria is pleased to invite all who are interested to come to the screening and to participate in an open question and answer session after the film. The months’ activities will also include a “Create-A-Thon” week, collaborative art installations, and the launching of the “Art Cart”, a mobile studio facilitated by the current GW Art Therapy Intern.

Call for Art
The Goodwin House Alexandria, a local long term care facility, would like to invite all George Washington Art Therapy students and alumni to submit two and three dimensional works for their residential gallery space. The show will be February 27, 2011 through April 15, 2011. If you are interested in showing your work, please contact: Sara Oppelt at seo@gwmail.gwu.edu.

Entry forms will be posted in the studio and must be filled out and submitted to Goodwin House no later than January 15, 2011.

Residents working in the studio

The Fall 2010 Incoming Student Exhibit is exceptional. The show includes a wide range of media, sizes, and evocative imagery. Stop by to see the show—it will be up until mid-December.
Reflections Along the Way
by Katerina Evans, 2nd year

Just a few weeks into my second year in the Art Therapy Program, I find myself thinking about this time one year ago. It seems like a lifetime has passed in an instant. I remember meeting a few of the second year students and thinking there was such a difference between them and me. They seemed so self-assured, like they were in the right place, the right field, while I felt overwhelmed and somehow groundless. Although I felt comfortable in the classroom, I felt like an imposter at my internship. How could I help clients when I was so apprehensive and really, had no idea about any of this?

Fast forward to one year later and I understand the difference between them and me. As I begin this year, I have a ground beneath me. A strong foundation which I built with the help of my professors and my classmates, my internship experiences and my personal growth, and of course the millions of hours reading and poring over all the articles and books and new information coming my way. No longer grasping at everything I see in an effort to layer myself with knowledge so that I might “feel” more like a therapist, I find that I am beginning to actually understand the article from our first semester which talked about new therapists and their need to be omniscient. I am smoothing my edges. I am learning to breathe into myself, knowing that I am not the expert and that’s ok. I’m not supposed to be. I still worry about meeting new clients and about wanting to do it right, but I’m settling into the idea that I really can do this. I’ve thought a lot about our class tree—our first introduction to each other and to the program. I miss seeing it in the studio, but it seems like we’ve grown so far beyond that one tree. Today, I see us more as a collection of trees—each one of us holding a piece of our original tree, and yet each one can now stand on her own. Together, we make this incredible forest - each one of us unique, with her own style and presence, while we are connected by this great underground system of roots which links us to each other.

It gives me pause to think that one year from now, most of us will be on to new adventures, leading new and different lives, but I believe that we will all continue to hold on to that piece of our tree, knowing that we will remain connected, one to the other, no matter where we are. With that in mind, I look forward to our continued growth along this journey to becoming Art Therapists.

Internships:
by Lisa Garlock, GW Art Therapy Faculty, Clinical Placement Coordinator

“If you hear a voice within you say ‘you cannot paint,’ then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced.”
~Vincent Van Gogh

We are off to a fast and furious start, with 55 students interning in the DC Metro area. Some of our new sites include School for Arts in Learning (SAIL), Goodwin House, Wheatley Education Center-DCPS, and Thrive DC. New or returning sites soon to be active include Goodwin House at Bailey’s Crossing, St. Elizabeth’s Hospital and Capital Hospice DC. A very special welcome to all our new and returning supervisors!

We are always seeking new internship sites—if you are interested, please contact Lisa Garlock at lgarlock@gwu.edu
Big Sib/Little Sib: Welcoming in a New Year
by Katryn Ellis, 2nd year

We have gotten off to a great start this year. When I arrived last year, I felt like this was going to be a very daunting experience. However, I also knew that I would have a big sib to help me if I needed it. Second year students (“big sibs”) are assigned each year to a first year student (“little sibs”) so as to make a connection with someone who has already been through the experience.

This year the second years put their own spin on the welcome event. The goal was to have a get-together where there was fun, food, art and conversation. In order for the little sibs to find their respective big sib we gave clues to look for, such as a piece of jewelry we had on, a rhyme, or a piece of personal information. Then everyone began to get to know each other and in the process discovered their big sib.

Once everyone found their sibs we made Artist Trading Cards together and got to know each other. Overall, the event seemed to be a success and we are looking forward to a great year. Hopefully this helped the first years to feel supported and to begin to feel a part of GW. Should there ever be a question about school or if you just need someone to talk to, that’s what big sibs are for—don’t hesitate to keep in contact. Good luck with the rest of the school year; I hope it’s a good one!

Kathryn Lovinsky and Katryn Ellis

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