

3. ARTISTIC EDUCATION AND CREATIVE ART-THERAPY

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Abstract: *As for the phrase "artistic education", in this paper work, it was used in the way of cultivating individual, authentic artistic talent, of acquiring individual skills, abilities and techniques, with the aim of training artists in different fields of arts, as well as the assimilation of theoretical and practical knowledge from the fields of theory, aesthetics, criticism and history of arts etc., adapted to natural, innate capacities with a view to non-verbal creative expression and development plastic expressiveness. Art education and art therapy have in common the fact that they are forms of applications of art that integrate theories and practices of art pedagogy in a supportive environment: museums, art galleries, ambient art - street or interior - nature, classrooms or creative studios, where artists use the influences offered by the environments specific to the practice of the arts, which by their pluri/inter/trans-disciplinary character, encourage freedom of creation, thought, expression and imagination. Being "postmodernist" in art therapy, as Shirley Riley sees it, assumes a renunciation of programmed knowledge. For the art therapist it is essential to become the "student" of the client and to "learn from each client the meaning of the situation that he brings". Through "co-constructive" therapy with the client, the art therapist becomes a collaborator in the therapeutic activity. Art therapy, as a component of occupational therapy, aims to correct the consequences of the disease that caused the disability or handicap, the development of adaptive skills, so that a person with a certain degree of incapacity can make the most of his or her remaining potential, in order to recover (both at family and professional level), by integrating into a useful activity at the highest level accessible to him. The therapeutic methods of the current era experiment with ways specific to each art, to achieve interdisciplinary exchanges. They connect to disciplines such as psychology or psychiatry, anthropology, history, religion, to experience the primary therapeutic values of contemporary art.*

Key words: *artistic education, art-therapy, creative art-therapy, occupational therapy, therapeutic methods*

1. Introduction

In numerous centers of research and artistic education in Europe and the USA, art education that also uses therapeutic applications of art is called "adaptive art". In the Romanian specialized literature, as Vasile Preda specifies, many terms are used as synonyms: art therapy, art in therapy, ergo-therapy, occupational therapy, creatology workshop, creativity psychotherapy. We have used some of these terms differently, depending on the objectives of the various types of creative, educational/art-therapeutic activities subject to analysis.

As for the phrase "artistic education", in this paper work, it was used in the way of cultivating individual, authentic artistic talent, of acquiring individual skills, abilities and techniques, with the aim of training artists in different fields of arts, as well as the assimilation of theoretical and practical knowledge from the fields of theory, aesthetics, criticism and history of arts etc., adapted to natural, innate capacities with a view to non-verbal creative expression and development plastic expressiveness. Starting from this approach, I expanded this meaning terminological

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for the formation of visual and verbal expression and communication skills, correlated with the development of mental, emotional and cognitive skills necessary for practice visual arts by people outside the artistic profession of all categories and ages, including people with special needs.

“The art-therapy has a broad applicability as it is used mainly for the rehabilitation, stimulation and development of children and adults with physical and mental disabilities but also for personal development and in education, respectively in prevention.”²²⁰ The working models practiced in Romania starting from the 90s, together with the information transfer especially in practice, made by various charity NGOs, are homologated and come from the UK, France and Germany, countries with a tradition in the research / development of art-therapy and related techniques. Visual arts, music, literature, physical exercises, dancing, theater and puppet shows are the main components of these techniques. In Romania, the specialists and the NGOs they represented opted for a plan with long-term effects, with an incidence at national level with the aim of helping as many beneficiaries as possible. After 1990, the Romanian movement of art-therapy grew and development of several levels of professionalization.

2. Artistic education and creative art-therapy

Art education and art therapy have in common the fact that they are forms of applications of art that integrate theories and practices of art pedagogy in a supportive environment: museums, art galleries, ambient art - street or interior - nature, classrooms or creative studios, where artists use the influences offered by the environments specific to the practice of the arts, which by their pluri/inter/trans-disciplinary character, encourage freedom of creation, thought, expression and imagination.

Art itself assumes the existence of an audience to which it is addressed (amateurs, financiers, experts, critics, buyers, etc.), this being an integration phase of the object created in the socio-cultural reality. In this sense I made the distinction between the "creative workshop of expression", which involves techniques, methods and procedural means which tend primarily to an aesthetic purpose, and the "therapeutic workshop of expression" which relies on another finality of art related to self-understanding, self-enrichment and healing; in the latter context, the art object is a form of affective communication, which serves as means of understanding, gives meaning, clarifies experiences that cannot be put into words.

We gave special importance to the direct participation of the artist in education/creative art therapy, recognized as a scientific research method, a recognition imposed by the specificity of the therapeutic practice. Referring to the direct involvement of the visual artist in the experimental process, as a subject to be researched and to its relationship with education and creative art therapy, Shaun McNiff believes that this "is an extension of his practice...it involves transference and countertransference and other subtle nuances that are constantly changing, coming from the experienced process...Sciences recognize the role of observation in research. It can be concluded, regarding the artist's personal participation in the experiment in creative art therapy research, as necessary and conditioned by

²²⁰ Preda, Vasile, *Terapii prin mediere artistică*, Editura Presa universitară clujeană, Cluj-Napoca 2003, p.122

practice"²²¹.

In the case of practicing art therapy, the artist and the beneficiary do not question whether "I am good enough"; value judgments are eliminated as the fullness of spontaneous expression is important. It is about an adaptive approach - all artists who practice art therapy are based on their artistic activity and have a common characteristic feature: they are in line with "essential pragmatism"²²², unlike the therapies through artistic mediation, where the therapists are non-artists, but use the language of visual arts in assessment and therapy. The therapeutic process in art therapy is based on the creativity of the artist, which together with that of the beneficiary merge into a creative flow that is adapted to the abilities and needs of the beneficiary during art therapy sessions.

Art, like any other technique used for artistic expression, cannot be separated from emotions. When we refer to the emotional level of humans, we must consider therapy. "At the emotional level of the artistic creator, we find the same ingredients necessary for psychotherapy. Each individual has his/her own perceptions and emotions, with his his/her cultural influences. The sensations originate within the setting of our social-cultural condition. As they are present in a relational framework, these become the result of projections."²²³ At this moment, the therapy through art becomes essential since it allows the experience of some positive and valorizing emotions and leads to the balance of the normal cycle of contraction – expansion which is characteristic to the human being.

Art-therapy, through the access to the nature of self-transformations and the relationship between humans, by its positive values which are the basis of understanding, exploration and assistance to the human being is a way of regaining and maintaining the somatic-psycho-social health as well as a way to prevent alienation. In this process, the artist-art therapist resorts to means taken from general artistic education to form psychomotor skills, in order to facilitate non-verbal expression, thus art crafts turn into therapeutic methods.

The use of nature as a medium for art therapy represents the preparation of techniques (specific to ceramic design and contemporary artistic ceramics) based on the application of some basic principles of nature: biomimicry, natural systems, processes as a model, elements as sources of inspiration in solving problems, mimesis, as an imitation of nature, either through the use of natural forms taken from the environment, or through prints or "stamps" after natural forms, or through images of forms (photographs, drawings, paintings after nature, processed sculptural forms, molds, etc.). The role of the art therapist is essential:

- recognizes and responds to the obvious as well as the hidden aspects of the child's productions;
- helps him to create emotionally expressive materials without influencing him;
- facilitates the development of the child's creativity.

Art therapy can also be used successfully for children with various other problems of language, thinking or various pathologies, with adults with various

²²¹ Shaun McNiff, *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*, Shambhala, 2004, p.213

²²² Mindy Jacobson-Levy & Gretchen M. Miller, (2022), *Creative Destruction and Transformation in Art and Therapy: Reframing, Reforming, Reclaiming*, Art Therapy, DOI: 10.1080/07421656.2022.2090306

²²³ Fabini, Dana, *Creativitate artistică. Relații între artele vizuale și terapia prin artă*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, pp. 54-55

problems of interaction, relationship and expression. In this way, art therapy can easily be included among classical psychotherapies. In art, the image is a substitute, a way to externalize life experience, impulses, fantasies, feelings. In art therapy it becomes a way, a tool to the deep parts of thinking and feeling. Being "postmodernist" in art therapy, as Shirley Riley sees it, assumes a renunciation of programmed knowledge. For the art therapist it is essential to become the "student" of the client and to "learn from each client the meaning of the situation that he brings"²²⁴. Through "co-constructive" therapy with the client, the art therapist becomes a collaborator in the therapeutic activity.

This position demanded a renunciation of power and determined a creative leap in therapeutic relationships. The artist, working on expressiveness, prolongs the creative process, which is established on the basis of a symbolic path, the finality of the creative process being an "artistic" object. This path is highlighted by "revelations-indications of meaning", which are less aware of meanings (as required in classical psychotherapies), but more of transversality, which highlights formal analogies between productions, the figures of alienating repetition of the subject, the history of his destiny and that of the transference relationship with the artist art-therapist, in the case of art therapy.

Hence the interest of a psychosemiotics, which would objectify these analogies in a practical research "a posteriori", V. Preda²²⁵ cites Darrault-Harris and Klein. The artist, the first viewer of his work, communicates with the emerging images, with himself, he uses creativity and imagination as investigative tools, learns everything during the plastic activity about how creativity, imagination from the process of "making art" can lead to a deeper understanding of the world through the creative process. One of the most obvious developments in the field of art therapy, throughout the last decade, was the return to the workshop and the development of a variety of workshop-based approaches (such as those described by Pat Allen, Carl Rogers and Shaun McNiff), which incorporates Rudolf Arheim's ideas from "Art and visual perception"²²⁶ and especially from "Gestalt Psychology and Artistic Form"²²⁷, in turn related to the informational aesthetics of Abraham Moles and Max Bense, for which information is putting into shape.

Starting from these ideas, Shaun McNiff developed the multimodal method in art therapy. In mental illnesses, which affect the entire human being in its biological, psychological, axiological and social complexity, the intervention of the art therapist is of great importance. „The condition of freedom of the sick individual being much lower compared to his own previous existence, the therapeutic intervention is of major importance and aims, in these cases, to increase independence and communication skills.”²²⁸ Art therapy, as a component of occupational therapy, aims to correct the consequences of the disease that caused the disability or handicap, the development of adaptive skills, so that a person with a certain degree of incapacity can make the most of his or her remaining potential,

²²⁴ Shirley Riley, *Contemporary Art Therapy with Adolescents*, Publisher Jessica Kingsley, 1999, p.201

²²⁵ Vasile Preda, *Terapii Prin Mediere Artistica*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p.173

²²⁶ Arnheim, Rudolf, *Art and visual perception: A psychology of the creative eye*. Univ of California Press, 1956

²²⁷ Arnheim, R., *Gestalt and Art: A Psychological Theory*, 2005th Edition, Springer

²²⁸ Emilia Chirilă, *Educație artistică și art-terapie cu mijloace specifice ceramicii*, Teză de doctorat, Universitatea de artă și design, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p.13

in order to recover (both at family and professional level), by integrating into a useful activity at the highest level accessible to him.

At this moment art therapy becomes essential, because it allows the experience of positive and rewarding emotions and leads to the balancing of the natural contraction-expansion cycle, characteristic of the human being. Art-therapy, through access to the nature of self-transformations and interpersonal relationships, through its positive values that are the basis of understanding, the exploration of the human being, is a way to regain and preserve somato-psycho-social health, to prevent alienation. Art therapy offers the beneficiary the safety he needs so much, the freedom to manifest and express his desires, opinions, attitudes, satisfies the human needs of belonging and identifying with a group.

3. Conclusions

The therapeutic methods of the current era experiment with ways specific to each art, to achieve interdisciplinary exchanges. The plastic artist with non-verbal communication skills, by understanding the guidelines of formal expressiveness that the arts adopt in the dynamics of their evolution, has, in clinical art therapy, a unique role and of fundamental importance in terms of: setting up the therapy space (individual and group), ensuring an environment facilitating therapeutic interventions through the use of volumes and the outside space in the channeling of psychic tensions outside; the organization of a more tense and sustained psychomotor activity with importance in psychomotor relaxation - basic phenomenon in relaxation techniques; adjusting some materials from the environment and transforming them into art, utilitarian and handicraft objects, in order to highlight certain inner tensions and at the same time to ensure the discharge of psychic tensions through the phenomenon of catharsis, which contributes to the increase of self-esteem and the rehabilitation of social dimensions - affective.

Through psychomotor training, the art therapist contributes to the visual detection of traumas, abuses and their causes - in crisis situations - and to relaxation, disinhibition - in post-crisis situations. Through the use of non-verbal language in the detection of practical skills, of self-knowledge, art therapy contributes to school and professional orientation, to the development of manual skills, perceptive qualities, good orientation in space, as personality traits. to highlight certain inner tensions and at the same time to ensure the discharge of psychic tensions through the phenomenon of catharsis, which contributes to the increase of self-esteem and the rehabilitation of socio-affective dimensions.

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