Picturing organizations: A visual exploration of the unconscious at work.

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Abstract

This article describes and considers the process and outcome of an experiential workshop held in the 'Art & Aesthetics of the Unconscious' stream at the second 'Art of Management & Organization Conference', Paris, 2004. The workshop was designed to introduce participants to an art therapy approach to explore the organizations in which they work. Through this process the intention was to consider and explore the potential of using art therapy in the context of organizational management. With particular focus on considering how it may assist with interventions where surfacing the unconscious material or psychodynamics of the organization may be useful in gaining insight into the organization and shape helpful responses.

Introduction

This article provides a background for the interface of art therapy and organizational management. The workshop and its rationale are described and observations and reflections are presented on some of the images and the process. This is discussed with reference to surfacing the unconscious and gaining insight into the psychodynamics of the organizational system. In conclusion some comments are made on the potential of using an art therapy approach in organizational management.

Art therapy

Art therapy is a specialized approach that brings together both art and therapy to explore people's experiences, perceptions and relationships. The creative art process and the making of visual images is the central focus. This is integrated with the knowledge and understanding provided by theories of psychotherapy, particularly object relations theory. There are many publications on art therapy that provide a background to this approach. (see for example: Wadeson, 1980; Dalley, 1984; Dalley, Case, Schaverien, Weir, Halliday, Nowell-Hall & Waller, 1987; Case & Dalley, 1992; Gilroy & Waller, 1992). This literature provides a thorough introduction to the training, theory and practice of art therapy. However, to briefly summarise,

1

art therapy has evolved from a breadth of disciplines; art & aesthetics; psychiatry; psychotherapy; and, child centred art education. It is also largely established from a base in psychotherapeutic principles (Waller, 1991). The theories of Freud (eg. 1900/1986, 1921/1985), Klein (1975a-d), Winnicott (1971), Milner (1971) and Jung (1968) are highly influential to the theory and practice of art therapy (Case & Dalley, 1992).

There are several key tenets, primarily the combination of art making and psychotherapy and the central place of art activity in the therapeutic relationship. There is no need to be artistically experienced or skilled to participate and gain from the process. But a capacity no matter how minimal to physically manipulate materials is involved. The individual is encouraged and supported to engage in creative visual productions within a defined therapeutic relationship. To become absorbed in the process of this activity and to allow the imagination to play and where appropriate to reflect on this to find their own meaning in the art making. While the individual engages in the art making they are held within the frame of the therapeutic encounter and the relationship with the art therapist. The art therapist is conscious of this and uses their understanding of psychodynamic processes to support the developing relationship and goals of therapy. Any dialogue, responses or interpretation of the art work the art therapist offers is informed by the experience of the relationship and a developing link with the participants associations and their search for meaning.

Therefore the significance of the relationship and the emotional and psychic containment it provides is an important factor. The form of the relationship might be an individual relationship with an art therapist but it can also be within an art therapy group. In a group as in individual work participants are invited to make visual images, usually spontaneously, to facilitate expression, exploration and discovery of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that may not be fully conscious or understood. This rests on the premise as articulated by an early founder of art therapy, Naumburg (1958/1966) that the unconscious can be accessed more immediately and expressed more fully in images than in words, allowing the emergence of hidden and unconscious influences within an individual or system of relationships such as those within a group or, as this article seeks to explore an organization or workplace. The discovery of these unconscious influences can facilitate expression, awareness and potential to integrate that which is hidden in order to function and develop more effectively and freely. As described, part of the art therapy process usually involves discussion and reflection upon the images with a view to exploring possible meanings and insights and significantly uncovering the unconscious content. The art therapist takes an observational position attuned to the meanings that may be

communicated from both the conscious and unconscious of the individual or the group. Taking into account the evidence in the visual productions as well as the experience of the relationship and the verbal associations that may be part of the encounter.

The aesthetic experience of art making in terms of process and product is important in art therapy. The aesthetic experience can be understood as a physical, sensory and embodied one. Art materials have different qualities and when physically handled provoke varied sensations and feelings. In the process of making an image a person is physically in relationship to the materials and responds to them through contact with the body. This sensual relationship also continues when experiencing or looking at a piece of artwork, as feelings and sensations are involved in viewing the physicality of the artwork. This sensory experience is a significant dimension in the process. The art or image therefore holds depth and richness of a sensory nature that can be explored to understand the person, the process and the unconscious. More recently art therapists have focussed on the aesthetics in art therapy. In particular Maclagan (2001) and Hyland Moon (2002) have contributed interesting views. Hyland-Moon has conceived of a notion of "relational aesthetics" in art therapy, she says: "The concept of a relational aesthetic leads to a valuing of art based on its ability to foster and deepen relationships to the self, the art object, other people and the environment" (p.155). Maclagan has conceived of a notion of 'psychological aesthetics' which he describes as "the relation between the actual (aesthetic) qualities of painting … and the inner (psychological) effects that these have on the spectator" (p. 7). Therefore the aesthetic experience involved in image making offers an expanded dimension to communication and experience in the therapeutic encounter.

Other key theoretical reference points that are relevant to mention include the work of Joy Schaverien (1987, 1992). She has contributed a number of important ideas from the perspective of an analytic art psychotherapist. She distinguished the "embodied image" in contrast to a "diagrammatic image" in art therapy. The embodied image being an emotionally alive image that holds feelings for a client in contrast to a diagrammatic image that illustrates thoughts and feeling but is not directly imbued with affect. She also examined and developed ideas about the process of transference in the images in art therapy and counter transference responses. In her examination of these concepts she developed thinking about how the art work functions as a site for transference projections and counter transference responses. She explored the idea of a triangular relationship between the client, the artwork and the art therapist and the reflective and distancing space this provides to work with these processes. She articulated ideas about the "talisman" and "scapegoat transference" to images and artwork in art therapy. The talisman

expresses the idea of an investment of power into an artwork and the scapegoat transference the projection of unwanted, disowned or split off aspects or feelings into an artwork that may then be disposed of.

The concept of the unconscious is central in psychoanalysis and therefore in psychodynamic theory and art therapy. Psychoanalysis is concerned with understanding the inner world and its dynamic processes. In relationship to organizations this can be extended to understanding the unconscious organizational anxieties and the defences against them. Some of the particular psychodynamic theories that have been most significant to the field of art therapy are those developed by Freud (1900/1986) on dream work and symbolism, and those of Winnicott (1971), namely his theories of transitional objects, transitional space and potential space. Freud's seminal work on the interpretation of dreams and the revealing of the unconscious through association with the content of the dream is similar to the exploration of the artwork in art therapy. The analysis of a dream can help integrate the unconscious aspects of a persons psyche and similarly the externalization and processing of the artwork in art therapy can facilitate an integration of the unconscious. The theories that Winnicott articulated grapple with understanding the development of symbolic play and forming a sense of self in childhood. The process of creating objects and the symbolic potential of those objects to hold an intermediary space of an internal and external nature are particularly linked to the artwork and the developing relationship in art therapy. The externalization of thoughts and feelings into artwork are central to the process and efficacy of art therapy and Winnicott's ideas relate closely with this process.

By bringing art therapy and organizational management together and considering unconscious processes there are a number of areas that are loosely linked and are relevant to discuss. Firstly the literature on art therapy with groups or organizations, secondly the psychoanalytic literature that focuses on organizations and thirdly organizational management literature that references psychoanalytic theory and more rarely art therapy.

Art therapy in groups and organizations

There is a reasonably well developed though small body of literature that focuses on art therapy in groups (for example: Waller, 1993; Skaife & Huet, 1998). This body of literature discusses the background of group therapy and systems theory in relationship to art therapy in groups. Reference is made to the theories of Bion (1961), Foulkes (1964), Foulkes and Anthony (1973), Yalom (1975), and Agazarian and Peters (1981) amongst others. The art therapists Waller

(1993) and Skaife and Huet (1998) explore the processes and possibilities of art therapy in groups. Their examination illuminates how the use of art therapy with its physical and active dimensions offers possibilities for communication of feelings and experiences within a group through visual images and their metaphorical resonances. From this work it is shown that art therapy adds a significant dimension to group therapy with respect to participant's engagement and allowing access to a multi layered complexity of material that can be worked with to facilitate insight and change. Skaife and Huet (1998) also identify that there is a potentially overwhelming amount of material that emerges from art therapy groups and that this is a challenging aspect. However they show that the complexities of the unconscious processes of the group can be surfaced through the image and image making process.

With respect to literature on art therapy in organizations there is a noticeable scarcity. Sandel (1987) discusses creative arts therapists as managers in organizations and Turner and Clark-Schock (1990) describe a workshop for corporate women using art therapy as part of a process to examine "self image". This article puts forward a case to support workers as whole individuals in the organizational realm, which is a relevant theme for this enquiry. However while these articles are useful they are just a beginning in exploring the spectrum of ways art therapy may be employed in organizational management. Significantly they do not focus on the use of art therapy as an organizational intervention where the unconscious is the focus of interest.

Psychodynamics of groups and organizations

The theories that inform the practice of group art therapy can be closely linked with the field of psychoanalysis of group processes and the work that has been done to apply these in very large groups such as organizations or mass groups such as societies. There is a relevant body of literature that considers unconscious processes in organizations through the lenses of psychoanalysis and systems theory that is relevant (Menzies-Lyth, 1960/1990, 1988; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Schneider & Weinberg, 2003). The premise of the literature rests on the theoretical stance that organizations operate with an unconscious life comparable to that of individuals. This literature suggests that "organizations pursue unconscious tasks alongside conscious ones and these affect efficiency and stress experienced in staff" (Krantz, 1994, cited in Obholzer & Roberts, 1994, p.25).

A major contributor to understanding unconscious processes in groups is Bion (1961). He developed a framework for analysing some irrational features of the unconscious life of groups. He theorised three basic assumptions that occur in groups; dependency, fight or flight and pairing. Stokes (1994) has developed these ideas in terms of cultures within large groups or organizations. He identifies "dependency" which relates to a culture of subordination; flight/fight which relates to a culture of paranoia and "aggressive competitiveness", and "pairing" which relates to a culture of collusion (Stokes, 1994, cited in Obholzer & Roberts, 1994, p. 26).

In the volume *The large group re-visited,* edited by Stanley Schneider and Haim Weinberg (2003), a chapter by Joseph Triest discusses the inter-relationship between the large group and the organization and identifies a dialectic tension between them. He draws on the Freudian theory (1921/1985) that there is an observable change in an individual when they become part of a group. Namely that the conscious personality recedes and the unconscious personality intensifies. This usually gives rise to a contagion of feeling within a group that can easily become polarized and split. Thus the "large group" is often seen as being led by the unconscious. When bringing these ideas to bear on organizations, Triest (2003) argues: "The organization, as a structure, therefore arouses ambivalence by its very nature" (p. 170). He further explains that the "organization" is called upon by the "large group" to provide safety against regression but at the same time its structures can be experienced as impersonal and cause narcissistic injury by limiting freedom, alienation, exclusion, persecution or engulfment.

> Splitting mechanisms are then activated against the organization and the setting is constantly attacked directly and indirectly (there is nothing people like more than hating the organization to which they belong). Such split situations make the individual choose between one of two possible and well known extremes: either identify with the organization as an alienated, mechanistic and non human object, and so become a "small part in a big machine" who only follows orders and instructions … or rebel to destroy the organization or to be persecuted by it…. (Triest, 2003, p. 170)

In his summary, Triest (2003) suggests that: "There is a constant dialectic tension between the organization, which offers 'order' and the large group which is a boiling cauldron of chaos…. Constant maintenance of the organization is therefore required to counter attempts on the part of the 'large group' to disrupt its systems and to take over its mechanisms" (p.173). This is an illuminating idea to keep in mind when considering the unconscious processes in organizations.

Organizational management, psychoanalytic theory and art therapy

There is a growing body of literature on organizational management that has used psychoanalytic theory (for example Baum, 1987; Diamond, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1991; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984; Carr, 1989, 2001; Carr & Gabriel, 2001; Gabriel, 1999; Gabriel & Carr, 2002; Hirschhorn, 1988; Kersten, 2001; La Bier, 1986; Levinson, 1972; Maccoby, 1976; Menzies-Lyth, 1960/1990, 1988; Miller, 1976; Schwartz, 1990; Zaleznik, 1977) to name but a few. This literature explores and puts forward the case for working from this perspective to focus on the hidden or unconscious dynamics within an organization. Taking this perspective allows a "therapeutic" view to be taken, one that takes into account the emotional human impact, which is often overlooked or disregarded in organizational management intent upon being 'rational'. This is of particular relevance when looking to explore an interface of art therapy in this field as it is concerned with the emotional and psychological welfare of people. Most generally it can be observed that the nexus between the world of the visual and creative arts and organizations is one rarely explored in the organization and management literature (as examples of rare exceptions and commentaries on such literature, see Carr & Hancock, 2003; Strati, 1999).

Using psychoanalytic theory in organizational management is charted in the literature but the use of art therapy is much less explored. A literature search revealed that there is one significant article by Barry (1994) on this topic. He describes the use of art making in an organizational consultation and reflects on some art therapy literature to explore this intervention. He discusses art therapy as a method within an analogically mediated inquiry (AMI) to surface the unconscious processes in an organization for use in organizational development work. AMI is the use of creative processes to produce an externalized mental map around phenomena of the organization such as one's job or team, to help mediate an inquiry process and illicit insights. In his article Barry makes a convincing case that art therapy processes can surface the organizational unconscious effectively and readily and indicates the potential for more exploration of this interface. Barry's contribution provides a significant foundation for consideration of the process and outcomes of the workshop that are described here.

Overview of literature and theory

The overview of this literature shows there is a shared theoretical basis between art therapy and psychoanalysis and rich connections to explore when this is combined with a group

or organizational intervention. The contribution of this piece is in the area of how the art therapist may approach the interface of art therapy and organizational interventions. To explore a particular workshop process and to generate reference points on this interface that may be further considered. However from this background review it would be expected that the use of an art therapy approach would provide access to unconscious material of the individual and the organization. And that the art therapists' perspective would be sensitive to understanding the content of the imagery and relevant interpersonal dimensions in relation to the organizational dynamics.

The workshop: Description of process

The aim of the workshop was to introduce participants to an art therapy approach to explore the organizations in which they work. Participants were invited to "picture their organization" that is to make visual responses on this theme. They were then invited to explore and reflect on these images for possible meanings, insights or understanding. Through this process it was intended to visually place organizations on the "couch" and see how the unconscious operates in differing kinds of systems and institutions.

The workshop was designed to safely foster an exploratory process to gain insight into the motivating forces operating in the work place. As an art therapist I am aware of the delicacy around fostering engagement in the art making process, especially for those who are not confident in art making or who are inhibited to participate for any number of reasons. The aim is to enable the participant to find a way to enter into the creative art process in a way that feels relatively comfortable and allows a process of expression and exploration to occur within defined and agreed boundaries. Once this has been established the next step is to support the developing relationship between participants and facilitator in an atmosphere of open exchange where participants can share the process of their images and discuss the thoughts, feelings and possible meanings that may emerge. A broad aim is to provide a space where each person has chance to be listened to and to process their work and experiences with others if they choose. Concerns about art skills are a common theme within art therapy and can inhibit participant's involvement. For the purposes of this workshop it was decided that ways that would enable and support participants into using visual images readily across all ranges of art skill and experience with the process was to be used. This approach is based on the psychotherapeutic notions of creating a therapeutic alliance and therefore a sufficient level of engagement to explore experiences. The

perspective informing the construction, facilitation and reflection of the workshop is based in object-relations theory as discussed earlier.

The workshop (90 minutes) was designed around the use of collage images from magazines and newspapers and was facilitated by an experienced art therapist and educator -- namely the author of this paper. The room and materials were prepared beforehand. There were a large and broad selection of pre-cut out images from magazines and newspapers arranged on the tables. These images were across a wide range of subjects and themes including a selection of words. These were provided as a way to provoke immediate associations to the organizational theme. The inclusion of some words in the collage materials was considered as a way to provoke immediate intellectual associations to the workshop theme and to include some options to meet participants in what may be a more familiar language. A small range of art materials was also available, that included; paper, magazines, scissors, glue-sticks, glitter and oil pastels.

There were 8 self selected participants, 4 male and 4 female. Although they were from a range of different countries, professions and work places (except two of the women who were colleagues and one who is a colleague of mine), they all shared the experience of being at the conference, having a high level of interest in the conference theme and in this particular workshop and they were predominately employed in university contexts. One could assume from this overview that the participants were willing and interested in the process and could bring a high level of intellect and reflection to the experience. I note these participants receptivity to the process because taking this approach into a less receptive organizational context maybe very different.

An overview of the approximate time structure of the session was as follows:

10 minutes – Introductions of participants/facilitator through a self selected image.
10 minutes – Explanation of process and aims of the workshop by facilitator.
40 minutes - Art making on the theme 'Picture your Organization'
30 minutes – Discussion and sharing of images and responses.

As participants arrived, they were invited to choose an image that could be used to introduce them selves. These images were shared as way to bring the role of the visual image into the foreground of the process in engaging with themselves and each other. The use of ready-made images was also considered as a way to maximize the engagement and flow of responses, associations and ideas given the time restriction (90 mins). This worked reasonably well in fostering an atmosphere of sharing of the self with the group through a visual image. Following

the introductions to each other participants were provided with a brief introduction to art therapy as an approach and to the aims and guidelines of the workshop. They were then invited to "picture their organization". A number of prompts were used to assist participants to find a point of entry to engage in the process in a way that felt relevant and accessible. The aim was to keep the scope of how this may be approached as open as possible to accommodate individual preferences, styles and situations. To provide opportunity for the participants to lead the process and potentially show ways of engaging that may not have been anticipated. The prompts or suggestions to facilitate use of the art materials and engagement with the theme included;

* As a springboard into the theme build on the image you have already selected as your introduction and select 2 or 3 more images from the stock of ready-made images that you associate with some aspect of your organization.

* Use any of the art materials to create an image based on the theme. Make a collage, or use other arts materials (a small selection of crayons and pastels were available) or mix the use of collage or other art materials. However suits you. [This encourages the scope for self-made images as these may also reveal different qualities.]

* What comes to mind when you think about your organization? What images, colours, forms, feelings arise? [This encourages engagement with feelings]

* The following aspects of a work place may trigger a starting point: management structure, workplace, working relationships, your job, a visual map, your CEO, the hierarchy. [This encourages multiple options to trigger responses]

* Select what may be useful to you. Where is your focus of concern or interest?

* Allow your self to play, use colours and shapes that evoke feelings and ideas.

* Do not be confined by realistic representations. All ways of making pictures or images are acceptable.

The group engaged easily and responded well to the invitation. They became absorbed in a period of quiet individually focused art activity for approximately 40 minutes. The group were then invited to explore and reflect on these images for possible meanings, insights or understandings. Sharing of the images was generally guided by the use of the following open questions: What was it like to do this? What process did you go through? What feelings do you have in response to the image? What do you notice or see in the image? What do others see? How is this useful? What has emerged?

Participants were forthcoming in talking about their images and the process, feelings and ideas that emerged. There was limited time to explore each person's work however various

experiences were shared and discussed. Due to the dynamic nature of the group more time was spent exploring some images than others. Through the sharing participants were encouraged to find their own interpretations or content in their images. The individual's own associations are considered key to understanding the meaning of the images created. The discussion generally included a narration of individual processes describing the making of the images and the associations to experiences in the workplace. Overall a variety of experiences and situations were communicated.

The responses and images of some of the eight participants will be briefly described, to try to encapsulate the material. Then some overall observations will be drawn together and some reflections will be offered on the experience related to large group processes in organizations and the unconscious. All participants gave verbal consent at the time of the workshop to being included in this article however I have protected their identities to provide a measure of detachment. The sequence of the descriptions that follow is not consistent with the actual process of the discussion that occurred in the group. Also only 5 of the images are reproduced and discussed due to practical issues such as the clarity of photographs obtained and some works were discussed more fully in the session and on later reflection some yielded more relevant themes to discuss here.

Usually when facilitating a therapeutic encounter the entire process of the experience is considered to shed light on understanding the complexity of its meaning and relevance. Usually there is attention given to attuning to any transference and counter transference material that arises. While reflecting on this paper it occurred to me that there may be parallels between attending a conference to create an exploratory art therapy workshop and entering an organization and offering a similar process to begin to gather peoples experience and understand the dynamics within the workplace. Perhaps the conference can be seen as an organization and the workshop as an exploratory consultative intervention? With this in mind I noted some feelings and thoughts in myself as I approached the task. I noticed I felt anticipation and anxiety about containing the experience for an unknown group. I had concerns that people may have difficulties engaging or trusting the art process, that there maybe feelings of intense scrutiny and fear of judgement. Also, that the participants may tap into powerful feelings that could be unsettling. These are all fairly standard expectations in this line of work, but nevertheless relevant to note as these shaped the construction of the workshop. My experience of the conference was very positive as it was well organized and greatly stimulating but I also sensed an edge of intensity in the arena of the work of a conference that is in presenting one's work for

critical feedback. In reflecting on the process of the workshop I will outline some other events and interactions that had an impact on the experience. The workshop proceeded smoothly until about 40 minutes into it when one member left to go to the bathroom. After a while he had not returned and I began to wonder what had happened. About 10 minutes after he had left someone knocked on the door and passed on the message that he was held up because there had been an accident but he would be back shortly. It was not clear at this stage if he had had the accident. This created some tension in me as I wondered what kind of accident and if he was hurt.

This throws up all sorts of thoughts about how to understand and respond to such an event. However I stayed with the plan and proceeded with it. As the art making drew to a close and the room (a lecture theatre) was not conducive to sitting together in a circle I decided to move the group outside to another space where we could all sit at the same level, however it was a compromised space as it was less contained than the lecture theatre. As we stepped out into the corridor we stepped into proximity of the situation that the group member was caught up in which was causing some activity down the corridor. We continued and found a space away from the centre of the 'activity' and about 10 mins from the end the member returned quite shaken. It transpired that he had found someone in a collapsed state who he had then attended to and called relevant medical help. This was a quite disturbing event and although we proceeded on course with our review of images, I was struck at the tension between attending to his particular 'emergency' presentation and the needs of the group to maintain their sense of safety and containment. I also in hindsight wonder about my decision to leave the containment of the lecture theatre as the benefits of being all on one level in a more conventional group setting was overshadowed by the disruptions that followed in changing the venue and opening the group up to the external emergency occurring outside. In recounting this as part of the process my aim is to bring to attention and include the dimension of context and how much complexity is present that is experienced by everyone in a 'group' situation and the demands it can present to a consultant or facilitator. I also in hindsight noticed I had not considered the 'whole' group process as much as I would if it were occurring in a therapeutic context but became rather distracted by the performative presentation format that a conference evokes. This is relevant in bringing to awareness how the art therapist is mindful of considering all of this contextual material in understanding an intervention even if no clear conclusion can be simply made.

Review of some of the images:

There are potentially many ways to present the material and images from the workshop. To try to capture the complexity succinctly the way I have chosen is to present the visual images produced by some of the participants followed by (in some cases) a summary of keywords that describe the visual content of the product of the image and where relevant the themes that were spoken about by the participant or discussed in the workshop. I have also included some of my own thoughts based on this material in relation to the surfacing of the unconscious of the organization.

 (**Figure 1)**

Above is the image (Figure 1) I selected to introduce myself to the group. A baby is looking at the viewer in a kind of engaged gaze and closely held by an adult, reflective of my feelings about conducting this experience with a new and relatively unknown group and unexplored area.
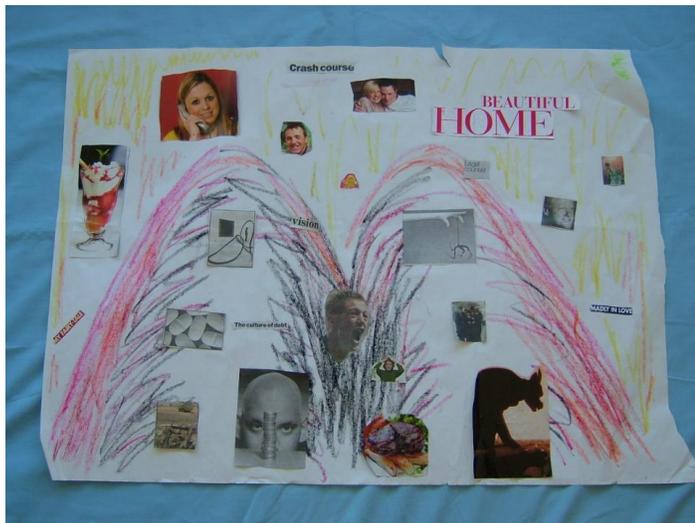
Participant A (Figure 2)

Participant A: Visual content/themes: Figure 2

The initially selected introductory image of a group of penguins interacting became a starting point in this image. Images included; a polluted underwater sea scape, "resignation", a business man, a man looking down manhole, "messy", hands holding rope, an Indian woman, young woman reading, "the healing touch", river delta, "love", closely bonded family (off the page), frog, woman with array of food, boat, "my work space". The images contain contrasting themes of love, relatedness, healing and the beauty of nature alongside pollution, resignation and messiness. The images seem to reference work activities and aspects of family/personal life. There are also aspects of the natural world with references to different cultures and human interactions and activities. This participant felt attached enough to the work to take it with her.

Commentary: This is a colourful rich collage that fills and even extends off the paper with many references that could be explored in relation to the organization. The participant shared the work openly and spoke about the aspects and images. On reflection now I wondered what the polluted sea scape and "resignation" may be associated to? And what might be happening with the man looking down the man-hole? Perhaps the themes in the images provide material or clues to direct an exploration of the organization and this participants' relationship to it, to potentially surface the unconscious material of the organization. I felt a sense that this participant enjoyed the process of creating this piece and reflecting on all the associated feelings and themes. As though the process was integrating and possibly validating her work activities. If I were to repeat this I would ask for written feedback from participants to check these kinds of perceptions.

Participant B (Figure 3)

14

Participant B: Visual content/themes: (Figure 3)

Erupting volcano/fountain, bald headed man looking at money (initially selected as the introductory image), faces, shouting, tearing at hair, grieving people, gargoyle, giant finger, person dangling on a string, tank, burnt out wreck, smiling faces, telephone, "culture of debt", "legal counsel", Bill Clinton, statue of liberty, MacDonald's happy meal, "beautiful home", "madly in love", "crash course", "my fairy tale", pills, ice cream sundae, sculpture, gallery, steak & chips. An erupting volcanic/fountain like form creates the structure of the image. The participant identified themes of power and powerless ness and the often frustrating emotional experience of working in the organization. The experience of being in the more private space of one's own office or within oneself where the power of emotions are felt while on the outside interactions with colleagues or clients are all polished on the surface and do not betray the underlying struggles. This participant left the image with me and I wonder now on reflection if this may have been partly in response to the material or feelings it contained.

Commentary: I understood this participant to be expressing feelings of pressure to present a polished outward façade when there are intense emotional pressures exerted within the organization. Maybe the system does not have a way to acknowledge the emotional impact of organizational events and this adds potentially avoidable or at least reducible emotional stress? The images in the picture also visually reference strong feeling such as fear, grief, anger, destruction and frustration. Perhaps this image identifies some relevant material to take into account within the organization that is not currently addressed? I had the sense this participant valued the opportunity to let some of these strong feelings be expressed and shared.

It is relevant to note that participants A & B both worked in the same organization. As they shared their images differences in perception and experience about the organization arose that could only be touched upon and not explored or worked with at any depth. When asked later about responses to the experience of the workshop an idea was suggested from them that perhaps it would be an option to work with individuals from different organizations in a group rather that people who work together in the same organization, as the potential for personal exposure and conflict to arise may be pronounced. It seemed that this idea arose in order to contain the feelings that are evoked in such a process, as it may be unsettling and out of the comfort zone of 'usual' work relations to share in this way. This is an important response and one that will be taken up later.

Participant C (Figure 4a)

(Figure 4b)

Participant C: Visual content/themes: (Figures 4a, 4b)

Mass of butterflies (initially selected introductory image), women grieving, rain, bushfires, lone fire fighter, hand reaching out, snake, tree, blue bird (on the back of the image). Destruction,

loss, grief, transformation, possibility of resurrection, help. A vibrant image of combined collage and pastels. This participant placed the initially selected image of the mass of butterflies in a central place. The butterflies were referred to as hovering on the shift of one stage of transformation to another. Below this is an image of two women grieving in the rain, next to an image of consuming bush fires dwarfing a lone fire fighter. Pastel marks extend and elaborate these collage sections across the breadth of the paper. From the top right side of the paper a drawing of a hand reaches in to touch the butterflies. The participant identified this hand as a helpful supportive presence. Themes of loss, devastation and hopeful transformation were discussed. This participant explained her position and program had recently been axed as a result of organizational change. This resulted in the decimation of a complete area of study. Destruction, grief and transformation appear to be the themes in this situation. It appears the butterflies towering above the devastation and grief along with the supportive hand offer hope and resurrection from the pain of loss and destruction that has occurred. This participant left the image with me and I wonder if this is again partly in response to the material it contains.

Commentary: With respect to the unconscious material of the organization I wonder if it indicates the affects of the organizations process of splitting off and disowning an area of activity. Perhaps thinking further about what was located symbolically in this "disowned" area in relationship to the whole organization would provide some insight into the functioning of the organization? The image is visually powerful and contains a testimony to the personal resilience of the participant and speaks strongly to the emotional aspect of the experience. It is relevant to note the powerful emotions conveyed in the work and the potential effects of making and sharing a work about such an event. I consider it would help validate and process the impact of such a change emotionally for the person.

Participant D (Figure 5)

Participant D: Visual content/themes: (Figure 5)

This selection of images creates interesting juxtapositions and meanings. It is titled "my work place". In a central position and surrounded by glitter is an image of a woman athlete (a British marathon runner Paula Radcliffe who in the recent Olympic games dropped out of the marathon and another long distance race that she held the hopes of a nation to win) next to her a man is closely studying some gold coins. He is also surrounded by the glitter. Another man is on the left side of the woman athlete and he is older and is looking thoughtful and next to him is a picture of Billy Connolly (comedian) and above them is an image of three large medals and in the top left corner is a cathedral like building. On the right hand side next to the man studying the coins is an image of a large wristwatch. Next to this is a giant large-scale stiletto heel shoe with a man impaled on the heel. Next to this is a ruined cathedral like building with a smiling man inside. In the far right corner is a simple line drawing of a person taking a shower. This participant also left the image with me and again I wonder if this is partly in response to the material it contains.

Commentary: The author of the image related the themes from his perspective as being about the organizational system (university) and the academy and the tension and conflict between the two. There were references to the hard work of keeping the organization running, the pressure of working with power issues around finances and personalities and time. A theme emerged of fear that the academy may be ruined by the demands placed on individuals by the organization. The participant shared an insight that the placement of the images revealed to him that he valued the academy and its ideals above the organization. The experience of this conflict was often strongly felt and the shower image related to a process of attempting to cleanse the 'bad' feelings generated by this conflict. Perhaps the unconscious material in this instance may be focussed on the pressures to maintain one area of work at the expense of another? Perhaps the ideals of the enterprise are under attack and could be seriously compromised or even destroyed? The image of a man impaled on a giant stiletto heel suggests violence and domination. These are visually strong and provocative images that may provide insight into the way the organization functions in its relationships and captures a flavour of potential problems in the system. Perhaps these powerful dynamics are not consciously owned and are therefore defended against in the system to detrimental effect?

Participant E (Figure 6)

Participant E: Visual content/themes:(Figure 6)

Sky-diving feat, many participants synchronising (initially selected introductory image), people in many different scenes, Russian president Putin shaking hands with someone, a team of people, a couple dressed for an occasion, a group of protestors, a school boy studying, a group of soldiers, a comedian/compare, Arnold Schwarzenegger in political life, a scarecrow, tattooed man, a set of clothes, "what's in a brand name", "experts", "making your views count". The themes include a range of roles, demands, aspects of self in a work place, team work versus individual activities, defending a position. This participant left the image with me at the time but contacted me a few weeks later to have access to it. It appeared the image held something that he was interested to review. This transaction could hold some material about what maybe contained in the image that has relevance to the unconscious material of the system.

Commentary: Participant E selected an introductory image of rock climbing to convey his interest and love of extreme sports. He produced a collage with the central image of a massive skydiving feat where a hundreds of people are linked in a symmetrical formation as they fall through the air. This central image is surrounded by images of people in various scenes and there are some pertinent phrases used. This participant conveyed that the image related to a range of different roles, demands and aspects of self that may be engaged in his work place. On one hand there are the team work and collaboration aspects on the other hand are the individual qualities of studying or preparing the self and promoting or presenting the self or defending one's position within this system. It may also refer to themes of masculinity within the work place or of developing from a "boy" to a "man" metaphorically within the team. This image may be surfacing useful material about the tensions between being part of a team in a system while managing the individual experience in a system. Further exploration may reveal more insights about the unconscious processes and possible effects occurring in the organization related to encouraging development of the individual and how to work together as a team. I am also struck by a visual parallel of the central image of synchronised sky divers grappling with the elements to form connection with each other and the other images on the paper placed similarly with some making contact with others around this central image, or perhaps in a process to come into contact. Maybe there is something being explored about an ideal coherent whole in contrast with the real experience of struggling to connect. This participant was caught up in the "emergency" situation described earlier, although this image was made prior to him leaving the room there appears to be some pattern being repeated of connection and disconnection that was also echoed in leaving the image with me and then seeking it out later.

Similar to the participants above the other three participants engaged well with the process. One created a collage image that described a journey of a female figure through a problematic work situation. This participant created a kind of a map of the issues and in the process of making the image discovered some options and possible solutions. It appeared the art process enabled this participant to clarify and understand her situation more fully and to bring some measure of resolution to it for herself. She took this image with her and did not stay long enough for me to get a photograph. Another created an image using pastels of an arts organisation he belongs to, that he wanted to explore. He created a map of relationships, capturing qualities of the interactions which by visualizing the relationships opened up a review of these dynamics. The other an artist created an image which he left with me of his studio and his relationship to himself as his own archive of organizational relationships. This provided rich visual references in relation to his experience and the associated feelings. In summary each participant visualized their own organization or notion of organization producing a variety of perspectives, feelings, associations and thought processes.

Observations of the process and the images.

The structure of the workshop and the use of collage materials enabled participants to engage easily with an art making process. This circumvented the tensions for participants about having adequate art skills. The engagement with art materials fostered an experience of visual exploration and play, that appeared absorbing and relatively enjoyable for participants, enabling a kind of free association to the theme. From this creative process, visual material was produced and participants were put in touch with ideas and significantly feelings related to their work places. The discussion of the images that followed generally resulted in participants clarifying their experience of their work situations or associated feelings. It appeared to provide a way of gaining an overview of their place in a situation or a perspective on the experience of the work context. It also produced a wealth of material to be considered with the unconscious of the organization in mind.

As discussed earlier there are several aspects to consider in an art therapy group process. In a central place are the images, they show tangible evidence related to each persons experience and capture a complexity of material related to each participant's feelings and ideas on the theme. As physical objects it is interesting to note how participants related to their images, for

instance leaving the image or taking it with them raises thoughts about "what is contained" in the image and how it is dealt with.

The associations the participants had to their images provide a focal reference and the sharing of perceptions of the other participants in the group including the art therapist creates another dimension to the process. Consideration of the context and the process that occurs to the 'group' can provide another layer of material to feed into understanding the dynamics of the system or organization. All this material is captured in a relatively brief time frame and can potentially engage all participants in a relatively equal way. This may be highly relevant if an intervention similar to this is attempted in an organization where everyone is from the same organization.

In such a brief exploratory workshop it is possibly ambitious to seek undisputable evidence of unconscious processes related to a particular organization. However what could be attempted is an indication of possible openings, clues or suggestions that could lead to more substantial corroboration. The theories explored earlier would suggest that unconscious material is likely to emerge in such a process. In reviewing the images above it could be seen in various ways that clues are present. For example with participant A, the visual material offers ways to pose exploratory questions about the organization around themes such as the references to "resignation" and an environment that may be polluted. This could illicit more insights. With participant B clues surfaced around the emotional tensions of projecting a polished façade and suppressing intense feelings within the system. With participant C there appears to be evidence of the effects of a process of disowning or splitting off an area of activity in the system and the subsequent trauma. With participant D it appears there is a process of attack on the ideals of the work of the organization from within itself. With participant E some indications of material around an individual versus team dynamic is brought into focus.

Themes of conflict/tension and references to powerful emotional states are seen in varying degrees in most of the images. These themes could be understood in various ways. On a personal level they may reflect individual psychodynamic or personal unconscious material. However when considering the theories discussed by Stokes (1994) on the cultures within large groups and organizations such as subordination, aggressive competitiveness and collusion, the images may usefully be considered as illuminating something about the unconscious material of the organization related to these theories. These repeated themes of conflict and tension in the images may also reflect the common predictable tension between the individual and the system

as discussed earlier by Triest (2003). Namely, that there is an observable contagion of feeling that arises in large groups and the organization is called upon to provide safety from this but at the same time its structures are experienced as limiting and possibly persecutory. Reflecting on the images with these ideas in mind seems to offer some kind of corroboration. Also in thinking about the 'emergency' event that affected the workshop perhaps this could be seen as part of the 'large group' process impacting on the "organization" of the conference?

Turning attention to the emotional response generated by the theme and process, it could be observed that generally all participants engaged in a relatively immediate way with their emotional experience. The connection to their 'felt' personal experience within their work setting meant there was a high degree of emotional association and content in the images and therefore a heightened emotional engagement. The personal content and emotional exposure is significant and although the view is taken to seek access to the organizational unconscious the personal unconscious is also potentially considerably exposed.

Perhaps because of the emotional investment engaged by the theme and process the sharing of the images and the associated experience with each other seemed to produce a feeling of relief and validation of experience. It also allowed ideas to be shared about some of the situations. The open sharing that was possible in the group produced some measure of validation and support of each person's of experiences. I would suggest this is dependent on how the group is able to function. It may not always be a given and repeating such a process in an organization may produce a powerful surfacing of the unconscious that would require sensitive and responsive containment and attention.

The workshop shows that the process generates valuable material for the organizational consultative process and potentially fosters satisfying and rich communication of feelings and ideas and access to unconscious dynamics. One of the most significant observations to consider is the level of personal exposure that the process opens up. This is quite pronounced and gives rise to the questions:

How can participants be provided with sufficient emotional safety in the process in the potentially hostile conflicted organizational environment?

How to hold and work appropriately with the personal unconscious material that arises alongside the organizational unconscious material?

The idea that was suggested by the participants A& B to minimize the emotional exposure and risk to existing work relationships is an important one. The potential to work in groups with people who do not work together is a reasonable response to such a potential stripping away of the usual work place defences. Using processes that unearth the unconscious will inevitably give rise to resistances. The observation that art therapy has great potential to produce connection to feelings and to reveal unconscious material makes it at one and the same time a potentially powerful and engaging way to work as well as tapping into, as Triest (2003) puts it, a "boiling cauldron of chaos" difficult to contain. Further consideration as to how to contain and shape the use of art therapy in this field is ripe for exploration.

It would be expected that this kind of work with an organization is going to be inherently challenging. Any exploration that seeks to bring the unconscious to consciousness will meet with resistance. The significant issue is how to work with the unconscious processes safely and constructively. It is indicated that fuller consideration of the impact of opening up the issues for participants needs to be considered. Any intervention would need adequate preparation and processing and follow up to contain and support what emerges. This fits with the therapeutic model where it takes time to build up a relationship to work through things, and the goal is insight rather than a solution. Although this sounds almost fanciful because of its intensive nature I suggest that attending to individual well being would have a significant effect within an organizational intervention as a whole.

In reviewing the material generated from this workshop it appears that art therapy could have many applications in organizational interventions. It may be useful as part of an intervention where the effects of a break down or disruption have already occurred where it can be employed to help repair or minimise any emotional damage or trauma. It may also play a useful role in building team relationships or viewing issues in creative ways to explore options or solutions. It could also be helpful in identifying underlying issues and dynamics and facilitating shifts in organizational culture.

Conclusion

The interface of art therapy and organizational management has a great deal of potential to be explored. The creative, visual and reflective process it offers brings a new perspective from which to view and contribute to the world of organizational management.

An art therapy approach can play a significant role in identifying and working with issues within an organization. Through the image making process material related to the unconscious of an organization can be readily surfaced allowing a complexity of material to be gathered up, considered and understood quickly. It has significant scope to shed light on the experiences of individual workers in an organization enabling all perspectives to be literally seen. It has a strong potential to validate an individual's experience. Significantly it brings emotion and the human into the organizational world and the literature indicates this is neglected (Carr, 2001; Kersten, 2001). While this is to be embraced, if we engage seriously with the human factor it brings with it responsibility to address the emotional effects of interventions. Therefore consideration as to how to contain and shape the use of art therapy in organizational management where emotional material is potentially surfaced would need attention. Indeed working directly with the emotional material could also be considered.

In hindsight there are a number of things I would have done differently. I would have gathered direct feedback from participants about their experiences of the workshop and consulted with them after the event and included their voices within the piece to strengthen, modify or develop the observations. I would have also thought more closely about how the conference workshop might parallel an art therapy group and an organizational intervention using art therapy and draw out more thinking about this interface. Additionally it could be useful to think further about the 'large group' aspect of the conference and parallels to the 'large group' of organizations.

A potential next step could be collaboration between art therapists and organizational management consultants to further build on this beginning foundation and explore some of the options indicated from this discussion. Significantly, how the opportunity offered by an art therapy approach can illuminate the unconscious of the organization and be used to analyse organizational case studies and, as Barry (1994) suggests, further consideration of the psychodynamic processes enabled through art therapy.

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