

ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine

Welcome Speech

Head of Therapeutic Studies

Kevin Jones

Goldsmiths is delighted to provide the setting for the International art therapy conference 'Finding your voice, making your mark' and takes great pleasure that we have attracted conference delegates from all over the UK and internationally. The conference is hosted and organized by the new department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (STaCS), of which art therapy is a part. The core values which inform the work of STaCS reflect the spirit and values of this conference: a shared commitment to social justice; the encouragement of diversity through participation and empowerment; developing critical and reflective practices; engagement with education, health and social services in the public, private and voluntary sector; and a commitment to reaching out to local, national and international communities. In welcoming you all to Goldsmiths, I would like to highlight three ways in which these shared values inform the relationship between STaCS and the aims of this conference.

First, the area of Therapeutic Studies within STaCS brings together art therapists, dance movement psychotherapists, cognitive behavioural therapists, counsellors, humanistic therapists, psychoanalytic psychotherapists and analytical psychologists. Part of the challenge for Therapeutic Studies is how to encourage dialogue and interdisciplinary work among the diversity of these therapeutic modalities, with their

histories of collaboration, conflict and rivalry. Added to this within STaCS there are also professional trainings in social work, community and youth and community and participatory arts. Within STaCS, art therapists and students potentially have the chance to learn from and train alongside these different disciplines that they will work with in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We hope to develop a dialogue leading to the creation of an 'interdisciplinary imagination' that can find new ways of working in the changed political landscape that we all face. Similarly, at this conference the full range and diversity of art therapy theory and practice with similar histories of collaboration, conflict and rivalry are to be found. We hope the conference will be a place in which these differences can be acknowledged and debated leading to a dialogue that respects the histories and traditions of particular approaches within art therapy while finding common ground for working together in the current political and social context.

This context is the second thing that brings us together and in a very particular way. The attendance at this conference reflects the increasing international development of art therapy across the world, which in turn reflects broader economic and cultural processes of globalization. These processes of globalization take place within a very specific economic and political framework of Neo-liberalism, a form of economic development which privileges the development factor of market forces lead by the private sector rather than public sector provision in the form of free welfare services, educations and social care. Internationally we are seeing cutbacks and changes in patterns to the provision of welfare services. We see an increase in voluntary sector and private provision dominated by market relations and values, all of which pose challenges to ways of working for art therapy. In the UK context, within STaCS, we have already seen an embryonic form of interdisciplinary collaboration in response to these developments. In 2011 the professional trainings organized a day event, 'Testimonies of Cuts and Resistance' (Goldsmiths, University of London, PACE 2011) which brought together community groups and local authority organizations affected by the cuts. From this meeting we developed the possibility of collaborative work around new teaching and research opportunities. In hosting this conference, STaCS wants to build on the impulses that lead to the 'Testimonies of Cuts and Resistance' and encourage a spirit of

collective action and interdisciplinary imagination among art therapists and between art therapists and other disciplines.

Finally, the exhibition emphasizes the unique contribution that art therapy and the image can make to the themes which animate StaCS in its attempt to create an 'Interdisciplinary imagination'. The exhibition foregrounds art therapists as artists and educators as they develop different ways of working in diverse clinical and community contexts in particular social and political situations around the world. For example, there are artworks bringing together the personal and the political in a powerful response to the aftermath of 9/11 in America and in response to the invasion of Iraq. Other work provides a platform for the voices of women partners of political prisoners in Northern Ireland and for imagery made by a participant with British forces in Northern Ireland. The exhibition also contains the collective art work of the staff group at Goldsmiths arising out of their ongoing research project into the role of art making and unconscious process in their teaching.

We hope that the conference provides a space in which the different forms of 'finding a voice and making a mark' in art therapy can be heard, seen and debated.

References

Goldsmiths, University of London, Professional and Community Education (PACE) (2011) *Testimonies of Cuts and Resistance*. Available at: http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/TCR_PACE_Building_Future_Collaborations.pdf (Accessed: 05.11.13.).