

# An Overview on the Transpersonal Art Therapy

Monika

RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh,  
Punjab, India

Email id- abc@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

The beginning of recorded history, it has been known that human people have utilized art to express elements that transcend the spoken and the written word, in order to convey the condition of their inner mental landscapes. Art is inherently healing and has the power to change. Transpersonal Art Therapy takes one step beyond conventional art therapy and digs into soul of the individual beyond the boundaries of his/her personal identity. This article offers a systematic assessment of the literature, pointing out the merits, critiques, and subsequently, the first author's own personal thoughts about connection with art. This is followed by introspective thoughts on art movements, by giving quintessential instances to demonstrate the effect of prototype work representing various art movements and their impact on the first author's psychology. Future ramifications of the study are addressed along with areas in which there are large gaps in empirical data, which thus need to be studied. Transpersonal art therapy is both a method of thinking and a way of doing things. It recognizes spirituality as universal across nations and history, compelling to include spiritual in scope evaluation and treatment, and pushes us to strive for a balance of mind, body, emotions, and spirit in everyone treat, beginning with ourselves.

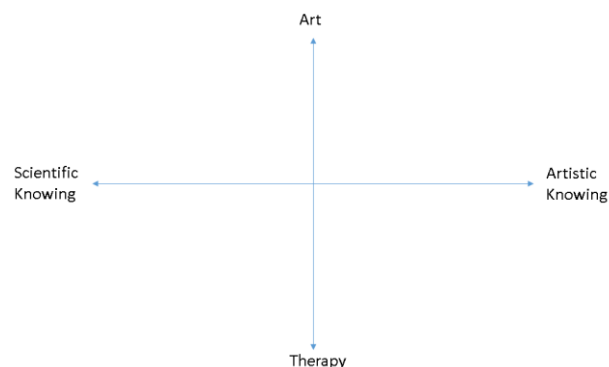
## Keywords

Art, Human, Life, Therapy, Transpersonal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Aristotle, "The goal of art is to portray not the external appearance of things, but their inner significance" [1]. Since time immemorial, human people have utilized art to express elements that transcend the spoken and the written word, to convey their inner mental landscapes. Quoting the words of Nicolas Bourdieu, "The artist is the stealth aircraft of culture: invisible by the radar of entertainment, but highly effective, since it constantly shoots at the sharpest edges, the most crucial situation." He sees that the whole civilization creates pictures and therefore there are artists everywhere [2]. The issue is as to how many individuals are utilizing art as a vehicle for transpersonal metamorphosis.

Art is therapeutic, life enriching and naturally transforming. Art therapy is an exploration of creative potentiality [3]. Therapy in the form of art includes the use of creative methods like drawing, coloring, painting, cartooning, sketching, collage, stitching, sculpting, etc. to help the client express himself/herself artistically. Figure 1 illustrates the basic diagram with the primary interests of art and treatment on one axis and ways to knowledge, whether scientific and artistic, on the other (Figure 1).

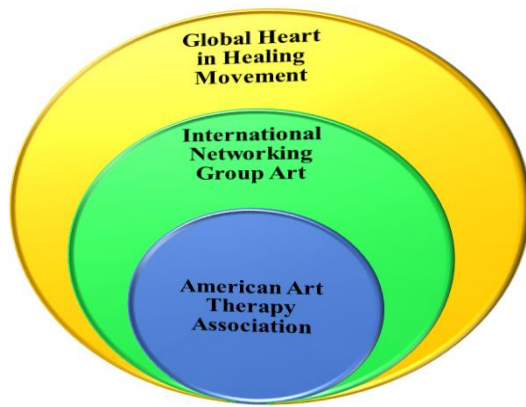


**Figure 1: Art Therapy Research and Knowledge Claims with the Focal Interests of Art and Therapy on One Axis and Approaches to Knowing**

This allows the therapist to analyze the psychological and emotional overtones in the art produced by the client. With the help of a trained art therapist, clients may "decode" the nonverbal messages, symbols, and metaphors often found in the art forms [4]. This approach is therapeutic and opens the path to a greater understanding of problems and helps uncover and address underlying issues buried in the unconscious. The therapy approach is not so much on the aesthetic merit of the work but it is concerned with artistic symbolism as related to the client's inner existence [5]. Many a time, art works as a tool for reawakening memories and telling tales which mirror the client's life narrative. Cognitive aberrations hindering the life script may also be evaluated and corrected [6].

The International Networking Group, which was established 20 years ago, claims to have 10,000 members in 91 countries [7]. Assuming that one-third of all practitioners join to a professional organization, the total number of art therapists globally is estimated to be 40,000. However, when compared to the worldwide arts in healing movement, of which art therapists are a part, that number is small (Figure 2)[8].

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**Figure 2: Comparison of Art Therapy Global Group Membership provided by the International Networking Group**

Due to the Internet, democratization of information, social networking, and the harnessing of political power via connections, there are hundreds upon thousands of creative projects taking place across the globe, with a reach that is rapidly and geometrically increasing. From filmmakers to artists to activist environmentalists to humanitarian aid workers to therapists to local non-governmental organizations to regular citizens, it seems that everyone is tapping into the healing power of the arts [9].

According to transpersonal theory, there are developmental phases beyond the adult ego that include feelings of connection with things that are considered beyond the ego's limits. These developmental phases may promote the greatest human qualities, such as compassion, creativity, and intuitive understanding, in healthy people. Such experiences, on the other hand, may lead to psychosis in individuals who do not have a healthy ego development [10].

What emerge through creative expression are not only the contents of the internal environment of the client but also the cultural training, values, beliefs, faith and views of oneself, of the 'Other', of existence and life in general. Secondary data comprising of journal papers, book chapters, art therapy-related websites and first person data – the researcher's own introspective reflections resulting from her interaction with art were the sources for this study. The publishing time span for the secondary data varied from 2000 to 2020 [11-15].

Regarding the personal introspective reports of the researcher, they were acquired in the beginning of the year 2019. Select publications that match the topic of the research were selected, based on internet search using the search terms "transpersonal art therapy", "art therapy", and "transpersonal art". Variables that did not fit the area of the research were eliminated, and sources with additional variables forming a part of a publication title were not included. For instance, "Mindfulness and flow in transpersonal art therapy:

Therapy was initially available and inexpensive only to the upper stratum of society. Today, the reality is considerably more different in the sense that from psychoanalysis to self-revelation, therapy with a spiritual or transpersonal approach has grown more egalitarian. Creation of art may bring one closer to the invisible power that is readily traversed by means of picture creation.

### • THE MERITS OF TRANSPERSONAL ART THERAPY

Transpersonal art therapy, much as art therapy may be used to explore emotions, enhance self-esteem, deal with addictions, reduce stress, alleviate symptoms of anxiety and despair, and cope with a physical illness or disability. It is a mix of psychology and creativity within the framework of a counseling setup. Transpersonal Art Therapy takes into account an integration of transpersonal theory together with a counseling and guiding method. It emphasizes on the person as a spiritual being, and not simply someone with psychopathology. It is a holistic approach to treatment, focused on the entire individual. Ancient as well as contemporary knowledge is made use of to examine the different elements of the individual's essence of existence.

The transpersonal art therapist helps the client to comprehend, magnify and fine tune his/her inner symbolic language. For clients who are reluctant to express their deepest thoughts, unable to vocalize their buried guilt and hesitant to speak out aloud the anxieties that have tormented them since infancy, art therapy is perfect. Like the angophora tree which accepts its own wound and heals from within, people have the capacity to re-invent their life and live more fruitfully. Like the phoenix, people have the capacity to rise up from the ashes. A competent therapist is the way out. Joseph Campbell connects the human journey throughout life to the heroic journey. He argues that we are all heroes and heroines of our life and need to connect with the inhabitants of the deep in order to heal and live to our greatest potential.

Like any other kind of treatment, it doesn't happen immediately; transpersonal art therapy takes time. The change that occurs happens gradually, and it is a process. Journeying in the process and immersion throughout the process is an important component of art therapy. Rick Warren says, "Transformation a process, and when life occurs, there are lots of ups and downs. It's a voyage of learning - there are moments on mountaintops and times in the depths of despair." Warren's statement may be likened to the process of transpersonal art therapy, particularly when he states that it is a voyage of discovery. The main difference in treatment is that the client has someone to assist him/her through the path of discovery while outside the therapeutic setting, one may not always have that someone to rely upon [16-20].

A source of tremendous inspiration for many art therapists is Sigmund Freud's dissatisfaction with language. He noticed it mainly in visual pictures part of the difficulties of providing an explanation of dreams is related to our needing to convert these visuals into words.

'I could sketch it,' a dreamer frequently says to us, 'but I don't know how to express it. Evidence exists for the argument that art therapy may improve conventional Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and that CBT-based art therapy may be as successful as psychodynamic-based treatments. In Transpersonal Art Therapy, new insights may be acquired by the client, which may speed up the healing process. This may be referred to as insightful learning, a 'Eureka' moment.

### 1.1. Criticisms

The expression of some concepts in textual form is difficult or not feasible. Those customers who can externalize their pain, for example by sketching it on paper, may find comfort. If the externalization doesn't happen, this treatment is not successful. For some clients, the creation of pictures may be an unpleasant or a harmful experience, and such clients may attempt to avoid or oppose participating in the therapeutic process regardless of its advantages. It must be emphasized that in drawings, paintings, etc., truth and imagination frequently intersect. No one, objective

interpretation can be filtered out. The significance of the art piece must be finally discussed between the client and the therapist.

#### • PERSONAL REFLECTIONS OF MY ENGAGEMENT WITH ART

I've been interested, intrigued and awe-inspired by art since infancy. Since my mother and my aunts are all artists by passion, I've always been exposed to a lot of creativity, beginning from home. I've tried my hand at sketching, cartooning, metal embossing, painting, drawing, coloring, soft toy creation, and knitting, among other arts and crafts.

I frequently attend museums, art exhibits, and art galleries. When I was a Bachelor of Arts student at Mount Carmel College, I had to take a course in Literary Criticism which was part of the English Literature curriculum. In this course, I was officially exposed to Art Criticism, Art Movements, and Art Appreciation. Here I show the different art works of distinct art movements in literature and how my interaction with art, relating to these trends has affected my psychology.

Art Movements are styles or trends in art with a similar philosophical concept that endure for a particular length of time, ranging from months, years or decades. Art Movements are especially significant in Modern Art, with each movement considered as a new avant-garde.

### 1.2. Impressionism

Impressionism has an element of talismanic fascination for artists, curators and the general audience. Impressionism is an art movement defined by relatively tiny, thin, but noticeable brush strokes, open composition, focus on precise portrayal of light in its changing characteristics with an amplifying impact.

Its topics include everyday subject matter, and movement is presented as a vital part of human perception and experience, along with complementing unique visual perspectives. When I interact with Impressionism art works, I get a subtle feeling of serenity, a sense of peace of mind and paradoxically a sense of urgency urging me to get active with work. I also feel like I am really there in the picture.

### 1.3. Dadaism

Dadaism is an aesthetic trend in contemporary art that began around World War I. The aim of the Dadaism was to laugh at the meaninglessness of the contemporary world. My involvement with Dadaism offers up a fresh view of reality. I get a feeling of eeriness, mixed with the idea that it is acceptable to not be a perfectionist in all one does. Mistakes lead to fresh insights and unusual ideas. I also get a feeling of the mysteriousness of the unknown.

### 1.4. Cubism

Cubism was a revolutionary movement for portraying reality developed in the early 20th century by painters Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. They combined various perspectives of things (typically objects or people) together in the same image, thereby producing in paintings that looked fractured and abstracted. Cubism is regarded as an artistic revolution. My admiration of Cubism is founded upon the unique concept arising from its philosophy.

When I look at and absorb the symbolic significance of works of art adhering to Cubism, I feel a feeling of gratitude for the potpourri of options that one has in life. As I attempted producing an art work based on the principles of Cubism, the resultant piece appeared to be an outlet of thoughts in my subconscious. I

understood the nature of interconnection of epistemology and I also learned that life constantly offers one a chance to select between alternatives. We are not the captives of our fate.

### 1.5. Surrealism

Surrealism is a 20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature which aimed to unleash the creative potential of the unconscious mind, for example through the illogical juxtaposition of images. As I tried producing a surrealist piece of art, the idea that came up was that it is conceivable for looks impossible today to become tomorrow's reality. What the mind can imagine, it can accomplish. It gives me a sense of furious resolve, a rush of adrenaline, the desire for adventure and travel, and the drive to have significant influence on the world.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Michael Franklin et al. studies it's a tough endeavor to teach future art therapists. It requires a careful but creative approach to integrating old and contemporary problems relevant to our profession. It is the responsibility of training programmers to interact with paradigms that respect time-tested ideas while also embracing the visionary. Traditional psychological theories are integrated with new ideas that explore spirituality, global wisdom traditions, and consciousness research in transpersonal psychology. This article examines these problems as well as a separate area of transpersonal psychology known as "contemplative schooling." Meditation and other contemplative practices, as well as their connection to the production of art, are explored in detail. The basis for the approach to art therapy training outlined in this research is based on transpersonal psychology and contemplative education [21-25]. A definition of transpersonal art therapy is given, followed by a review of the literature to acquaint the reader with this perplexing subject. Throughout the book, there are instances of contemplative schooling [26].

Beyza Kirca studies Spiritually oriented art therapy interventions are based on a holistic, therapeutic approach that aims to help people who are fragmented achieve integrity, unity, harmony, and balance by utilizing the medium of art and its creative processes to address all of the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of human nature. Many artists and art therapists regard art as intrinsically spiritual, and the history of art and its relationship to treatment dates back to the dawn of time; however, open consideration of the spiritual dimension in therapeutic settings, particularly in art therapy interventions, is relatively new. Reviewing emergence of spiritually-oriented art therapy treatments, as well as their processes of change, is considered to be helpful in understanding how they promote holistic development. Through the holistic wellness approach, these processes have been characterized as self-realization and understanding, transcendence, meaning-making and striving for a purpose, and attaining integrity [27].

Mary Ellen Hluska research explored the function of art producing in art therapy, concentrating on how art therapists value, interpret, utilize, and make judgements about art in their personal and professional life. Art therapy's art-making component is understudied, despite the fact that it is art that differentiates art therapists from other helping professions that use art in practice. In addition, the research sought to examine how professional clinicians' artist and art therapist identities are influenced by art making. To gather data, a mixed-approaches approach based on inductive and deductive research

methodologies was utilized. Constructivism provides a framework for generating ideas and understanding art producing as a structural component of art therapy [28].

### 3. DISCUSSION

This paper discusses all about the transpersonal art therapy in this paper which tells that the transpersonal art therapy, just like art therapy can be used to explore emotions, improve self-esteem, deal with addictions, relieve stress, alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression, and cope with a physical illness or disability. It is a mix of psychology and creativity within the framework of a counseling setup. Transpersonal Art Therapy takes into account an integration of transpersonal theory together with a counseling and guiding method. It emphasizes on the person as a spiritual being, and not simply someone with psychopathology. It is a holistic approach to treatment, focused on the entire individual. Ancient as well as contemporary knowledge is made use of to examine the many elements of the individual's essence of life. The researchers offer a thorough assessment of the literature, pointing out the virtues, critiques, and subsequently, the first author's own personal thoughts about connection with art. This is followed by introspective thoughts on art movements, by giving quintessential instances to demonstrate the effect of prototype work representing various art movements and their impact on the first author's psychology. Future ramifications of the study are addressed along with areas in which there are large gaps in empirical data, which thus need to be studied. The Comparison of Art Therapy Global Group Membership offered by the International Networking Group and Art Therapy Research and Knowledge Claims with the Focal Interests of Art and Therapy on One Axis and Approaches to Knowing are also detailed in this article.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This study suggest that there is an urgent need for art therapists to start more cooperation and work in combination with psychologists in practice as well as research. Future research may examine cross-cultural and indigenous art traditions in various nations across the world. Also because there is a lack of study on the influence of art works of particular art styles and their therapeutic benefits, this is an unexplored upon topic for future inquiry. Comparative research on the same are also scarce in the scientific literature and the International Networking Group that started 20 years ago claimed that it had approximately 10,000 members in 91 countries. Assuming that one third of all practitioners are likely to have membership in a professional organization, combined this would constitute an estimated 40,000 art therapists throughout the globe. Transpersonal art therapy is both a method of thinking and a way of doing things. It recognizes spirituality as universal across cultures and history, forces us to include spiritual in our evaluation and treatment, and motivates us to strive for a balance of mind, body, emotions, and spirit in everyone we treat, beginning with ourselves.

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