

Chapter 3

**‘A COMMUNION OF SUBJECTS’[†] HOLISTIC ECO ART
THERAPY: INTEGRATING EMBODIMENT AND
ENVIRONMENT IN ART THERAPY**

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ABSTRACT

Art therapists practice in widely varying ways under the umbrella of ‘eco art therapy’. An holistic approach is described here in two parts, mirroring how art therapists and their clients often work within culturally inherited linguistic and cognitive dualisms despite art and healing transcending these. Part I concerns the role of the body, somatic awareness and natural gestural and bilateral movement in the theory, development and practice of eco art therapy. Part II explores the progressive synthesis of somatic awareness with field awareness in developing an holistic eco art therapy, using examples from indoor, ‘open door’ and outdoor sessions. Field phenomena connect art therapy with its roots in embodiment, shamanic earth-based traditions and transpersonal, religious experience. Holistic eco art therapy is presented as a contribution to the transforming paradigm within society and the sciences, in which all life forms are recognised as participating in our body-mind well-being.

Keywords: eco art therapy, mindfulness, embodiment, bilateral movement, field awareness, nature in therapy.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Body, mind and ‘environment’ are always present and interwoven in art-making and art therapy, but the complex dynamics and effects of their interactions have remained largely

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implicit in our theoretical analyses. The body; its place within the web of life, its structure and movement, though central in making and perceiving art, have not been regarded as such in the making and perceiving of art made in art therapy, nor in the training of art therapists and the discourse within the profession.

'Communion' implies an intimate process of interpenetration akin to alchemy, often referred to in art therapy, where both parties are affected, transformed and a third element, a new state, arises, as when we observe a quantum phenomenon and in doing so, alter it forever, bringing into question the very notion of 'separate' entities and awakening a non-dual sensibility. The practical question, *How is a somatically and ecologically inclusive paradigm applied in clinical practice?* is addressed via narratives of the systemic interplay between the client and therapist and their somatic states, the expressive art-making, and the 'field', focussing specifically on the activities of wildlife during and in the vicinity of holistic eco art therapy sessions.

My journey in art therapy since the mid 1980s has been to acknowledge, explore and integrate these related streams:

- the body and its role in the creative-art therapeutic process,
- the presence and influence of local and distant ecological and cultural environments,
- the best of psychodynamic, relational wisdom.

As a therapist, I have come to rely on my own body as a sensitive instrument of resonance and attunement to the client's psyche-soma and the natural field, and as a valuable modality of counter transference. I have come to recognise the ability of nature, and our non-human kin, to act as facilitator, provocateur, mirror and container, during therapy, with a precision I could not engineer.

WHY INCLUDE EMBODIMENT IN ECO ART THERAPY?

The following might be regarded as premises of an holistic eco art therapy:

- Including the body in art therapy logically and phenomenologically leads to including the 'environment.'
- Bodies are our closest wilderness, our wild nature, most of whose vastly complex processes occur outside our conscious control.
- Bodies as living systems, communicate at gross and subtle levels, locally and at distance, with the field of interdependent living systems, a zone of 'unbroken wholeness' (Bohm, 1980 p. xviii) in which 'subatomic particles are connected in ways that transcend space and time' (Brennan, 1990, p.27 paraphrasing Bell, 1964). We radiate and transmit ourselves biochemically, electrically and via empathy, as we also sense and empathise with others' mind-body states, feelings and motivations, via our mirror neurones and other physiological systems.
- Some indigenous, more earth-aware cultural traditions and their associated forms of shamanism, contain coded wisdom about our mind-body-world connection relevant

to therapy. These may be seen as the roots of art therapy and, especially in the multi-cultural context in which many art therapists now work, can provide artistic-creative resources, alternative cognitive and ethical perspectives and collaborative opportunities for eco art therapy, in their embodied, systemic spirituality and co-creativity with nature.

- 'Health' globally increasingly means multifaceted 'well-being'; a state of body-mind-world in which individual and collective vitality and opportunity is maximised in concordance with other living systems. In therapy this is typically manifested as awareness, 'presence'; the ability to remain a fully embodied, connected, compassionate and attentive witness to self and others amidst disturbance and distress.

Much has been written about the impact of the body-mind split in Western industrialised societies and its reflection in a relatively disembodied psychotherapy discourse (Leder, 1984). The growth of eco psychology, eco feminist philosophy and eco therapies enables the embodied and environmental tendencies already implicit within art therapy to be made more explicit. We can acknowledge art therapy's natural tendency, through art-making's synthetic processes, to foster an 'ecological self' and its capacity to include and empower those with unconventional, intimate and poetic relationships with nature as 'primary carer'; source of security, identity and inspiration.

BODY IS ENVIRONMENT

Our conscious, dualistic experience, language and sense of a distinct 'I-self' obscures our awareness of ourselves as comprised of colonies of organisms (McFall-Ngai, 2014); an environment within, interdependent upon, and interacting with, all others. Eco art therapy involves the interplay between the embodied minds of the client and therapist, with the physicality of materials, within the field of influences from the world surrounding the therapy. Eco art therapy aims to alleviate psyche-somatic suffering partly by reconnecting persons with the natural empowerment that comes from recognising our place in nature, and in working with embodiment we begin with the most intimate 'wilderness', our own living body, composed of millions of microbes, to explore and (re-)discover new or atrophied sensitivities and faculties, such as our 'felt sense'.

Making is an embodied process by which the imagined emerges via the body-mind to become part of the world of all that is material, visible, tangible and able to be reflected upon and shared. Accompanying somatic shifts in the body radiate beyond the skin and in turn affect the environment (Weiss, 1999). Many therapists will recognise among their clients those who can freeze the room, or moments in sessions when a client's process seemed to illumine or excite the air. The body is not abstract, not merely a concept, but is the locus of reaction and action which bears testimony to trauma, reveals states from rigidity to fragmentation and expresses change. Bodily phenomena can be witnessed and reflected upon by both client and therapist together. Whitaker (2004) advocates for the inclusion of embodiment and movement in art therapy and supervision, while Burns (2011) calls for integrating embodiment and eco-psychology in dance-movement therapy. The view that

genuine and lasting psychological growth and change requires and implies a parallel embodied and relational shift is not new:

'When the great swing has taken an individual into the symbolic mysteries, nothing comes of it, nothing can come of it, unless it has been associated with the earth, unless it has happened when that individual was in their body. Also individuation can only take place if you first return to your body, to your earth, only then does it become true.'

(Jung, C.G. 1976 [1934] p.473).

ROOTS OF ECO ART THERAPY: BODY, ART, PLACE AND THE POWER OF MAKING

The evolutionary, biological, social and cognitive roots of art therapy can be recognised among our Neolithic ancestors and beyond (d'Errico, et al., 2005; d'Errico and Vanhaeren, 2007; d'Errico and Henshilwood, 2011; Henshilwood, et al., 2001; 2002; Marean, et al., 2007; 2011). Pre-historical, perennial roots of art were very much grounded in human beings' relationship with the environments which they inhabited. From a biocultural, evolutionary view, the arts appear to have been effective instruments for attunement and adaptation to the natural environment, such as developing perceptual and cognitive skills in discernment and socially bonding ritual. Ancient art works are often our primary window into understanding our ancestors' existence, society and beliefs and ethological perspectives on the arts help us to understand the role of the body as the focus of adaptive activities closely interwoven with 'the behavior of art' (Dissanayake, 1980 p.398).

From stone tools, clay figurines, rock reliefs and cave paintings, from bone and horn puppet-toys, to ceremonial body ornament and costumes decorated with shells and stones, animal teeth, horn, fur and feathers, and later, metal jingles, and embroidered patterns of healing plants and dancing 'goddesses', 'arts and crafts' were everyday life, where clothing and every implement had to be hand-made mostly from local resources and materials worked with in a visceral, cooperative process; carved with, not against, the grain, resulting in a natural aesthetic harmony; stones chipped along natural veins and fault-lines, wooden utensils carved around hollows, burrs and forks, pebble tools polished to reveal their crystalline structure and growth patterns, baskets and fish-traps woven using the natural flexibility and resistance of fibres and imagery painted with plant and mineral pigments, in a harmonised palette of colours. This suggests a quality of attuned attention, an embodied presence of mind-in-body in relation to materials, a 'mindfulness', eloquently described by contemporary therapists seeking to integrate into therapy and care; non-dual, holistic wisdom from Eastern traditions, discoveries concerning neuroplasticity and global ecological imperatives (Siegel, 2007).

In eco art therapy, introducing natural materials and access to outdoor nature immediately stimulates art-making which vividly echoes ancient traditional activities of our hunter-gatherer ancestry; gathering, wrapping and binding occur early on in many clients' work (Kopytin, and A'Court, 2007). The assembly of fascicles; bundles of visually or symbolically similar or categorically disparate natural objects, which together have meaning and signify some kind of power, is a frequent initial response to the invitation to make art outside in nature (Kopytin, and A'Court, 2011).

These bundles are often constructed to fit the maker's hand or to be carried or hung. Access to wood, trees and coloured cords, similarly stimulates the tying on and winding of colours around branches to make staff- or spear-like, talismanic objects, and the decorating of whole trees with coloured rags, as wishing, blessing or memorial 'cloutie' (Scots) trees, a tradition found across many cultures in both hemispheres. Binding, with its dual meaning of bondage and commitment, especially, seems metaphorical for our bodily sense of ourselves bound inside a skin bag, held, and sometimes 'holding' to secure and control body, identity, emotion or the world around us. In rituals of wrapping sticks and rocks we 'clothe' or shroud the naked bones of nature and endow them with meaning and ceremonial status.

In art, shamanism and healing, the skin, wood, bone, clay, paper, metal and stone, even the trees, may all 'talk' to us as we work with them in craft and ceremony, influencing our imagining and guiding our moment-to-moment somatic and emotional responses to our own moves and the changing nature of the medium. This is an intimate, mutually affecting relationship, with place as an aspect, or mirror, of our self, and with the 'matter', or 'mater', of place as 'mother', birthing our creativity and resourcefulness, an experience often echoed among contemporary makers;

'It was interesting to see that the creativity is kind of living in all materials ready to be unfolded.' (Eco-Village Training student)

'I enjoy the freedom of just using my hands and 'found' tools - a sharp stone, the quill of a feather, thorns. I take the opportunities each day offers: if it is snowing, I work with snow, at leaf-fall it will be with leaves; a blown-over tree becomes a source of twigs and branches. I stop at a place or pick up a material because I feel that there is something to be discovered. Here is where I can learn.' (Goldsworthy, 2001)

In psychotherapy and many religious traditions, work, play, or ceremony in intimacy with nature, is revelatory; able to reveal our nature, reconnecting us with a knowing we recognise, find deeply stirring and replenishing but have forgotten to value or become dulled to, the subject matter of myth, poetry and shamanism. Like art works that emerge from the authentic, archetypal Self, the works of nature can enable us, as mirrors, to recognise our very embodied and transpersonal Self, embedded in the matter and community of all things. Therapy as self-awareness liberates our conditioned cognition and art therapy can bring awareness to internalised cultural imagery and collective stereotypes playing out in our actions: for example; Kimberley Patton (2006) links our use of the oceans as a dumping ground to their historical and mythological image as 'non-places'; vast, archetypically receptive mothers, all-consuming and all-birthing, unable to be overwhelmed or ever filled up by our pollutants.

Psychotherapy theory has focused on the human interaction between therapist and client, despite many of our clients, especially those with borderline and trauma-related conditions, having intense, significant relationships with the realms of nature, animals and the man-made world, sometimes seeing nature as 'primary caregiver' (Bernstein, 2005 p.160) Eco therapies go 'beyond the interpersonal concerns of clients by locating them in the world and recognising their reciprocal relationship with the environment' (Clare, 2014, p.5) Direct experience of this reality can feel like merging into intimate union with non-human nature; dissolving into the ocean waters, becoming one with the mountain, radiant with light ... with radically transformative 'therapeutic' effects (Rust, 2004). Eco psychologists like Rust, concerned with the effects of global eco crises on our consciousness, ask how we could practice art therapy 'with ecology in mind?' Like many indigenous peoples, Clinebell (1994)

described how we could view the health of humans in the context of the health of the planet (Swimme, and Berry, 1992) a much needed 'rapid evolutionary reconnection of the western ego with nature' (Bernstein, 2005 p.93).

Indigenous traditions suggest some of the roots and branches of eco art therapy. In the multi-cultural context in which many art therapists work, they can provide new paradigms, collaborative opportunities and creative inspiration for art therapy, in their embodied, systemic spirituality and co-creativity with nature. Ethno-medical beliefs play a crucial role in the efficacy of treatments, as psycho-physical dynamic variables which might be said to be 'active ingredients' able to act as 'conduits' for healing. Some eco therapists argue that therapy is ethically required to foster 'a non-dual, participatory, eco-centred approach, one that is mutually enhancing for all participants in the shared earth community, human and otherwise.' (Adams, 2009) Closer to home for this art therapist in Scotland, the European Romantic poets' nature meditations while revolution raged, eloquently voiced the yearned-for release from the small, industrial self, our intimation of a shared continuum of being and the healing powers of the natural world. Coleridge, gazing at the moon, wrote;

'I seem rather to be seeking as it were, asking, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists than observing anything new ... I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature.' (Coleridge, S.T. 1805, entry 2546)

GREEN STUDIO

Like Rust and other eco therapists we can extend the idea of the relational field around the client and art therapist to include place as a significant contributor to our inner development and life. I encourage clients to use the room, surrounding garden, woodland and beaches, to notice and include objects and life forms encountered there in their installations and constructions. Holistic eco art therapy, in prioritising connecting with the client's ecological self via embodied, co-creation with nature, may shift



Figure 1. East London's 'Winchester Geese' cemetery gates: tribute to the unnamed women of London.

'the focus on the therapist from being the primary attachment figure to serving as an accepting container of awareness who opens space for the client's own Self to emerge. To do this, therapists must embody their own fullest Self, acting as a tuning fork to awaken the client's Self to its own resonance.' (Schwartz, R. 2011 p.3)

Many practices described in this chapter can be used by therapists for such self-care and development of therapeutic presence.

'Many of our inherited concepts isolate our intelligence from the intimacy of our creaturely encounter with the strangeness of things.'

(Abram, 2011, p.8)

Fears and risks associated with outdoor therapy often coalesce around its being perceived as boundary-less, potentially evoking terror or anxiety. The contribution of local field phenomena gradually entering my own and my clients' awareness led to 'open door' sessions; a transition to outdoor sessions, whereby the door to the garden is open or clearly unlocked, softening the inside-outside boundary, potentially mirroring the client's inner process, while maintaining the safe studio base. The client is free to follow their gaze and attention out beyond the room and to move outside if called to, the threshold often becoming charged with significance. In my experience, preparation in body awareness is essential for some clients; building micro-experiences of groundedness, anchoring skills, receptive awareness and connection via indoor and open-door sessions, preparing the body-mind system for the positive, containing and relational vastness of nature and any potential '*creaturely encounter*' (Abram, 2011, p.28) out of doors. Some of the examples given below occurred during open door sessions, as clients began to integrate their awareness of the local ecology into their process, in a situation of therapist and client co-learning, guided by Authentic Movement and Process Work principles in allowing the 'next most natural and authentic move', that which wants to occur without contrivance, to flow and guide perception.

SOMATIC AWARENESS AND EMBODIMENT IN ECO ART THERAPY

Expressive art-making need not begin with a visual image or concept, but arises out of the body's viscerally felt life, finding expression in an 'organismic' language, that includes the 'presenting past' (Jacobs, 2005) and the myriad field forces present. In trauma work, the inclusion of embodiment within art therapy can help the journey of recovery, for example in the use of mindfulness and related practices (Rothschild, B. 2000; Baer, R. 2003; Davis, and Hayes, 2011) to bring clients out of dissociation and post-traumatic flashback, providing short term 'fast aid' and longer term psycho-educational, self-help tools. Mindful, body-environment awareness and eco art exercises can support therapeutic aims by fostering reconnection, returning us to the ground of sensory experience, meeting ourselves and nature in the here and now, as embodied self within a living, physical world-field.

Eco therapies typically incorporate some building or craft-based activity while outdoors, but may not focus on, or underplay this component. In eco art therapy the processes of making-within, and co-creation-with nature are pivotal and closely attended to. As in all art

therapy, the embodied nature of creativity itself can be experienced as an energised or subtle physical experience, which may elude focused perception, control or definition;

'It is sometimes possible to hear a poem before you know what it is about ... to get the movement before you get the words ... or the first faint stirring of something waiting to be expressed.' (Alvarez, 2013 p.53)

Being Touched, Being Moved

A review of the role of touch in art therapy (Ball, 2002) is beyond the scope of this chapter, except to emphasise that, 'to the body, the world is not 'object'. There is no 'me' apart from an 'other'. Everything is animate for the sensing body. Touch a tree and the tree is touching you back'. (Daloz, 1998) While the touch of a valued person may elicit an oxytocin response (Ishak, Kahloon, and Fahkry, 2011) and help assuage fear, pain and threat, imagined presence, contact, or the actual touch, of other living beings; animals, plants, trees, grass, water, moving air, etc. may, for some, provide comparable sensory comfort (Pretty, Peacock, Sellens, and Griffin, 2007).

Physical and emotional-metaphorical touch is the essence of artistic expression, and characteristic of the awe we can feel both in response to nature and art as it bridges inner and outer; we may feel soothed or invigorated and woken from defensive, dissociative numbness, to face a new layer of feeling with an intense vulnerability to being 'touched' and moved by the world. Eco therapies offer the opportunity to thaw frozen states, at the risk of our developing 'a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary life ... like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat' and we can observe, alongside our clients, the reactive repertoire of defensive, habits, lest we 'should die of the roar which lies at the other side of the silence.' (Elliot, G. Middlemarch Book II Ch. 20)

Charged psycho-physical reactions to art media are well documented outdoor places and materials also trigger potent feelings and associations. Robust, sometimes disturbing, physical engagement and frustrating technical struggles with found objects and materials often contribute to the significance and emotional value to the client of the objects created in sessions and the place of their making;

'I was rubbish at art ... this wooden stick kept going wrong, I got fed up but I kept at it, fiddling till it stuck ... bits broke off, the metal bit fell but ended up in better place, so I left it there, looking much more how I wanted it. It's special to me now ... it reminds me of my grandfather who always carried a walking stick.'

(Participant: Youth Empowerment Programme)

Gestural Drawing: The Body in Virtual Place

Gestural Drawing (Kopytin, and A'Court, 2007, 2011) evolved as a tool to mindfully explore the body's inherent geometry and the natural gestural marks that emerge from resting in deep attention to this. It has become one among many forms of mindful, somatic preparation for outdoor eco art therapy work as it invites authenticity within the micro-environment, the potential space of the large paper. 'Drawing' is facilitated to flow from the

body as a form of non-doing, without direction, contrivance or effort, while being witnessed as we monitor our felt sense.

Such exercises reveal and relax habitual attitudes of mental grasping at agendas, desires and outcomes, facilitating a more open, receptive psyche-somatic state in which to experience both the body and the field of nature. The process of 'being drawn' rather than drawing, resembles the being 'drawn' along, 'called' by nature to follow a path, towards or into an unfolding landscape. A metaphoric resonance, mirroring how we move through everyday life, is often felt in such moments.

EMBODYING ART WORKS

During art therapy, clients spontaneously relate physically to, or find ways to embody, their art works, extending them into the space and environment via vocalisations, gestures or movements before, during and after art-making or making marks from impulses and expressive gestures. With support they learn to notice the subtle emergence of somatic changes. They may make images of specific body parts, sensations, symptoms or whole body experiences and follow urges to somatically express their imagery; in facial expression, posture and movement, dance, song and spontaneous prayer or poetry. Before, during and after art-making, clients can practice, here and now, embodying states unfamiliar or inaccessible to them in their everyday life and seek resonances in the natural world around them.

The next example illustrates a natural flow between modalities; somatic memory, spontaneous metaphoric imagery and body movement-enactment, akin to the self-liberation of thought in meditation, when thought and feeling are allowed to flow, arise, subside and dissolve without interference, as the client is free to move around the environment.

Example: Nailed to the Doorstep

A female client had been using expressive hand gestures while speaking about how to thrive as a fully rounded, self-accepting person, having experienced an authoritarian and prescriptive childhood. She stood after making a series of paintings, through which she found 'a whole body joie de vive' following 'a huge compulsion to use both hands and ... revel in the ambi-dexterity my upbringing has now left me with.' Assuming a posture expressive of her feeling and artwork, sensations of 'stuckness' arose; simultaneously 'exiled and reviled, imprisoned and controlled', an agony akin to having her 'feet nailed to the parental doorstep'. This image evoked further painful childhood memories of feeling 'neither safe in the home, nor free in the world', facing uncomfortable alternatives, both involving loneliness and isolation. She was now trying to 'liberate' and express her authenticity amidst seemingly irreconcilable and historically suppressed aspects of herself. Tracking and embodying outwardly the inner sensations accompanying the image, she felt fully her inability to move and observed how she perceived the world from this doorstep. Gradually, staying with the uncomfortable and distressing sensations and experiences of standing on the doorstep,

swaying and amplifying her movements in tiny increments, she explored possible directions of movement, risking extending her body and her play into the space behind and ahead of her.

My role was to witness, reflect and invite inquiry into, contrary or secondary, forbidden impulses towards movement being visibly signalled in her body. A somatic shift occurred and concurrent transformation of the meaning of the doorstep to that of a threshold of potential, a 'springboard' for action; 'the safe harbour or home-base she could safely return to and earth' and a radical change of affective state. She re-framed the apparent burdens of her complex and multi-cultural upbringing and world view, now recognising them as a gift; precious opportunities to enrich her own life and be shared through her work with others. Her feet felt 'more alive' with sensation as she danced about and found among the art materials a pair of green foot-shapes, which she embellished, turning them into 'Goddess feet' to ground and affirm her new found liberation.

ART AND WALKING: BILATERAL PROCESSES IN ECO ART THERAPY

The combination of bilateral movement and corresponding hemispheric activity is used intentionally in some contexts for specific art-therapeutic purposes. (McNamee, 2011; Cartwright, 1999; Shapiro, 2001, 2007; Talwar, 2007). In holistic eco art therapy walking provides an important form of bilateral stimulation, through art-making during, or following, a walk, or by combining walking and art-making. As both an everyday bilateral and symbolic activity, walking is often the first move towards embodying an art work and is easily incorporated into therapy. Initially, learning from my clients' spontaneous self-healing actions, I began to observe, and then include, walking in sessions.

The role of the walking itself in eco therapies can easily be overlooked but it has its own traditions; associated with the rhythm and movement of mind and as a metaphor for how we move through the world. The power of walking to bring body-mind-path into synchrony, to settle and awaken creativity in art, poetry and music, is testified to by painters, composers, poets, scientists and inventors. Walking facilitates loosening intensely focused attention on the mechanics of a problem to be fixed, in favour of roaming awareness that scans the immediate bodily context and synthesises diverse elements from experience, creating new images, associations and insights. Liu and Braun (2008) describe the 'natural de-focused attention and uncensored processes' that can occur when we relax our 'executive functions'. Flaherty's (2005) work on relaxation and dopamine and research collated by Opezzo and Schwartz (2014) provides a neurological view of this phenomenon.

Mindful, Ritual and Ceremonial Walking

While mindful walking brings us present to our body and the flow of sensations and connection, ritual and ceremonial walking combine loosening of the matrices of conventional thought forms with surrender to an ancestral, mythic or transcendent process, letting our 'self' 'go' in order to follow a traditional, sacred route to a deeper Self, processing deep personal and collective emotion; from solemn procession and dedicated pilgrimage with sacred intentions and destinations to celebratory marches. Labyrinths, spirals, mazes and earth

mandalas are walked as symbols of life-as-a-journey or the soul’s path. Examples of mindful and ritualised walking in art therapy, indoors and outdoors through indoor and outdoor environments are described below.

Example: Pacing Herself

An adult client, sexually abused as a child, attended for 6 sessions. She placed the art materials out of reach, requiring 3-4 paces between paint and paper. This seemed to contribute to reducing her agitation and dissociation; during walking and painting she became more present, seemingly more in her body, breathing deeply, more energised and able to relate to me as an equal/adult. This spacing and pacing became this client’s chosen regular set-up, with positive effects. After 6 sessions, which became increasingly physically active and interactive with me, she expressed satisfaction with having met her intention to overcome some of the disabling effects of her abuse. Pacing is an interesting body metaphor, with its dual meaning of repetitive, preoccupied walking and managing the scale and tempo of exertion. Talwar’s (2007) Art Therapy Trauma Protocol, (ATTP), in which clients paint standing up, walking to and from the paints, engaging the whole body, similarly engages what Talwar proposes is an innate ability ‘to construct adaptive solutions to negative experiences and to integrate positive and negative motional schemata.’ (Ibid. p.27)



Figure 2. Ritual walkway: natural elements, rhythm, repetition. Photo: B.A’Court

HOLISTIC ECO ART THERAPY ACTIVITIES: MOVING FROM INDOORS TO OUTDOORS

Art-Based Somatic Constellations

Art-based somatic constellations are a way to begin working with the art and the field in eco art therapy, in preparation for open door and outdoor work. Using embodied sense the client makes expressive images representing the 'feel' of selected aspects of a situation, family dynamic or bodily experience, then places these in the space according to body sense and intuition. They walk to each art work in turn, stand, sit beside or place hands on each, allowing somatic sense; skin and sensory-nervous system to respond, to experience consciously what this part of the field is holding and can communicate. Since the constellation, i.e. the field, transcends and includes space and time, experiences transmitted down generations may be felt directly via the sensing body.

Path Working

Pathworking (Kopytin, and A'Court, 2007) combines installation-building and mindful walking, and was also inspired by Earth-based psychology's concept of 'path awareness', 'our innate ability to sense where to turn at any given moment.' (Mindell, 2007 p.ix) Path awareness involves a sensitive attunement to subtle, yet significant, dimensions of self and world, particularly non-rational and often unconscious dimensions that tend to be ignored, dismissed, or pathologised in our lives and in contemporary psychology.

Building installations and virtual or micro-environments to be interacted with, is not new in art therapy. Less common has been to relate them to the 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1996 p.20). We can work with installations to bring the individual's or group's attention to the eco therapeutic aspects of their experience by inviting them to monitor their bodily felt sense and perceptions of the local field at each stage of the process:

- selecting materials,
- working alongside others,
- entering, travelling through and being inside the environment.

We can invite clients to become mindful of the flow of their somatic experience in a continuous process of inner witnessing and to work with the indoor environment as if it were an outdoor environment. Combined with mindfulness, this art can awaken deep environment-associated feelings and memories and be a mirror for core beliefs.

Walking the Painted Road

One way we work explicitly with the field; the room and immediate indoor or outdoor environment, is to join art works together to create a virtual environment, a path or place. As we enter and move within it, we discover, via sensory, imaginative and whole-body somatic

experiences, metaphoric places resonant with inner states, personal orientations, implicit collective narratives and motivating myths. Deep Democracy (Mindell, 1988, 1992) encourages us to welcome and respect all viewpoints, all voices, inner and outer, of however small or marginalised a minority, since these views will inevitably be part of the dynamic 'field' of relationships, roles and realities and potentially exert an influence on, or contain crucial, transformative information for, the whole. This can be witnessed when the group task is to assemble images into a place or path to be walked and all images and their corresponding lived realities must be included. Like this participant, walkers risk entering and intimately encountering the psyche-somatic realities of their peers in a process that parallels moments in everyday life.

Some further examples of ways to combine mindful walking with art-making in eco art therapy.

Example: 'The Path that became My Spine'

Following a mindful walk, a workshop participant created a small installation aligning pebbles of diminishing size (resembling vertebrae) along a branch in a long curve. The construction process created resonances in her spine, sensations and memories, in turn evoking further artistic processes as she worked simultaneously at a symbolic level in the art work using the natural materials that had called to her and on her own body history and structure.

Reconsecrating Everyday Life

The mindful walk or questing journey is within a long tradition of cross-cultural, traditional and shamanic practices designed to align us with the world in which we find ourselves and to help us to meet and cooperate with mundane and sacred beings, forces and materials alive there. Walking, not in our usual half-present, hurried or preoccupied way, we can ritualise and transform an ordinary activity into a dedicated one with initiatory potential.

Ritual is both symbolic and real activity in the world witnessed by, and generating feedback responses from, the world. Within ritual space all components take on significance; materials and objects become capable of carrying meanings far beyond their everyday use. We give, and the world takes back, its poetical power. Anything can be transformative, as that is the work of the body, mind and imagination. Learning this, via the accessibility of the inner artist function, is often a powerful side benefit of art therapy.

'The ritual process is generative ... speculative ... it enables us to proliferate new structures, new symbols new metaphors.' (Turner, 1969 p.130)

We already do this in how we look at art works, but extending into the room and beyond can build another level of awareness and confidence not only for clients who have lost faith in life or feel frozen and alienated from the world, but also for some high achievers whose lifestyles require moving at a fast pace through the world, and who feel deadened and

oblivious to the world around them, especially the tiny but vivid signs of nature in amidst urban life.

Mini Pilgrimage

I devised this process inspired and informed by Buddhist approaches to mindful potential of the everyday and 'work' and the art of Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969-80) to 'honour and confirm the dignity of maintenance work as a life sustaining, life enhancing activity.' (Phillips, 1995 p.183) An everyday walk, familiar, depressing or travelled in a dissociated, unappreciative state; from the house to the metro or car, from home to school ... is transformed in stages, using a fluid, body-mind-art-environment process of; art-making, somatic experiencing and mindful walking. The walk becomes a live work of art as we bring creative attention to it. We may choose to reframe it as a mythic or sacred journey, and practice walking it virtually and in reality with mindfulness and somatic awareness. Clients report radical changes once back home; changes in their psyche-somatic responses, behaviours and sensory pleasures received from their daily journeys and other mundane tasks following this practice.

PART II: THE WORLD TALKS BACK

In a non-dual paradigm, the Earth is envisaged as a unified field (Griffin, 1978; Lovelock, 1979; Bohm, 1980) within which the substrate matter of all life is shared, elements and compounds endlessly recycled. This implies potential 'resonance' among all the manifestations of these materials; common energetic properties, radiating, communicating, echoing and responding, such that the whole field of therapy, containing both client and therapist can be considered alive and potentially responsive and worthy of attention. Rust (2004) uses the term 'eco-psyche system' and asks:

'What if we extended this human relational field into a relational field of life, and considered our ecosystem to be one great bodily interdependent system that we all lived within, one that was infused with psyche?'

A 'flow', according to Bohm (1980, 2002) in which mind and matter are not separate substances. Rather, they are different aspects of our whole and unbroken movement. Since human experience is embodied even denied, split-off psychic aspects of identity can be perceived as they manifest in the body-mind-field relational system. Hence this advice from a Yupik hunter:

'You have to clear your mind of the thoughts of the animal or he'll see you coming.'
(Picoult, J. 2008, p. 298)

In a 'communion of subjects' what if the 'objects' of our perception are subjects looking back at us? Our perception, and what we can say of our experience, is constrained by the subject-object structure of our language. Eco feminist philosophers since Griffin (1984)

advocate 'situated knowledge' which grants 'the status of agent/actor to the 'objects of the world'. (Haraway, quoted in Warren, 2000, Ch.2 p.34) Process Work regards phenomena in the 'world channel' as also mirroring the client's inner process via synchronistic events (Mindell, 1985, p.14-24) just as many non-European indigenous cultures view nature as imbued with its own sentience; the shared substrate of matter being a form of collective consciousness within which we may appear and be 'seen'.

Shamanic traditions have always made use of nature's ability to perceive and involve us and 'talk back'. When we walk through a forest do we pause to wonder how the forest is experiencing us? Fairy tales abound with whispering forests, talking animals, and saints and heroes who can converse with non-human life forms. Nature and her creatures will interrupt and break into our awareness at precisely timed moments in therapy, or in ceremonies for example, as support for healing rituals, to help diagnose or treat whatever transgression has developed into illness in a person's body-mind or family (Bernstein, 2005, p.160). What is described here is a reciprocal relationship; as art therapists we do not simply use nature merely as 'another room' or 'scenic backdrop', (Jones, and Nash, 2015, p.11) exploitable for inspiration and resources. We attend to the relationship, to what happens between client and nature and to the client-art-nature-therapist field, just as many indigenous communities use ceremony and ritual to re-establish and harmonise the person-world relationship, often using the arts as the bridging medium:

We are the land. Illness is a result of separation from the ancient unity of person, ceremony, and land, and healing is a result of recognition of this unity. Perhaps we can best characterize this relation by saying that the stories are the communication device of the land and the people. Through the stories, the ceremony, the gap between isolate human being and lonely landscape is closed. (Gunn Allen, 1992, p.119)

In open door sessions I invite the client, if they wish, to loosely include the garden in their awareness and to venture outside if or when they feel a 'call', sometimes initially to go to a place that intuitively feels right for them. Invariably this place has some supportive or challenging meaning for them and an encounter occurs which enters and colours their therapeutic process. Therapy itself, at times, becomes a narrative, in which causal and other significant non-causal, but significant, connections, appear. Complex, apparently a-causal, synchronistic field phenomena occurring during eco art therapy, especially during the client's art-making, can be observed to have a powerful effect, 'speaking' directly to the client's imagination. Seemingly witnessed and affirmed by nature, we may feel less separate, as illustrated in the following examples from indoor sessions of the natural world synchronistically entering the therapy.

Example: Rainbow Painting

A client in her forties was making a delicate watercolour painting as she reflected on her preoccupation with the loss of her twin sister shortly after their birth. The session had the feel of a re-connecting, honouring and memorial process, rather than one of cathartic grief. We hung the finished picture on the wall to look at it together. A rainbow appeared on one side of the image, refracted light from the window, looking so convincingly like an intentional part of

the painting that it transfixed us both with its presence. We watched in silence for the next 45 minutes as it travelled in an arc across the image and all the while the client felt it was the 'essence' of her lost sibling. She found this comforting, and it facilitated a gentle unfolding of thoughts and reflections, culminating in a sense of both mourning and reconnection achieved within the session and a new phase able to begin. The light became part of the created image, arriving, appropriately for the subject matter, from the 'heavens' beyond the client and her own (or my) ego, and suggested communion across a larger witnessing field.

Example: Crane Dance

A new client telephoned to book a session and immediately the sky outside my studio was full of raucous screeching. Two herons, resembling large cranes, were flying over the studio with a group of gulls and crows chasing them. The herons circled slowly, gracefully and unhurriedly above the studio, despite the aggressive mob, and eventually carried on their way. Herons have not been seen in this area before and this was an eye-catching scene of gull-crow collaboration, usually only seen on occasional visits by predatory hawks. During her session, the client was investigating loss of function in one foot following an injury, using mindfulness methods to allow the flow of sensation, imagery and movement through her body. She assumed a posture in which she resembled, and said she felt like, a dragon-like bird. As she explored and developed this imagery in movement, her injured foot relaxed and was able to flex more than since her injury. The key, she said, was the crane-like form, its gestures and movements which she found invigorating and empowering, repeating and extending them with laughter and enjoyment. I observed how these movements lifted her out of a victim role in relation to the perpetrator of the injury, and suggested they may be therapeutic to practice at home or incorporate into her dance sessions. I recalled the initial 'phone contact and the herons; the only crane-like birds native to this area. In some traditions such appearances would suggest the presence of a totem animal and an invitation to pay careful attention to what it embodies and may teach us.

Stories of animal communication, protection, guidance and transferred wisdom, abound worldwide in myth, folklore and art. In eco art therapy we can often witness the apparent continuum of imaginary-physical reality via human-animal synchronicities, which do not fit traditional Western concepts of space-time and causality, and accord more with Einstein's circular model. Such synchronistic phenomena surrounding all stages of therapy from first contact, including animal activity in the field, potentially mirror or express aspects of the therapy.

Example: Toucan Feather

In a path-working installation a client chose a feather to symbolise safe arrival at a desired destination. The art work resembled a sandy path and the feather suggested air and flight. Years earlier, when I had become lost and disorientated along desert trails, three rare toucan birds appeared, slowly circled above me and decisively guided me home. I experienced clear 'inner' instruction to follow them and was led safely along the right trail back to where I was staying. The toucan feather had held this memory and feeling for me ever

since and was now serving my client's needs as a symbol beckoning movement and flight to a new life.

The world talks back when we drop into a transcendental or mindful and embodied presence during art-making and invite connection, receptive to experiencing synchronistic events: such as when a gust of wind arises suddenly on a still day, blowing twigs and leaves at the window, creating a perfectly timed dynamic interruption for a client's insight to land, or when a single wave in a smooth glassy sea sweeps up to the client's feet, bringing a wave of realisation. This is the Biblical world of cosmic revelation mediated by life forms, that we find recorded in many epic myths, legends and religious scriptures. It is a small step to regard all that we live amongst, the entire field, as part of the art-work-in-becoming. In many traditions the world is the Holy Ones' creation; a work of art, a sacred masterpiece of shimmering complexity. We can use our eco art therapy ways of looking and exploring to engage with phenomena. Together with our clients we can discover resources – from challenge to solace - within the immediate living world, working towards our therapeutic aim to be at home, among kin, in the world.

The animate field of life itself becomes the theatre for therapy, where healing on many levels may occur and,

*'with an eye made quiet by the power
of harmony and the deep power of joy
we see into the life of things.'*

(Wordsworth, W. *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*. 1798)

WILD THERAPISTS: ANIMALS AS PARTNERS IN ECO ART THERAPY

Animals have always been an intimate part of human life and significant presence in therapy, one which has been growing alongside the reframing of our species' relationship with non-human nature in accord with Buddhist and other holistic, eco-feminist and systemic world-views. Awareness of the participation of local wild animals in art therapy sessions arose from observing clients' engagements with the garden surrounding the therapy studio.

Herring gulls, crows and other garden birds, bees, wasps, butterflies, mice, roe deer, domestic and local feral cats have all played significant roles in sessions. This process intensified 20 years ago when I moved to an area where herring gulls nest on rooftops and are renowned for dive-bombing humans and causing disturbance during nesting season. I joined the Findhorn Foundation Community where co-creation with nature is a founding and guiding principle and animal communication is practiced and taught. My amateur wildlife-watching skills deepened into daily practice. Since it is now illegal to destroy nests many home owners install metal roof-spines to deter nesting. Our household tried another strategy; we spoke to the gulls on the day they arrived in April, welcoming them, telling them we were happy to share our roof-space and garden with them. We spoke to them daily and ensured that visitors did likewise. No one was dive-bombed all summer. Renowned for stealing food from plates and, occasionally, from a child's mouth, these so-called scavengers proved pleasant house-guests. They circled respectfully when we ate in the garden, escorted their chicks to the roof-edge as if to have us admire them, did not soil our decking or damage property, while neighbours spent desperate days shielding themselves from gull dives, scrubbing guano from

their woodwork and aggravated the birds into frenzy by throwing sticks and chasing gull chicks away. We repeat this welcome annually, a practice now tried by villagers, with similar results. Here the focus is what they began, and continue, to do, in relation to my art therapy practice.

The studio opens onto the garden directly below where the gulls nest. The gulls began to demonstrate dramatic, atypical behaviours, perceived, both by myself and clients, to be directly related to the art, the therapy and the client's inner process. Gulls' intelligence' is often attributed negatively; referring to their rapid learning where to find food, but is also recognised in other individual and social behaviours. We may admire their play within the field, within which their interventions are unfailingly timely, precisely symbolic, ironic and accurate. I have learnt from them that I can invite the animal realm to participate in therapy, as part of the living field of healing, and receive a relevant response.

From the many synchronistic events involving animals as human helpers, we must look more deeply into nature's participation from its own side; animals acting from their own sentience and agency, in relationship to us, seemingly affected and drawn into the relational field of the therapy, therapist and client, just as we ourselves may be 'dreamed up', within the intricate web of life into dramas and counter-transferences, to mirror our client's process in our own body, speech and mind.

Example: Nest

Nests as symbols of natural protection and potential, woven from easily handled twigs and soft leaves, moss and feathers often appear in eco art and art therapy as the psyche recovers and develops. A client was weaving a nest from soft wool and twigs when a crowd of tiny garden birds gathered outside the window then flew in synchrony to line up immediately outside the window, facing directly in to where the client sat, as if watching her at her art work. This was a touching moment as she reflected on her recent tragic loss of several family members in a violent accident. This visitation from the birds, traditionally messengers from 'the other world' of soul and spirit, was relevant.



Figure 3. Nests in mourning: natural circle, embrace of love and protection, eggs of potential new life.
Photo: B. A'Court

Working with nature as co-therapist is not entirely contrary to the psychodynamic approach but can be viewed as a broadening of it. Our childhood social-relational identity and dynamics, especially our fundamental dependency on nature and defences against this, are transposed onto, and manifest in, our 'transference' relationship with the whole planet and natural world. Being alive and sentient, the world of nature speaks back.

Example: Doe and Faun

During a client's final session, as she was standing and drawing, having arrived at an emotionally charged place in the midst of the art work, struggling to express something, our attention was simultaneously taken by movement outside the room: A roe deer doe had stepped out of the trees and was licking her newborn faun, literally minutes after the birth, the faun teetering on its legs. The doe continued for several minutes to gently lick and tend the faun in a small patch of sunlight in direct line of view from the studio. The client and I watched in silence. The environment was completely still and no one walked or drove past. After some minutes when the faun could balance on its legs the pair withdrew back into the trees. The client exclaimed, 'That's what I've been doing. I've been birthing a new self' and went on to understand a series of feelings and experiences she had been having difficulty with.

In traditional psychodynamic terms we might say she had identified with the doe, the faun, and the whole scene, projecting her desired meaning onto it. Or that the complex matrix that is life also had an active role in creating this scene at that time and place in an 'implicate order' (Bohm 1986) beyond reductionist analysis. Whichever explanation we choose, this is what we spontaneously do all the time: we receive, we simultaneously 'render and receive' (Wordsworth, 1798) reading the world metaphorically to discover ourselves.

The client and I had looked together at the scene as if it had been the art work. Silent looking, as it often does in art therapy, allowing movement to occur in the psyche. For this client, whose problems had included recurrent bullying and isolation and who also had a particular affectionate kinship with animals, this was an especially poignant and appropriate gift. The sitting and looking together in silence itself felt especially significant to me, as much of the therapy had focused on painful dynamics in relationships with women, in her family of origin and those with whom she now shared a house.

Mother Mind

'Mother mind' is the term coined by traditional healer Vusamazulu Credo Muttwa for that part of human consciousness that is empathic and feels by 'direct transmission' all that is going on in the world and senses that all life is sacred. In therapy, clients are often tense, anxiously agitated or numb and shut down, rigidly holding the world at bay or circulating thoughts. The gentleness of the mental attitude required to be sensitive to vegetation's subtle tremors and wildlife activity, the non-grasping at outcomes, is significant here, and is itself a practice with benefits, helping to interrupt and make space in self-defeating, projected aggression and rumination.

Similarly, as we walk we may meet creatures, objects and materials, all with the potential to inspire and move us. We are used to this idea in art as a catalyst for inspiration: Mozart is said to have heard a starling singing in a vendor's cage and immediately received the core of his G major concerto for piano and orchestra. The Process Work method of paying attention to what in the environment 'flirts' with us, takes seriously the idea of the shared communing substrate or ground of being; both the apparently physical and the apparently 'dreaming', within which we live and suggests we simply pay attention to what our organism notices, what catches our eye, turns our head, what we stumble upon as it literally crosses our path, and becomes part of our moment and destiny. We might then receive what the world has to say to us from its side, as we pass through it. We may encounter the subject-ness of a deer, fox, rabbit or tree, and see something of the world and ourselves from a new perspective.

Example: Industrious Magpie

A client was describing a habitual mode of thinking and acting; focused, industrious, often trying to do too much. Outside the room a magpie paced up and down while looking up into the window where we sat. It was gathering twigs, leaves and other nesting materials, packing its beak to full capacity and seemingly beyond, piece by piece. Among other characteristics of this bird, with its relevant cultural associations, the client noticed this mode of activity with humour, as an accurate mirror of his own compulsive tendencies.

Example: Seagulls Wrestling

The client was painting on a wall beside large glass doors to the garden, on themes related to her sexual and creative expression. She spoke of a familiar somatic sensation of her throat constricting as she related narratives of past and recent relationships and shock during an early experience of oral sex. She spoke of the painting's sexual energy, including increasingly explicit imagery. She depicted two over-lapping faces and on one 'a woman's mouth' which she wanted to make bigger. She spoke of anger and the primitive urges involved in sexuality; eating and biting, and, in contrast, talked of being so 'assailed by' her office work at home that she could not work on a large painting that kept 'calling' her and which she was longing to complete but continually put off.

At this moment, outside the window close to and directly parallel to where she was standing, we heard loud screeching as two gulls appeared, engaged in behaviour not witnessed before (or since) in the garden. One had the other's beak locked sideways in its own, resembling the two faces in her picture. The trapped bird was flapping and vigorously pulling away as if trying to escape. The 'biter' kept a firm hold as they flapped, violently dragging each other across the garden, one being pulled along with its beak clamped tightly in the other's and then gathering some energy to pull back. Suddenly the freed bird flew off as the other stood for a few moments, a red blood mark near its beak, a surprisingly minor injury from this visceral struggle, and then it too flew off.

The scene had captured my attention, not only for its noisy drama, but also for the graphic resemblance of the seagull body shapes and gestures to the forms, energy, themes and colours in the painting. The client made immediate connections: the closed throat that could

not open to bite or scream, recalling how, in her everyday life part of her feels 'injured' when she does not allow herself to flow naturally, creatively, saying that when she suppresses herself her energy seems to 'leak out sideways' affecting others, taken on and expressed by them, rather as the seagulls had seemed to be expressing something for her. The potent image she had been painting conveyed some transpersonal aspects of male and female. She had said earlier 'A lot of what holds me down is not mine' again prefiguring what the birds had enacted. She returned to her painting with some anxiety, but continued and allowed more sensuality into it and gradually began to enjoy making it. She remarked that the creatures in her picture wanted to 'sink their teeth into something.' The role of the seagulls, the synchronicity of their drama and the seeming animation of the painting witnessed by the client and therapist brought more information and memories into the contemplation of the art work and delivered new energy into the painting and her state of body-mind.

Such sessions demonstrate the seamless ease of moving between the art work, the client's somatic experiences and the mirroring by animals in the natural environment, and the power of this to contribute to the creative-therapeutic flow.

Clients' experiences of perinatal interventions often surface in holistic eco art therapy as somatic memories. In my observation, including somatic and field awareness can facilitate and support clients to feel, recognise, and be a witness to, the origins of certain obsessive-compulsive or phobic reactions and be a step towards gaining mastery over their troubling manifestations in current life. The active participation of nature and wildlife in such moments may offer a dramatic mirror, amplification of, or counter-scenario to the experience of medical processes. Herring gulls and other birds have sometimes created noisily metallic accompaniments to therapy, together pecking and interfering with roof, gutter or windows, dislodging aerials and fittings to create a commotion and, for the client, a sense of intrusion, evoking the panic and discomfort associated with the vulnerable isolation of the incubator or powerlessness during technological medical interventions. The birds' precision and skill can seem a playful analogy of the liberating, life-saving skill of the 'invasive' medical care.

The presence and activity of birds and butterflies in the following sessions seemed to mirror and amplify the subjective experiences of the clients and affirm their insights.

Example: Hawk and Gulls

One of several sessions with a couple working in managerial roles for the same organisation was held outdoors in the garden adjoining the therapy studio. Therapy had focused on the dynamics of their relationship lived within the context of occasionally conflicting work roles. They sat side by side, modelling in clay; a bowl and a 'Venus-lady', when conflict arose concerning authority, rank and decision-making. At this moment our attention was caught by a sudden noisy commotion directly overhead; a hawk was being surrounded and chased away by a group of seagulls nesting in this colony's area. For several minutes the raptor repeatedly attempted to return and was violently turned back.

Including and addressing this scene brought into focus professional territories, feelings of 'being chased away' and 'mobbed', and the naming of what was being 'driven away' in their situation, allowing expression of pain and frustration associated with their roles. A remodelled the Venus into a 'jug pouring itself out', commenting on this as a symbol for how much B knows, how she works and her need to 'pour out' her feelings. They discussed rank,

power and emotional responsibility, and identified a mutual need to see the commonalities between them rather than getting caught up in polarisations. At this moment of connection two butterflies flew directly overhead, captivating our attention with their weaving dance.

Example: Butterflies

A course participant repeatedly met tiny brown butterflies during mindful walks and when working on her art outside the studio. When one flew as if to touch her, she felt a moment of delight, followed immediately by self-critical doubt, whereupon the butterfly turned and flew away. Disappointed, she wished for the butterfly to 'come and sit on my hand.' It turned, flew directly towards her and landed on her hand where it stayed for some time. The butterfly had been a special symbol for her for some years and appeared throughout her art work for the rest of the course, with many insightful connections.

Many such stories came from sending clients and participants around the studio, to its threshold at the open garden doors and outside, with the invitation to relax their familiar agendas concerning where and how to walk and expectations of what they might find, to allow nature or their own body parts/symptoms to guide them by deep listening, paying attention to subtle signals catching their attention; a bird call, a flutter of leaves, a flash of sunlight, the sound of an animal in the bushes. Or to take their heartfelt questions and walk with them held diffusely in mind, watching and listening for responses from the natural and man-made world around them. If the world talks back perhaps the world also listens to us and may even benefit from our attention and involvement. We may be met with cooperation, and receive healing. The individual body and isolate self is a mythic image of an impossible singularity in non-duality:

'Art therapy is a means to discover both the self and the world, and to establish a relation between the two. In the complete creative process inner and outer realities are fused into a new entity.' (Ulman, 1975, p.13)

THE ART OF RESTORATION, REHABILITATION AND INTEGRATION: ART THERAPY WITH DISCARDED AND FOUND OBJECTS

'What can save us is our knowledge that true creativity arises from bricolage, from working with whatever odd assortment of funny-shaped materials we have at hand, including our odd assortment of funny-shaped selves.' (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.137)

This activity connects the client and their/our work to places and people far beyond the walls, nearby or continents away, and vividly reveals transference and other aspects of the therapy often via synchronicities. As we make art in and around the studio or on our walks in wilder places, we encounter natural or man-made, lost, rejected and discarded objects, our found objects, objects that have found us and speak to us via images and metaphors in the imagination or through the senses of touch and smell and thereby acquire new meaning. We can begin to feel, via synchronicities, serendipity, 'happy accidents' and lucky finds, that the world has meaning and intention and somehow comes to meet us, just as,

'Antonio Stradivari made some of his most beautiful violins from a pile of broken, waterlogged oars he found on the docks in Venice one day. In bricolage we take the ordinary materials in our hands and make them into new living matter. The fulcrum of the transformation is mind-at-play, having nothing to gain and nothing to lose.' (Ibid, p.87).

Integrating Specialness and Otherness: Transcending Binary Thinking

Much has been written in recent years about the psychological and social benefits of using discarded and recyclable materials in art therapy and therapeutic community arts. (Camic, 2010; Davis, 1997, 1999; Camic, Brooker, and Neal, 2011; Kopytin, and A'Court, 2011). However 'green' we believe our thinking and therapeutic style to be, the current eco zeitgeist can perpetuate prejudicial dualisms, simplistically opposing the 'positive = natural'; wood, glass, paper, with the humanly-manufactured 'artificial = negative'; plastics and all petro-chemical based materials, as illustrated in Goldstein and Kornfield's (1987) anecdote concerning a donation of plastic flowers to a Buddhist shrine, and their removal by embarrassed students. The problem, the Zen master said,

'was not the plastic in the flowers but the plastic in the students' minds. Because they were stuck in their own ideas about beauty, they missed seeing the sincere love and devotion that the offering expressed.' (Goldstein and Kornfield, 1987, p.177)

In eco art therapeutic work outdoors and with found objects, we can face such binary views that perpetuate marginalising what we think we don't like or need, for linked ecological and psychotherapeutic ends; to help overcome aversions to the man-made world, perceiving its deep connection to nature's 'common substrate', and to drop the illusion of separateness and encourage us to creatively explore how to reintegrate the toxic materials and attitudes we have manufactured. Just as our current ecological problems are partly the consequence of our wish to exclude, to throw away, hide and ignore, both certain materials and mind-states, eco art therapists pay attention to noticing implicit dialogues often about ignored, denied parts of the world and self and help the client to make them explicit, to be met with compassion and given space to transform. By representing all these parts and giving them a voice literally, spatially and symbolically, they may become less shameful and integrated into the conscious self. Weaving plastics and other environmentally toxic, dirty, man-made potentially polluting 'rubbish' into natural sculptures and combining incongruent media in bricolage, can stimulate an exploration of many forms of aversion and otherness in our lives and invite creative reconciliation.

Driftwood, Stone, Shell and Bone

I keep some natural materials; driftwood, bones, shells and stones, available during sessions for clients to handle, to bring them present to their senses and at the same time invite wonder as to where the wood came from, from what tree, bringing them ever more present in their bodies and connected to the wider sphere of the natural world. Forest trimmings and driftwood from the sea-shore embody the natural elements of the area, with their qualities as

once-living material sculpted into organic forms by wind, sand and water. Clients report comfort, warmth, softness and solidity from these objects, which often appear in the art works in various ways, symbolically holding physical and emotional experiences and memories. The 'talking stick', traditionally carved, horn-handled Scottish Highland walking stick and hazel or willow wands of Celtic tradition also often feature in clients' art, crafted in distinctive ways expressive of the person's emotional concerns and life needs.

Some objects we find, or which find us, seem to be already 'art', others we deconstruct and re-assemble to make art. Archetypal forms emerge from our interactions with found media: faces, figures, birds and ships are common, naturally dynamic shapes found in wind- and water-worn wood and stone. Bird-forms often morph into boats and vice versa.

Ships have long been archetypal symbols of the body-vessel in which we travel, the vehicle for life's voyage and into the other worlds of death and beyond. Clients may work spontaneously with no anticipated form or agenda in mind or with more focused conscious intention; purposefully making a boat as a talisman or amulet for a specific 'journey' or project. Children and adults, therapists and supervisees alike enjoy creating 'soul boats' from found materials and these little ships often take on poignant meaning. Russian children on a recuperative visit to Scotland firmly insisted on taking their rough-hewn driftwood ships home in their luggage despite practical difficulties. Foreign students make ships and birds to help them reflect on the challenging journey into community and academic life in a new country. Other clients discover an affinity with metals; malleable rusted iron, salt-corroded zinc and tin, buckled and barnacled ships' machinery, evocatively shaped and tinted by the elements.



Figure 4. Found driftwood gestures and expression. Photo: B.A'Court.

ART WORKS IN NATURE: A LIFE OF THEIR OWN

Art therapists are used to the way in which art works seem to come alive in sessions; when the client is absorbed in the flow of art works which seem to create themselves, becoming imbued with presence, power and the numinous. In many traditions, finished creations such as masks, bowls and ritual objects we call 'art works', are regarded as having an energetic or 'spirit' life of their own and must be stored and disposed of with respect as potentially powerful and capable of affecting life around them (Cotte, 2011). When we make art from found materials there is often a feeling that they belong back in the world with work to do and should at some point be returned to nature or placed in another significant location. Often their final destination arrives in the mind as they are being made and this becomes part of their meaning. Then the art-making and therapy close the circle; matter has been loaned to us to be creative with and to heal ourselves, then it is returned, to pass on its power to another place and other beings who come across it. Our creativity and our creations, however humble, become a gift for the world, part of the world's story, weaving us back into time and place and the community of subjects, for example:

'I saw my little clay and linen talisman hanging in the tree yesterday. Someone had added to it, feathers and coloured glass. I felt really happy, thrilled that my piece has added more meaning since it left me, it has its own life now.' (Art Therapy Client)

Interdependence implies a reciprocal transaction and it is common for clients and workshop participants to report personally 'healing' experiences during and following eco art therapy sessions outside, especially when art is made in direct response to the perceived needs of a place or part of nature for its own health or well-being:

'I took my clay sculpture to the river and laid it in the shallows, the gravel where the salmon spawn, and just as we stood up to leave, a salmon jumped. It was my prayer for my family and the river. I want it to be healthy and full of fish.' (Art Therapy Client)

'I made my little house and put it beside an old birch tree. I asked for the woods to be protected, lots of trees have a disease there, they look sickly. As I walked away my sore throat and headache completely went and I felt good all day, sort of lighter, and my body felt more flexible, as if I had been working out. I'd been so stiff up to then and had just wanted to be in my bed' (Art Therapy Client)

Bereaved parents among my clients have made sensitive objects such as small wooden or woven boats, cradles and baskets, to carry their loved-one's ashes and/or symbolic mementoes to float away in local rivers and sea bays. They describe unexpected somatic occurrences; pains or anxieties suddenly reduced or gone, changes in stiff or injured body areas, accompanying these memorial art-rituals in significant places of natural beauty.

ISSUES ARISING: THE SINGING FIELD

In summary, the concept of a 'Communion of Subjects', in congruence with quantum physical sciences, relational psychologies and ancient cultural and spiritual traditions, generates ways of engaging the synchrony between the client's body with its flow of sensory

experience, the influencing field of beings, objects and phenomena, together with the flow of imagination and art-making impulses rooted in ecology, culture and myth. The holistic paradigm informing eco art therapy is an alternative rationality with its own internal logic requiring appropriate modes of research. How do we honour in our research the 'integrity' of eco-art, valuing it as one of many non-conceptual forms of knowing emergent from the communion of subjects, in the process of 'making meaning'?

Honouring the embodied experience and creativity of clients frequently challenges conventional perceptions and values, art's role historically and its power to energise and liberate. Eco art therapy offers opportunities to validate, and advocate for, forms of 'communion' between sentient subjects; special, non-psychotic relationships with the non-human world and their potential and power to heal and contribute to the multi-faceted consciousness and well-being associated with inner and outer sustainability.

Holistic eco art therapy invites and empowers clients to become their own eco-artist-healers; to attune deeply to their nature-within-nature, the body-mind-as-instrument for communing with nature's vast field, and to listen inwardly and outwardly for its song and find ways to express this. As global medicine increasingly includes eco-psycho-social factors, art therapy has a unique role in revealing the creative, healing self at work within the field of causes and conditions, potentially contributing to the reframing of many areas of care; from diagnostic imaging using the body's technology, to attending to the root causes of body-mind and planetary conditions.



Figure 5. The Salmon Queen's dress (detail) Made from locally found shells, honesty seed cases, marram grass by Debbie Raymont (artist and specialist art pedagogue) and cast into the sea at the end of Findhorn Salmon Festival 2007. Community processing grief and loss and celebrating an iconic indigenous wild animal. Photo: B.A'Court.

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