

Review of the 34th Arts Therapies Forensic Conference at The House of Lords

Hosted by FATAG (Forensic Arts Therapies Advisory Group) on Monday 30th November 2015, 9.30 to 16.30 at The House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Introduction

The day began with a warm welcome from Kate Rothwell and an expression of the honour and privilege to be in the House of Lords. Special thanks were given to all delegates in attendance as well as acknowledgement of all those who could not be there.

Morning Presentation

'In here' and 'Out there'

***Lulu Falbe-Hansen** has worked in the mental health sector for over ten years and trained as an Integrative Arts Psychotherapist at the Institute for the Arts in Therapy and Education, qualifying in 2014. She is currently establishing a private practice, running Community Art Psychotherapy Groups and working as a Creative Wellbeing Adviser for an arts and mental health Charity in South London.*

***Christopher Burke** Christopher Burke trained at the University of Hertfordshire, qualifying in the summer of 2015. He starts an honorary contract with CNWL NHS foundation trust this October, and hopes to start a group at the Queen Mary hospital in 2016.*

Christopher and Lulu gave an enjoyable and immensely engaging presentation of a piece of work they completed as trainees on placement in the context of a low secure Forensic Mental Health Setting. Through an impressive and innovative visual montage / collage style slide show, the audience was invited to walk through the landscape of their journey establishing a recovery-model focused 12-week art psychotherapy open group in a low secure male ward. They explored key aspects of the group and evaluated the impact of the group on the participants, the ward and themselves with great depth, clarity and insight into the recovery paradigm and its application to short-term art psychotherapy groups.

Lulu and Christopher began with their pre-group process. Their placement of themselves as paper cutout silhouettes poignantly captured and contextualized the co-therapist couple as a recurrent theme in their presentation. They referenced Trisha Montague and James O'Connell's presentation at the 30th FATAG conference commenting that tension in the co-facilitator relationship could also be valuable. As trainees from two different institutions, the presenters felt their different training styles would be complementary. Lulu cited Marian Liebmann's seminal *Art Therapy for Groups* in the reassurance she found from this as a trainee, new to group work, that there could be many different ways of running a group.

The presenters then gave an excellent overview and evaluation of the recovery model, which underpinned the focus of the ward and the therapeutic frame where all participants were close to discharge. Their critical analysis of the three-prong approach (hope, choice, opportunity) was acute and perceptive, calling into question the reality of these guiding principles for forensic patients and whether such a broad approach was appropriate for forensic services.

The presenter's reflections on the phenomenon of "Gate Fever", where patients close to discharge are in danger of relapse and finding themselves in more intense services were situated with images of their therapist parallel process on post-group walks passing a fire exit next to a rotting bridge. This was evocative and illuminating in what it came to symbolise of their experience.

Christopher and Lulu explored the room, materials and structure of the group with great depth and clarity. I found their slides gave a feeling of looking into a doll's house or the internal world of the group. They described how the windows in the room enabled a gesticulation of "in here, out there". Their use of a hospital chimney to order the materials on a scale of intensity was innovative and effectively resounded with a heat metaphor also reflected in their idea of using a check-in period to test the temperature of the group in terms of how far or how deep they could go.

The presenters gave excellent care and focus to exploring the imagery made in the group. The presentation of these in ornate, gold frames almost pre-empted the grandeur of the House of Lords conference room, but also seemed to signify the value of the work. Here the presenters demonstrated interventions that showed considerable sensitivity to issues of difference and inclusivity, through, for example, their provision of postcards, and speaking about Muslim art. They also acknowledged the unspoken dialogues of culture and identity that they were unable to tap into in terms of group members' lives "out there".

The creative use of the pool table, a massive and immobile obstacle in the room, showed therapeutic ingenuity in its use as a "potent visual statement" on which group members placed images on a metaphoric pathway through transition and discharge.

Some of the imagery was immensely powerful. Their description of the production of a clay penis, which had escalated beyond containment in the group, effectively recapitulated the idea of clay as high material intensity in its viscosity or invitation to make body parts. A later image seemed to suggest a shift or transformation in the group from eroticized acting out to a more subtle and contained erotic transference in a striking portrait of a flushed female actress.

Lulu and Christopher ended their presentation with an expression of regret of not using an outcome measure for the work and highlighting the value of co-facilitation and highly charged dynamics of Forensic Services. Their evaluations were lucid and measured concluding that Art Psychotherapy could suit the recovery model, but within this one must accept the unknown.

Discussion

Lulu and Christopher's presentation opened up the thought-provoking discussions that followed.

Initially comment was drawn on the innovation and newness of the project and the immense learning which had taken place, particularly in the parallels the presenters had made between "Gate Fever", transitions and the rotting bridge.

Some debate centred on the clay penis, "the penis in the room", and the level of shock value. Lulu and Christopher responded to a question about how they would deal with this now, commenting on a need to balance safety and positive risk taking, that they would try to explore it with the group, but also the difficulty that lay in how to interpret what was inappropriate about it.

This raised some timely and important questions about whether the recovery model itself can be inhibiting. One delegate commented on how the offence and the darkness will inevitably come out, but the recovery model shuts this all down resulting in things which need to be acknowledged or talked about becoming split off, or an Orwellian twisting where risk assessment becomes security planning. She observed having heard transgression (rather than transformation) when the presenters spoke about the portrait of the female actress, and a need for work to be longer and deeper.

A further theme unfolded around the co-therapist couple. One delegate commented that the two portraits, one male and one female, suggested in the transference an attacking male and elusive female. Further thoughts were given on co-therapists as a married couple, and Lulu drew out a poignant discrepancy in their placement of themselves as black silhouettes, where the majority of the group came from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, whilst at the same time they epitomized a white middle-class family making art after dinner.

Other themes explored included the co-therapist post-group walk, the after-hours group through the changing seasons and the pool table, "obstacle: creatively modified", as a transgressive / transformational surface.

Afternoon Presentations

Sydney Klugman gave introduction to the three afternoon presenters, who were all involved in a recent pilot project of a three-prong intervention (restorative justice, art therapy, mentoring) delivered to gang members with a conviction of violence at a newly established category C training prison for young male adults. Marian Liebmann had provided the training for facilitators working on the restorative justice intervention. Lucy Gibson-Hill was lead art therapist running seven weekly art psychotherapy groups for 60 participants. Tony Gammidge provided individual art psychotherapy for men who had been found to be unsuitable for group work.

The composition of the three presentations that afternoon was novel and brought staggered angles on some complex issues. There was a shuddering sense of the dynamic drama and of therapeutic ethics in action.

1. Marian Liebmann – Restorative Justice Project

*Marian Liebmann has worked in art therapy with offenders, women's groups, community groups, and most recently in the Inner City Mental Health Team in Bristol, UK, where she developed work on anger issues, and work with asylum seekers and refugees. She lectures on art therapy at several universities in the UK and Europe. She also works in restorative justice, mediation and conflict resolution, and has run workshops on art, conflict and anger in many countries. She has written/edited ten books, including *Art Therapy and Anger* (2008). In 2010 she was awarded her PhD by publications from Bristol University, and in 2013 she was awarded an OBE for services to art therapy and mediation.*

Marian brought her wealth of knowledge and expertise on the subject of restorative justice and its application to practice in a highly informative and inspiring presentation. Her consideration of the historical and global context, underlying principles and process brought great depth to the subject and was particularly useful for those who were unfamiliar with restorative justice. Her descriptions of case examples and of her innovative training programmes were compelling in their potential implications for restorative justice as an alternative to punitive judicial systems.

Restorative processes bring those harmed by crime or conflict, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

(Restorative Justice Council)

Marian began by elaborating a paradigm shift from justice founded in punishment, and which prioritises the processing of criminals, to justice founded in restorative processes, which prioritises reparation, victim support and healing. She demonstrated how a restorative model could be achieved through collective group processes, which brought victim and offender together in dialogue through Conferencing or Mediation. Her example of a burglary and family photographs was both poignant and evocative in illustrating that putting a face to crime could bring about reparation for both offender and victim.

Marian's presentation of the history of restorative justice illustrated this as a practice which was not only growing on a global sphere and in many contexts, but also as being closer to traditional justice or informal courts run without the paraphernalia of punishment. For example, Marian spoke about villages in the Congo Republic where offenders must give a statement of how they will make amends at village assembly. This effectively captured Marian's idea of restorative justice as a social microcosm.

Marian used case study examples to illustrate the use of mediation or conferencing in the criminal justice system. These were quite moving and succeeded in demonstrating how a reintegration of the voice of the victim in the process could bring about a deep felt remorse and potential for reparation. In her examples of smashed milk bottles and robbery at toy gun point (bringing to mind the Kleinian baby and destructive desire), the integration of victim voice made the destructive human impact heard.

Marian finally guided us through the process of her three-day Restorative Justice Training, which combined a fascinating combination of didactic technique and role-play. This crystallized the many interesting ideas in the presentation into their practice.

Arts therapists are familiar with the concept of reparation from the influence of the British school of Object Relations. Marian's presentation was compelling in its scope from the individual to the group collective. These ideas are highly relevant to Forensic Arts Therapists.

2.WORKING AGAINST THE SYSTEM

***Tony Gammidge** is a freelance artist, filmmaker, art therapist, lecturer and arts in health practitioner. He has been running video and animation projects in secure and psychiatric settings for the past eight years. In that time he has been involved in the making of thirty short films, eleven of which have won Koestler arts awards. These films have been screened in galleries and arts centres and international conferences including in London, USA, Brighton and Edinburgh. His own films have been screened in the USA, UK and Europe in film festivals and galleries. www.tonygammidge.com*

***Lucy Gibson-Hill** graduated as an Art Psychotherapist from Goldsmiths in 2012. YOI/HMP Isis was the first experience of working in a secure setting where Art Therapy was delivered through a charity within a pilot programme. Prior (and subsequent) to this Lucy worked as a therapist at an Anna Freud unit for Personality Disorder, a drug & alcohol service, and with addiction and mental health for Kids Company. Lucy also works with young offenders in the community.*

Tony Gammidge and Lucy Gibson-Hill presented their work delivering the art psychotherapy strand of the interventional programme. Bringing together their experience of the men's engagement in art psychotherapy with reflections on the issues they faced both from the institution and the charity that employed them, they individually elaborated their shared theme: "Working Against the System"

Part 1: Tony Gammidge

Tony Gammidge delivered a highly engaging presentation with a developed critical stance through ideas from the forensic literature, and his own experience and reflections of The Prison. Stating initially a need to disentangle what had happened within this complex, he gave an excellent analysis of the three-strand interventional frame and some startling views of the challenges to an art therapist working against the system.

Opening with an intriguing image taken of vanishing point through a system of girders and reflections on paned glass recalled the vortex motif of classic images of prison corridors and served as an effective visual articulation of the theme of system and its embedding in physical and psychological structure. Situating this alongside a reference to Hillman's imaginal psychology seemed to invite a deconstructive gaze.

Tony began by commenting that Art Therapy doesn't happen in a void, but within an institutional frame. He followed with an excellent overview and critical evaluation of the three-strand approach as interventional framework. Here his particular focus on the mentoring strand, which included both academic definitions and participant comments on their experience of mentorship, was effective in elucidating some of the relational nuances and interventional blurring in the programme. Tony highlighted the absence of art therapist voice in a recent evaluation report as significant and concluded that little (or no) communication between the three strands produced an interventional system where all were working against each other.

In the following part, Tony brought together his own initial experience of the category C prison with ideas from forensic literature in some fascinating reflections on issues of physical and relational security and containment. His idea of the Key Lecture as culture carrier was acutely perceptive, whilst his theoretical elaboration of symbolic aspects of "The Fence" poignantly demonstrated the psychological impact of physical boundaries specific to forensic environments. Here his use of James Gilligan, American psychiatrist and author of the series "Violence", was particularly well placed in drawing parallels between behavioural and psychological aspects of violence and paranoia as respective partners, and their bearing on the dynamics of shame, which reverberated through the case examples and the culture embedded within the literal, physical and relational boundaries of the prison.

In the final part of his presentation, Tony guided us through two case examples of individual art therapy, focusing particularly on 12 sessions with "Andy". He drew out the key themes in the work of shame, trust, mistrust, loyalty, betrayal and Andy's view of himself through the critical eye of the other. The descriptions of the sessions demonstrated a working with and through paranoia and its defences. Here the absence of pictures of the artwork was compensated for by images Tony described, which effectively gave an impression of depth in the work.

Tony's final conclusions and considerations were hard-hitting in the many questions left unanswered, an uncertainty still entangled with some poignant ethical concerns.

Part 2. Lucy Gibson-Hill

Bringing together descriptions of art therapeutic group work, context, process, and outcomes, Lucy delivered an intensely engaging presentation, in which she reflected on “the success of Art Therapy despite the system” with some agonizing conclusions. Lucy’s chosen style of absolute genuine honesty was at once brutal and brilliant and gripping from start to finish. This approach was extremely powerful in evoking the complex dynamic texture of the work.

Lucy began with a detailed description of the context and background information, which helped the audience to grasp the immense challenges of the work. This held echo and resonance with Tony as she voiced concerns of being misquoted in a recent report and continued the question of ethics as a thematic undercurrent in the content of their presentation. Lucy showed how she had used her art therapeutic process with image to hold onto hope in spite of the many difficulties being signalled from the beginning.

Lucy introduced the idea of the “gang matrix”, a traffic light system used by Metropolitan police, and reflected on the ambiguities in determining gang membership. This raised some important ethical concerns around participant consent in the interventional programme. Her descriptions of group numbers and membership were excellent and evoked at once her compassion for the men she was working with and a vivid picture of the immensity of the workload.

Lucy demonstrated a mentalization-based approach to the art therapy group work. She described how she was clinically transparent with the men in the groups and how this approach had enabled intimate themes to be explored, shifts in paranoia and freeing up in the paint allowing a softer side to emerge. Here a level of therapeutic brilliance using this approach was clearly demonstrated, and reflected in an awe-inspiring 90% attendance.

Some of the paintings could be described as visceral, beautiful, and a creative breakthrough given their production with spreaders, as paintbrushes had been prohibited. Lucy responded to the clear expressions of shock and surprise in the audience commenting that the men had paintbrushes inside their cells.

Lucy evaluated the impact of art therapy on other arms of the intervention reflecting that ownership of action and capacity to change in art therapy enabled a shift in restorative justice.

The last part of Lucy’s presentation was immensely moving as she described the premature ending to her work and the implications for both the men she was working with and for herself. It might be described as a testimonial laid bare which left a profound impact of something tragic, unfathomable, brave and heroic.

Discussion

The dynamic impact of the three afternoon presentations was reflected in the lively discussion that followed and provided an opportunity to process some of the difficult and complex content. Initially comment was drawn that although there were ambivalent feelings of love, hate and reparation, a lot came out as dynamic and exciting.

A large focus of the discussion centred on the dynamics of Lucy's therapeutic relationship with the men in her groups. One delegate commended Lucy on how brave she had been in her honesty, whilst also being aware how much she had sided with the prisoners rather than the challenge of restorative justice. The same delegate later gave reflections about the idea of offence paralleling whereby women are groomed into gangs. Another delegate suggested that siding with the men had perhaps been about survival.

Lucy commented on a despotic rule in gangs having become re-enacted in the management of the project. She observed how attempts to inhibit sex or violence from discussions could be viewed as siding with deviance.

Tony offered some further reflections on the dynamics of splitting and idealization where the anger, which belonged in art therapy, became displaced to anger with the arrangements for restorative justice. He commented on there being desperation to get art therapy into institutions, but at what cost ... to Lucy.

Kate Rothwell gave her perspective as clinical supervisor commenting on the difficulties of blame, scapegoating and lack of containment. She observed that these are the sorts of projects that arise during these times, whilst FATAG enabled a possibility for linking up and learning. She responded to thoughts of how the level of disturbance gets into the system, commenting on how this unfortunately couldn't be acknowledged and had instead been grossly acted out.

A further aspect of discussions centred on restorative justice and the interventional programme as a whole. One delegate questioned what had been the value of the project, noting that it had been an amazing idea with dangerous delivery.

Marian responded to this acknowledging that the execution had left a lot to be desired. She suggested that restorative justice was all about getting people to a stage where they can entertain the idea of suffering of others or entertain another's views, and that art therapy can be a bridge to a lot more thinking. She suggested there had been a need to acknowledge and manage the interaction between mentors and art therapy, and that in spite of the conceptual brilliance of the project, there had been a big gap in carrying out restorative justice and failure at the last post.

Discussions were nicely rounded off with an oral question and thought experiment in conflict resolution from Marian Liebmann's training programme.

BUSINESS

1. Kate Rothwell brought exciting news of publication of her new edited book: *Forensic Arts Therapies: Anthology of Research and Practice*. Free Association Books. To be released 30th April 2016.
2. Marian Liebmann gave news of three new book titles:
 - Hughes, R (Ed). (2015). *Time-Limited Art Psychotherapy. Developments in Theory and Practice*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group
 - Liebmann, M & Weston, S (Eds) (2015) *Art Therapy with Physical Conditions*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
 - Weston, S & Liebmann, M (Eds) (2015) *Art Therapy with Neurological Conditions*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
3. Jessica Collier delivered some tremendously sad news about the closure of Holloway Prison. She drew attention to some of the questionable political motivations for this, and the implications for the female prisoners.

Kate Rothwell suggested a future Conference as a retrospective review of Arts Therapies at H.M.P Holloway , feeling it was important to mark this in some way.

Special thanks:

A special thanks to Janet Gibson, Parliamentary Researcher to Lords McKenzie of Luton and Young of Norwood Green and Lucy Gibson-Hill for organizing an exceptional venue at The House of Lords.

Review by Alice Myles, Honorary Art Psychotherapist, Forensic Directorate, East London NHS Foundation Trust, and Freelance Art Psychotherapist, adult mental health.

References and Bibliography

'In here' and 'Out there', Lulu Falbe-Hansen and Christopher Burke

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Short-term Art Therapy References:

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Group Art therapy and Co-facilitation References:

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Montague, T. and O'Connell, J. (2013) The Good Enough Couple. Presentation of the 30th FATAG Conference

Useful Websites:

<http://www.imroc.org/>

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/R/recovery/>

<http://www.signpostuk.org/recovery/recovery-model>

Requests for further information are welcome. Please contact:
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Useful web sites

Restorative Justice Council, UK

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

European Forum for Restorative Justice

www.euforumrj.org

Web site on world-wide restorative justice. Run by Prison Fellowship International.

www.restorativejustice.org

Working Against the System

References from Tony Gammidge

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Reflections on the pictures in the Conference Room, House of Lords