

## **Art therapy and sentiment of the self**

Art therapy is a way of rebuilding the integrity of a person that, for some reason, had been weakened or traumatised by some event or experience of life. It was recognized as a profession and research discipline in the 1940's. Since, the profession built a sound theoretical framework inspired by various art forms and movements such as surrealism, automatism, expressionism and abstract expressionism and some conceptual art notions all attached to visual arts. Music also played a very important role in the development of the discipline. But the roots of the various art disciplines to which it referred in practice comes from ideas and ways of working that had been explored over centuries and that are all linked to creativity and creative process, the powers of imagination and the capacity of art to carry emotions and sentiments related to human experience of life and to our perception of the world. The relationship between analysis and the arts had since been describe as a revolution, a revolution in communication that was largely inspired by phenomenology and its philosophical aspects.

This approach to arts re-insert the learner/subject into the sensible world and make this world accessible to conscious awareness. Thus the experience of art is no longer an experience between a subject and an object, but involve a complex, intersubjective creative process that becomes the foundation to knowledge. In that perspective, art therapy succeed where conventional and traditional psychological and psychiatric services fails at providing creative and constructive approach to rebuild the integrity of the Self. It succeed because it goes beyond the institutionalized framework and practices inherited from positivism that are still prevalent in healthcare facilities.

Art therapy research programs offers unique opportunities to implement and develop a much needed human dimension to healthcare and post-trauma reeducation services. Through their qualitative analysis based on « listening and meeting the other » and which can be defined as an intersubjective analysis of the creative process, an image becomes more than just a mental construction. It is a sentiment emerging from a relation between a person and his/her inner world. It is this complex relation between the Self, the others and the outside world, which can be defined as the expression of a sentiment, « je ne sais quoi » encompassing the entity of the Self, and « presque-Rien » that recalls the presence of images in his or her memory that will shape his or her art experience. It is that sentiment of the Self that art therapy research programs document and evaluate.