

The Case for Case Studies:

Art psychotherapy as a feminist methodology with women in prison

Jessica Collier

Abstract

The castigation and criminalising of women is a systemic catastrophe that cannot be understood only through a standardised positivist methodology. Forensic art psychotherapy case studies seek to utilise stories and images to reframe misogynistic public perceptions of criminalised women as “unnatural” and “monstrous” by visualising their experience as complex and layered. This paper advocates for the inherent importance of case studies as a significant feminist methodology in understanding the value of art psychotherapy, the fundamental importance of ethical considerations including consent, and the explicit acknowledgment of power, prejudice and human fallibility. It concludes with a criminalised individual’s reflections on her own art psychotherapy experience in prison. This privileges her voice and evidences the value of feminist research methodologies that include listening, embodiment, relationality, reflexivity, emotions and intersectionality, as critical additions to classic case study psychodynamic interpretation.

Key words

Art psychotherapy, women, prison, reflexivity, embodiment, emotion

ATOL: Art Therapy Online
Issue 15, Volume 1

Publication Date:
2025

ISSN:
2044-7221

DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.atol.v15i1.1900>



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Introduction

Throughout my career as an art psychotherapist, it has been repeatedly suggested to me by art psychotherapy educators, consultants, colleagues and clinicians, that my

published explorations and writing about my work, including multiple case studies (Collier, 2015; 2019a; 2019b; 2021; 2022), is not 'real' research. It has been suggested to me that quantitative methodologies are the approaches that matter, and what is referred to as evidence-based practice must have a foundation of quantitative data garnered from a study or controlled trial. Case studies, I have been told, are fine, but they do not constitute 'gold standard' research. With this in mind, I was surprised to be welcomed to my doctoral viva by examiners delighted to have read a thesis based on case studies. After years of doubt and discouragement, I felt vindicated, and more importantly, the voices of the women I have worked with and written about, were given credibility.

Given the vulnerable people caught in the criminal justice system with whom I work, this seemed to suggest both a mirroring of experience between myself and my patients (criminalised women are routinely treated with disregard) and also evidence of my second research interest; systemic misogyny. Case studies, indeed much qualitative research in the social sciences, and certainly my own methodology of feminist research, still seem to be considered second rate compared with the strictly positivist and empirical methods that maintain the patriarchal hegemony.

This paper argues for the intrinsic value of case studies, particularly focusing on marginalised members of society, alongside the fundamental importance of ethical considerations, including consent, and the explicit acknowledgment of power, prejudice, human fallibility and something increasingly overlooked in our field; the unconscious. Moreover, in my own work, it is the connecting of a number of case studies that has illuminated the wider issues faced by women in prison. It may also be important to recognise that the understandings gathered from case studies, with informed consent given following the completion of therapy, offer data and knowledge creation that concerns the actual experience of art psychotherapy as undertaken within a therapeutic relationship. This differs in my mind to data and knowledge creation collected through more formally designed trials, which tell us only about the results of a particular study relating to art psychotherapy in which all participants know they may be research subjects under observation.

My own critical feminist focused prison art psychotherapy research, aims to challenge the biologically deterministic stereotypes and myths that women are intrinsically good and nurturing, and only warrant support if they are mad, bad or sad (Gelsthorpe, 2010). The castigation and criminalising of women is a systemic catastrophe that cannot be understood only through a standardised methodology. Art psychotherapy case studies can seek to utilise images to reframe misogynistic public perceptions of female offenders as 'unnatural' and 'monstrous' by visualising their experience as complex and layered.

Art Psychotherapy Case Studies

The psychoanalytic case study has been an accepted, if challenged and at times disparaged, qualitative methodology since Sigmund Freud published the first in a series of formative studies at the beginning of the twentieth century (Freud, 1905). Positivist researchers have criticised them due to their inability to produce evidence that can be generalised. Generalisation is, of course, the antithesis of personalised care to which mental health services aspire. Evidence-based treatment programmes evidently come in and out of fashion. In prison mental health teams over the past fifteen years, I have noted the gradual reduction of the once ubiquitous Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) model, in favour of Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and now the omnipresent Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR). The critique here is not to devalue the worth of these interventions, all of which can be beneficial and which present a diversity of options in practice and research. Rather, my concern is that the unique capacity art psychotherapy has both in and of itself, but also in offering a dramatically more reflective, creative and alternative perspective within multi-disciplinary teams, is diminished by art psychotherapists increasingly feeling they require more training to be employable and up-to-date, often in generic mental health roles which negate their professional identities as art psychotherapists. I would argue that these hypothetically evidence-based therapies are slowly eroding the foundational art psychotherapy concept of raising awareness of unconscious thought through creative endeavour in the presence of another. In contrast to skills-based, manualised treatments and controlled trials, case studies offer research that is easily digestible because it tells a human narrative, a story. 'The purpose of case research is to understand a real-life

situation by studying it in-depth and with its context' (Kapitan, 2018, p132). Case studies allow us to see our work in the context of individual human experience as well as within the broader organisational and societal context. This type of research helps us put theory into everyday practice and allows us to engender theory from practice. While classic psychoanalytic case studies have historically looked at clinical material as pathology particular and internal to the patient and distinct from systemic influences, modern art psychotherapy case studies, including my own published case studies (Collier, 2015; 2019a; 2019b; 2021; 2022), encompass a trauma informed (Covington, 2022, Sweeny et al, 2018) and creative approach, and a sociocultural perspective of art psychotherapy praxis (Talwar, 2010). Theoretically, this regards the social and external environment as a factor in the patient's actions and responses, and repudiates the classic psychanalytic notion that it is the person who is broken and needs fixing, not society. Art psychotherapy case studies can integrate images and visual research methodologies as an intrinsic aspect of the case study, and so add the patients' own creative expression. Narrative case studies offer broad descriptions and cumulative accounts that create a picture/argument to shape a theory from the data collected through non-directive image making and ensuing conversations during therapy. In my own work, which focuses on women's identities in prison, a wealth of visual data is interrogated to inform understandings of gendered encounters with incarceration. For example, over the course of numerous case studies, the experience of being imprisoned manifests through images of frames, cages, citadels and cells. Through these images the women may recognise their own day to day experiences and their 'un-thought thoughts', making the unconscious conscious, and representing their feelings and identities. These can then be contrasted with pre-existing representations in the public realm: studying art images for information about society, culture and history and viewing these alongside the images made in the session to look for aesthetic links which suggest a shared gendered experience of incarceration and violence done to or by women. As Gilroy clarifies, 'the social, political and institutional practices and relations that produce and interpret an image... enable investigation of different ways of seeing the world, how images articulate social difference and how different visions have social effects' (2006, p 95). As she suggests, a case study approach is at the heart of clinical practice; '... case studies describing work with people from the same population, with similar problems and using the same

clinical approach contribute to the cumulative evidence base of the discipline and form the bedrock of all forms of clinical research' (Ibid, p100).

Art Psychotherapy Practice

Unlike the certitude which underscores quantitative research methodologies, case studies can hold uncertainty. This aligns with most art psychotherapy theories, which support the notion that shifting layers of meaning can be contained within images and the therapeutic relationship and do not have a single interpretation, elucidating the notion that knowledge is not fixed. As Hogan reminds us, 'symbolism is multi-faceted and able to contain manifold and contradictory meanings...The art works, the space and the viewer can interact to create new meanings' (2016, p1). These images may hold meaning in and of themselves, but also prompt further verbal enquiry through conversation about what they encompass, as embodied, emotional, relational and aesthetic communications providing a way of discovering more about identity intrapersonally and, as highlighted, in response to social context. As Hogan goes on to say, 'pictures can be seen as providing women with a tool for carving out a self-identity which might challenge dominant exemplifications or those representations connected with their gender or particular socio-economic status' (2016, p117). Thus, in my own work, case studies have allowed me to develop an understanding that in prison, art psychotherapy offers women an opportunity to examine the internal images they may have of themselves as a result of their gendered experience of violence, both as victim and perpetrator, and find different images to express themselves which may disrupt their own, and the public's, conception of them as evil and monstrous. As I wrote elsewhere: 'Art psychotherapy offers the opportunity to create a different narrative, a story which both encapsulates the current feeling of the individual and encompasses the enduring psychological influence of the past' (Collier, 2019, p110).

If women's experiences have been too overwhelming to put into words, images can embody the gravity of emotion felt and offer a profound ontological knowledge which encapsulates feeling. As Elliot Eisner proposes, '... the arts in research promote a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through empathic experience... the products of this research are closer in function to deep conversation and insight dialogue than they are to error free conclusions' (2008, p7). This is the aim of art psychotherapy; to transform unconscious feelings into conscious thought. In my own

practice, images are made in relationship, under intimate and relational observation and in exploration of meaning not yet understood. Eisner suggests the arts contribute to knowledge by developing ways of thinking that reveal different ways of perceiving and interpreting the world and by stimulating empathy that engenders action. The images made in art psychotherapy by women in prison evoke meaning that would otherwise remain unknown.

Feminist Methodologies, Reflexivity and Ethics

Feminist methodologies prioritise the importance of professional reflexivity and humility. This is particularly important when working with minoritized individuals in explicitly oppressive systems, such as women's prisons. Feminist methodologies are inherently inclusive, or they are not feminist. This paper does not aim to propose feminist methodologies in opposition to psychodynamic theories that may include thinking around the unconscious motivations, actions and transference phenomena between the therapist and patient. It does not argue against other ways of making meaning common in art psychotherapy, including intersubjective processes, visual expression and communication, and the inclusion of cultural and political contexts. Indeed, it argues that feminist research is "pluralist, with many researchers recognizing the value and salience of different research methods, if applied from a feminist perspective"(Burman and Gelsthorpe, 2017, p226). Nor does it suggest that feminist methodologies are unfamiliar. Important and influential work exists that advocates feminist approaches to art psychotherapy and considers the variation of thinking inherent in feminist praxis and theory, demonstrating that feminist approaches offer diversity and fluidity (Hogan,1997; 2012). At the heart of psychotherapeutic practice and of feminist research is active listening. Listening to one's affective story enables learning and challenges prejudices (Qhogwana, 2022). Encouraging aspects of these narratives and identities to be made visual is my primary methodology, as well as engaging in what artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger terms 'wit(h)-nessing' (Pollock, 2010, Collier, 2015). Qhogwana goes on to suggest that 'Listening is... shaped by the researcher's life experiences, identities and more immediate experiences... our researcher positionality is important' (2022, p5). The significance of reflecting on my own standpoint and countertransference must be underscored; 'I must appreciate my own vulnerabilities and be aware of the difficult feelings and

personal responses my patients may bring up in me' (Collier, 2015, p4). Dupuis et al (2022) suggest that feminist methodologies offer alternative perspectives to prevailing and conventional models of research by emphasising aspects of research that are embodied and experiential. These features are important in prison as 'women's experience of imprisonment is embodied...via their bodies and their senses' (Chamberlen, 2018, p56). Far from dominant methodologies that deride feelings as subjective and unscientific, Dupuis et al suggest that '... knowledge is not disconnected from, but rather entwined with, emotions and experiences' (Dupuis et al, 2022, p4). They suggest that specific to feminist research methodologies are themes of embodiment, relationality, emotions and intersectionality, all of which can be understood through '... practices of sharing, storytelling or by engaging creative and artistic mediums' (Ibid). Art psychotherapy is fundamentally a process of personal narrative; expressing emotions through the embodied format of art making and the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship. This embodied and relational sharing of feeling is simultaneously recognised through the self-reflexive understanding by the art psychotherapist of the differences in power, hierarchy, identity, life experience, prejudice and systemic oppression within the relationship and which informs any elucidation of the images (Talwar, 2010). As scholars have noted, emotions are not static affects, they are fluid and illusive and play a key role to our own self-perceptions as human (Pink, Hogan and Bird, 2011, p15). As Talwar notes, 'A reflexive practice resists inflexible conclusions' (2019, p 68).

Importantly, Dupuis et al acknowledge that '... feminist approaches take time' (2022, p295). Earlier research cements the significance of this by warning that 'constant change in the relationships observed requires: building duration into the investigation' (Cain, 1990, p138). The sixteen years I have worked in prison with women constitutes meeting hundreds of individuals, engaging in many thousands of hours of conversation, open ended discussions, dialogue, storytelling, image making, exchange and connectedness; all methods of feminist research (Dupuis et al, 2022). This distinctly human and humane aspect of my practice is deeply feminist in its rejection of strictly positivist, empirical evidence (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1990). In addition, working with images allows imagination to come to the fore as an intrinsic method of understanding and connection; '... imagination opens up the

listener/viewer/witness to the lives and worlds of others' (Pink, Hogan and Bird, 2011, p18). During the many hours I have spent immersed in the narratives and evocations of my patients', ontological knowledge production is taking place in the relationship between myself and the prisoner and in the making of art images. It is important therefore, to acknowledge that my standpoint and positionality reflect not only the content of the case studies that I publish, but the years of deep listening that have influenced my broader practice and enquiry (Qhogwana, 2006, Blakemore, 2021).

Reflexivity attends to varying perceptions of gender theory and attempts to dismantle, or at least understand, power hierarchies in the research process (Talwar, 2019, Burman and Gelsthorpe, 2017). This consideration must be applied to both client and therapist, as unconscious responses are communicated by both parties within the therapeutic relationship. As Talwar notes, 'Reflexivity refers to the bidirectional nature of relationships' (2019, p67). Emotional responses left unexplored may contribute to therapists experiencing vicarious trauma, burn out and moral injury, potentially responding punitively as an unconscious re-enactment of previous familial or societal patterns because '... as therapists, we too unconsciously engage in the re-enactments played out by patients' (Collier, 2019, p174). Thus, to practice safely and ethically, reflexivity is fundamental to art psychotherapy as a clinical discipline. Structures of power, privilege and prejudice can only be examined if art psychotherapists have an awareness of their positionality and recognise how this affects them and their work (Talwar, 2019). Working with women in prison is particularly marked by power differentials; 'An analysis of the prison must therefore be reflexive and multifaceted. The criminologist must be honest about her own structuring 'prejudices', both as an individual and as a criminologist' (Bosworth, 1999, p7). My effort to recognise these power dynamics is an attempt to foreground the inherently stigmatising and pejorative societal position women prisoners are situated in and the ethical dilemmas that come from misogynistic and racist laws and politics that themselves engender trauma (Talwar, 2017). This matters in the therapeutic exchange, as well as for research purposes, because the production of knowledge, the context in which knowledge is produced and the people involved, are central to reflexivity (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). To be reflexive is to notice similarities as well as differences between myself and the prisoners. This means acknowledging uncomfortable feelings and recognising

over-identification. Clinicians must accept and embrace their own vulnerabilities and prejudices because 'Our reflexivity is only as good as our desire to really understand our motivation to work in such a powerful position with vulnerable people' (Collier, 2022, p130). In addition, Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990) suggest that feminist theory must acknowledge the validity, as well as the problems inherent in documenting subjective experiences for research, and that this is essential for knowledge creation.

The women I work with often have backgrounds that encompass complex experiences of trauma and abuse. It is therefore my professional practice to minimise the prisoners' exposure to risk. Confidentiality protocols are essential to this process, and it is crucial that any material used in writing a case study must be produced following professional standards. Consent requested during therapy may influence the therapeutic relationship in problematic ways which may mirror exploitative interpersonal relationships from the past. With this in mind, I seek consent to use material from therapy sessions during the post-therapy evaluation stage of the therapeutic relationship, or later if possible. Over the years, most of the women who have given written consent for me to use their stories and images have described altruistic motives to do so.

The British Association of Art Therapist's research governance stipulates that research must respect the dignity and protect the welfare of participants; abide by the laws, regulations, ethics and professional standards governing the conduct of research and publication appropriate to their circumstances, their academic organisations or employers; and that information collected must be held or stored confidentially and anonymised before submission or publication. It is also important to keep in mind the significance of the power differentials in requesting consent for research, and the unconscious ways in which the women might feel obliged to acquiesce. In prison, women are often punished for refusing to do as they are asked, '... [this] leads once again to the oppressed colluding with the oppressor' (Collier, 2022, p198). It is essential to mitigate this potential abuse of power and reiterate throughout the consent process that there will be no consequences if permission is refused.

Visual Methodologies

Like case studies, art itself has not always been taken seriously as a form of knowledge production. The connection of art and epistemological matters has been undermined by the positivist notion that knowledge must be empirically informed and should not engender emotion whose value cannot be defined. This may be because meanings in images are not fixed, ‘... there is no right or wrong way to see an image’ (Rose, 2016, p148). However, more recently, visual research has grown to incorporate many different methods. These highlight the fundamental significance of the materials chosen, the process of using them and the context in which they are used, ‘...art is a process that engages all the senses and therefore the understandings that we develop from art and it’s making need to be derived from more than just the visual image... it demands further attention to empathic and experience-based ways of knowing and understanding.’ (Pink, Hogan and Bird, 2011, p17)

However, when painting and drawing is used as visual research in art psychotherapy, this has often tended towards response art made by art psychotherapists as a form of visual enquiry or social justice approaches (McNiff, 2013, Wright and Wright, 2017, Talwar, 2019); as participatory art elicitation groups (Pink, Hogan and Bird, 2011); as isolated single case studies (Gilroy, 2006) or as a randomised controlled trial (Crawford et al, 2010). In contrast, a collection of individual and group case studies can give shape to the experiences of a particular demographic. In my own research, I have focused mainly on female prisoners in England, to formulate a distinct interrogation that considers the experience, understanding and self-perception of gendered identities in prison. In prison art psychotherapy, identity and experience can be explored and understood in art images and through the creative process itself. Emotional substance and non-verbal communication can be instrumental to the women revealing their gendered experience of prison and beyond. Visual research attends to cultural signs, symbols, sublimation and semiotics as central to knowledge production, so images and stories made in sessions which have explicit connections/connotations to art works in the public realm, misogynistic markers in the media and images from art history, are also important as indicators of the women’s experience. ‘Artworks can be interrogated within art historical and phenomenological

frameworks that sit more comfortably with our primary discipline than those that equate the formal elements of visual representation with pathology' (Gilroy, 2006, p98).

Thus, the visual methodological lens is an approach which typifies feminist methodologies in its embrace of emotion, embodiment, relationship and intersectionality in relation to the consideration of images made by and discussed with women prisoners. This differs from more traditional visual criminologies which have focused either on the content and/or concerns of media representations of crime, and the social influences and ethical questions therein (Young, 2014, Carrabine, 2012). Visual criminology has often utilised analyses of documentary film, television, digital imagery and photography, and as Carrabine notes, 'contemporary societies are saturated with images of crime' (2012, p 463). Indeed, it is becoming more difficult to distinguish actual crime from depictions of crime as the representation and seeing of images and visuals of crime in contemporary society becomes more blurred (Hayward and Presdee, 2010). What is needed, cultural criminologists have argued, is a 'methodological orientation towards the visual that is capable of encompassing meaning, affect, situation, symbolic power and efficiency, and spectacle in the same 'frame'' (Hayward, 2010, p3). Forensic art psychotherapy case studies seem to describe this approach quite precisely.

Some reflections on art psychotherapy in prison

This paper is not a case study itself, but rather argues that a body of research comprising case studies of specific populations over many years, offers a deeply nuanced, embodied and emotional data set. I suggest that feminist methodologies include aspects that supplement and advance the classic psychoanalytic, psychodynamic case study through the foregrounding of contextual social, political and cultural factors. My definition of feminist methodologies includes, but is not limited to, art psychotherapy praxis that incorporates embodiment, relationality, emotions, professional reflexivity and humility, and an awareness of intersectional experiences and concerns (Collier and Eastwood, 2022). I highlight that these components can be understood through 'wit(h)nessing' (Pollock, 2010; Collier, 2015), listening, sharing, storytelling, and using creativity and imagination. I have argued that case studies used as a research methodology create an essential foundation of knowledge and understanding. I suggest that art psychotherapy case studies that use feminist

methodologies in addition to psychodynamic concepts, are particularly significant when working with complex, oppressed, marginalised and under-researched populations such as women in prison.

The woman described below, and her own reflections of her art psychotherapy experience, highlight the un-nameable quality of art psychotherapy, and the way in which change is not only measurable by positivist research standards, but rather can be felt emotionally and intuitively. In my opinion, this demonstrates not only the embodied, affecting and unconscious essence of feminist methodologies that I have attempted to articulate here, but also the humanity our work encompasses. I'm grateful for Fleur's generosity in giving consent to share her image and her story, and especially for her eloquent and poignant summary.

Fleur was over half way through a four-year sentence for wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, committed in the context of a psychotic episode. Fleur has lived a volatile life, including periods of great creativity and productiveness, interspersed with traumatic experiences of interpersonal violence and poor mental health. When we first met, Fleur was not doing well. She was anxious and depressed and was on an ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork); a prison document that records the care of individuals who are likely to self-harm or who are feeling suicidal. At this time, Fleur was under regular observations and was cutting herself frequently. Fleur felt strongly that she would not leave prison alive, and struggled to believe that prison and healthcare staff were anything but malign. Although obviously intelligent, talented and interested in the world, she appeared disconnected and paranoid. Nevertheless, Fleur was curious about engaging in art psychotherapy and the two of us met on a weekly basis for twelve months. Over the course of our meetings, Fleur would sometimes comment that she didn't really know what was going on in our sessions, but she continued to attend consistently, and expressed that she was feeling different in herself. An outsider observing our sessions would likely see two women sitting together, discussing a diversity of interpersonal, cultural and political themes, sometimes agreeing - sometimes not, with various points resonating or discarded; one woman making visual art and both occasionally reflecting on this. To satisfy the parole requirements and her sentence plan, Fleur and I had to agree a planned ending to our sessions so she could engage in the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) programme.

Fleur was able to articulate that she would miss the sessions and acknowledged that she had found the time useful and stimulating. During her twelve months in art psychotherapy, Fleur stopped self-harming and came off her ACCT document. Although she remained ambivalent about her victim and the offence, and continued to believe there may be darker forces involved in her incarceration, it seems plausible that this uncertainty might be symbolically analogous to the difficulties and prejudice she has faced as a black woman surviving in a hostile and racist system. Following art psychotherapy, Fleur immersed herself in creative programmes within the prison, including with Clean Break and the Koestler Trust, and began working in the prison library. Three months after we finished our sessions, I asked Fleur if she would be willing to select one of her images (Fig 1) and write something about her experience of art psychotherapy. What follows are Fleur's words verbatim.



Figure 1. *Chaos* by Fleur. Acrylic and wood on paper (297 x 420 mm)

'I spent a year doing art therapy & it's not the type of therapy where you can just say now the journey has ended, this is what I've learned, this is how I've changed. It's an experience, a sensory quartet of listening, talking, creating with fingers, hands and

your eyes taking in the results of your expression, through colour – black & white, acrylic & chalk. It's choices without consciousness really, becoming primitive, reaching for paints, for colour. My favourite painting that my unconscious created was called chaos, but named only after completion, created entirely with my hands & a tiny piece of wood. Vibrant, blue, centred, explosive, an inner sea. You talk, you're listened to, you're asked why & through the psychotherapy new thoughts arise, new understandings, & these inanimate concepts flow through your fingers to create the Art. It's almost like a trick of attention but a clever one. It's harder to self censor whilst focusing on art materials so there's an openness and a freer dialogue than if you were just sitting in a chair, silence the only distraction from awkward thoughts, & shameful feelings. Art therapy never ends even when it does. Self expression continues, self understanding continues. It's a therapy that not only opens a dialogue between you and your therapist, but between you & your subconscious, your soul, & your inner landscapes. It teaches you to talk to yourself, & dialogues never end. So what did I take from art therapy – a way to understand myself, broach pain & create art that bears my emotions.'

Conclusion

As we can appreciate from Fleur's thoughtful reflections, using art psychotherapy case studies as a feminist methodology allows us to make meaning in an embodied, messy and affective way. We relate on a human level with the individuals that engage in the work. They are not merely research 'subjects' to be studied, but people we build emotional and meaningful connections with. They discover something about themselves and their experience through the therapeutic relationship and their own creativity and imagination. I have written previously that '... art psychotherapy changes both the patient and the therapist' (Collier, 2015 p17). I continue to believe that engaging in art psychotherapy offers our patients insights not only for themselves about themselves, but for and about us all. Case studies that incorporate feminist methodologies, demonstrate the singularity art psychotherapy offers in making an authentic connection with oneself. They establish knowledge creation by allowing us to *feel* the outcome and validity of an experience. These feelings help us understand how a therapeutic journey can both create knowledge and change perceptions permanently.

As Fleur insightfully suggests, '*Art therapy never ends even when it does*'.

A note on the language used by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) The adult prison estate in England and Wales is divided into male and female categories. There are individuals incarcerated throughout the estate who do not identify as the sex they were assigned at birth. My use of the word woman/women in this paper refers to all the prisoners I have worked with who identify as women in prisons categorised by HMPPS as female.

Biography

Dr Jess Collier is a senior art psychotherapist, clinical supervisor and academic working with women in prison in the UK. Jess has taught, lectured and published extensively, including forensic art psychotherapy case studies with a focus on the interdisciplinary dialogue between feminist criminology, art history and the role of criminalised women in society. She is co-convenor of the Forensic Arts Therapies Advisory Group and a council member of the British Association of Art Therapists.

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