

# Art Therapy Online: ATOL

## Art therapy in the Czech Republic

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### Abstract

This paper clarifies the history and development of art therapy as a profession in the Czech Republic since 1913. The author describes how the profession began with an initial interest in an intuitive understanding of the therapeutic possibilities inherent in art making for people with physical disabilities and psychiatric illnesses. An account is presented of how art therapy has grown into a profession that is understood as a form of psychotherapy which takes into account the complexity of unconscious processes as well as the role of the art object in its form and in its possibilities of a shift in art-making. The paper includes a discussion of the significant professionals and institutions which have been integral to the development of art therapy as a profession in the Czech Republic.

### Key Words:

Art therapy, Czech Republic, art therapy history, art therapy education and training.

### The beginnings of art therapy in the Czech Republic

The first use of art therapy in the Czech Republic can be traced back to the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to Prague city. There was an institution for physically disabled people established by Professor R. Jedli\_ka<sup>1</sup> in 1913. In that particular institute the art therapy approach was used as a form of aesthetic education for rehabilitation purposes<sup>2</sup>. A. Barto\_<sup>3</sup>, the director of that institute, tried to maintain a parallel between the practical and the artistic approach in aesthetic and moral education there. Many personalities, such as doctors and educators, working at that time in the field of therapy and education, had used their talent in art in their medical, therapeutic or educational profession with their clients in various institutions. They were all enthusiastic about the possibilities of creative

art-making. Janota<sup>4</sup> was the one who first published the artistic works of psychotics and alcoholics in the 20's.

On the other hand Strnad and Skula<sup>5</sup> were interested in art-works produced by children with mental disorders; they published papers which represented work in this area. Their work on the art products of a ten-year-old boy with schizophrenia was often quoted in the international media. Somrová<sup>6</sup> took an interest in the manifestation of physical disorders in drawings of children with a physical disability; Herinková and Hájková<sup>7</sup> wrote about the use of art therapy in child psychiatry.

### **The birth of Art Therapy as a discipline**

From around the 1950's, art therapy in the Czech Republic stopped being used simply as an intuitive way of working, and started to be understood as a discipline that could build on its previous practical and theoretical knowledge. Art therapy in the Czech Republic had a place as an aspect of psychotherapy in different kinds of treatment and psychotherapy institutions at this time. In art therapy, the bio-medical, the social and spiritual aspects of human being were interconnected. However, the use of art therapy did not get that much support at that time. That was the situation until the 1970's, when The Art Therapy section of the Society of Psychotherapy was established.<sup>8</sup>

The Art Therapy section gathered those people who were interested in art therapy and especially those who used art-making for the treatment of their clients. Art therapy was used as a part of psychotherapy, which means that it was used mainly by doctors, psychologists, psychotherapists and also by artists. Organizing art therapy workshops and specific lectures (including case study lectures) represented the most important activity of that Art Therapy section back to these days.

### **Education in Art Therapy**

The first systematic art therapy trainings as well as other art therapy courses, both longer and shorter, took place in 90's. Art therapy, which was begun first simply as a course, was subsequently developed and eventually established as a bachelor's programme at the University of South Bohemia in 1992/1993.

### **The Art Therapy Atelier in the Faculty of Education, University of South Bohemia**

At the beginning of the 1990's, a couple of courses were organised in projective art therapy in the South of Bohemia region. Those courses later on became the foundation of a new art therapy department at the University of South Bohemia and so the foundation of this new field generally. This is thanks to Dr. Milan Kyzour<sup>9</sup>, who in 1992 established the Art Therapy Atelier as an independent field for bachelor's studies at the University of South Bohemia. The curriculum of this programme offered to future art therapists a combination of theoretical studies and practical self-experiential training groups.

This particular group training is based on psychodynamic theories, where artistic artefacts are perceived as a material through which unconscious content is revealed. Through an art-making process following the analytical process of art production, we can get an insight into the etiology and genesis of manifested symptoms of the client. Artistic artefacts and the process of art-making are perceived in a similar way to free associations or dreams, so that it is seen as a phenomenon, which emerges during the process of imaginative activity. Symbolic expression or "self-revealing" through images can more easily escape censorship than it can through verbal expression. If we understand the activity of mental processes as an activity of systems, composed by overlapping structures, we can see, that one's experience of art-making allows re-structuralization and compensation to take place in order to achieve the equilibrium of a mental system and in that way it provides harmonious functioning.

The framework of an art therapy department consists of lectures on art on the one hand (including history of the image, psychology of art, theories of colours, art symbolism, aesthetics), and, on the other hand, psychological courses (such as introduction to psychology, the basics of art therapy methodology, psychology of human communication, phylogeny and the ontogenesis of art-production, psychology of abnormal personality, and the basics of psychopathology). Another part of the art therapy programme is a self-experiential atelier, of abreactive techniques and the analyses of the artistic artefact. The last part of the training includes art studio practice (autobiographically focused) and supervision of art therapy work of students.

In relation to postgraduate studies in art therapy, the first five-year training programme was started by the Czech Art Therapy Association in 1998 and it has been running since then, with frequency of every five years. Another art therapy training has been organized by M. Huptych<sup>10</sup>. This is a two year training which is open to everybody working within the school system (for example - school psychologists, special teachers, those working in educational counselling services, in special educational centres, in residential centres for children in care, for therapists in residential re-educational centres, etc.), who can use art therapy in that specific

### **Art therapy within Health Care Setting**

The art therapist can do his/her profession to the extent of his/her professional competence. It means e.g. that the teacher by profession would be using art therapy in his particular area of competence (in the school setting in our case) as well as e.g. the health care professional would provide the art therapy services in a health care setting, etc. Specific art therapy training has been offered for people who want to work in the health care area. This particular training consists of a comprehensive combination of knowledge with manual and intellectual skills necessary for practical work with clients in health care. Through the course of the training trainees get a complex overview of the use of art for the treatment of psychological and psychosomatic difficulties. They acquire theoretical knowledge from the field of psychology which is necessary for understanding the personality of the patient/client. They also gain knowledge from the field of psychotherapy, art therapy, expressive art-making, as well as basic health care procedures, including first aid, hygiene and epidemiology. So this training consists of different modules, including modules which are theoretical, theoretical-practical and practical, with supervision.

Trainees are also introduced to the basic theories of colour perception, from antiquity to the present day; then to changes in artistic production over the period of time in relation to the therapeutic change. They are also taught the ontogenesis of human development and personal growth in relation to art-making. The trainees also learn about how to work with symbols; how to use that symbolic communication, and how to work with the expression of pathology through art symbolization, with the use of the diagnostic system (ICD – 10), as well as about the use of different art therapy interventions. Supervision of art therapy plays a very important role in art therapy training as well.

The art module equips trainees of art therapy with a knowledge which helps them to get a better orientation in the artistic-historical and cultural contexts of art therapy, in the main functional aspects of visualisation and in the experience of art-making based on the theories of aesthetics. Within this module trainees are also introduced to the techniques and technologies of art-making to be used in the practical art therapy work with clients. The module clarifies the existing relationships between the artistic and psychotherapeutic approach towards the art-making activity.

### **The interdisciplinary character of art therapy**

In the last 20 years art therapy has become an interdisciplinary field in its own right. Besides the fact that art therapy is part of treatment methods used in psychotherapy, it oscillates between at least two other disciplines, namely psychology and theories of art. So from that perspective art therapy represents a crossroads; on the one hand of general psychology, (psychology of personality development, educational and social psychology, developmental psychology, psychosomatics, psychological counselling and rehabilitation, of applied disciplines like police psychology, clinical psychology, psychological diagnostics, psychotherapy and especially psychology of art) and on the other hand the history of art, theory of visual expression and visual studies.

### **Art therapy in Educational Setting**

The popularity of art therapy has increased especially since the 1980's, among students and graduates of Special Education departments since art therapy has been brought into curriculums in the Faculty of Education. Even today art therapy is taught at colleges or universities at Faculties of Education more often than at Medical Faculties; however the proportion between them is slowly being equalized. Art therapy has been taught as one of the courses at these departments with the aim of introducing students to the basics of art therapy and serves as a tool for self-development. It is not professional art therapy training.

From the 1990's there has been a new specific discipline called "Artefiletics" developing within the educational setting. It has been created on the interpenetration of aesthetic-educational and expressive-therapeutic disciplines. This new specialization has been

taught at some faculties of education and is being considered as a specialization which is affiliated to faculties of visual art. It is based on the connection between expressive art production and on reflection of that art-making process which is facilitated through a dialogue in the creative group. The main aim of this subsequent reflection is to gain a better awareness of culture, people and nature based on the self-discovery process. This educational approach uses artistic expressive media leading towards an integrative mental development and personal growth and it also serves as a positive prevention of psychosocial disorders, especially in children and in young people. The goal of Artefiletics is to offer a person the possibility of revealing psychological potential and limits, to give the person a chance to find their place and their task within human society and to equip them with sensitivity towards the pain of others. This way of acquiring knowledge is expected to lead towards the development of creativity, expressive skills, communication and social skills, adaptive decision-making and critical thinking. Artefiletics is based on psychological theories of creativity and puts the emphasis especially on the originality and spontaneity of a person. It also tries to build up students' motivation and to pull them into the self-experiential process.

### **The integrative model of art therapy**

Art therapy approaches have been gradually developed in many institutions under the leadership of art therapists, with a range of theoretical orientations. In some institutions the way of working with clients is exclusively process-oriented. The emphasis is placed on a creative process of a client, where the art therapist turns his attention towards the feelings of the client, pays attention to the fluency in clients' art-making, radical shifts in his emotions during the art therapy session, as well as any disgust towards art-making. Alternatively, attention is paid to the content of art therapy artefacts, on themes/issues which the client has been dealing with, on its specific meaning for him and tries to find out which period of his life are themes or issues are connected to. Attention is paid also on the content elements of the image or collages. Eventually, after that, the art therapist looks at the formal elements, the styles of client's art-production, e.g. how is he able to draw perspective, what colours are used here, which developmental elements are appearing in his art-making.

Since the experience of art therapists – as well as the conclusions of some research studies<sup>11</sup>, which were focused on the interconnectedness between the changes in client's art-production and changes in his difficulties at the same time – has pointed out this statistically significant correlation, there has been an effort to focus art therapy sessions on the change in the art production.

Based on changes in the art therapy artefacts of the client, particularly on formal aspects of his art therapy artefacts which is client suggested, work on the reduction of the client's difficulties takes place. Therefore by the integrative model of art therapy we understand that the emphasis of the art therapy is placed on working with the process of art making and on the content of art products as well as on its form. Besides that, art therapy practice is influenced by the psychotherapeutic orientation of the art therapist (psychoanalytical, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, existentially-analytical, etc). So, despite the variety in approaches, in recent times, integration has been taking place.

### **The Czech Art Therapy Association<sup>12</sup>**

This association was established in 1994 as an independent professional association of art therapists. However it is open to everybody interested in art therapy. The association has been recently working on the formation of professional status of an art therapist, so that standards of education in art therapy would be in agreement with standards of other expressive therapies in the Czech Republic as well as with European standards.

The main aim and the standpoint of the Czech Art Therapy Association is to keep achieving a constant improvement of Czech art therapy. Another goal is to maintain an appropriate space for an effective communication. This is achieved through creating a space for mutual professional exchange of information. The association develops relationships with other disciplines – especially with related expressive therapy disciplines and also psychological (psychotherapeutic) and educational disciplines. The Czech Art Therapy Association also organizes or co-organizes conferences and professional meetings. It also conceptually participates in organizing art therapy activities in medical, educational, social and other institutions and participates also in conducting research related especially to art, psychology, psychotherapy and education. There has been the

cooperation between the other forms of expressive therapies taking place ( music therapy, dance therapy and drama therapy).

### **The magazine Art Therapy (originally “Arteterapie”<sup>13</sup>)**

Since 2002, the association has been publishing a professional magazine called “Arteterapie”, which is issued three times a year. This magazine contains articles, essays, case studies, reviews/critiques and information about events in the field of art therapy. At the same, the magazine provides information about the happening in the field of music therapy or drama therapy together with associations for expressive art therapies (music therapy, drama therapy and dance therapy).

The magazine is not intended only for members of the art therapy community, but the goal is also to find out about different kind of activities, experience of therapists and clients, to spread information about the movement and events within the association and to publish theoretical papers on professional topics within the field of art therapy or fields associated with the art therapy (e.g. the history of art, fine art, etc.) as well as to publish critiques/reviews on new published reports books and reports from different treatment institutions, etc.

Today, Art therapy is clearly defined by its competencies in documents of the Ministry of Health of Czech Republic and it is grounded in its own theory. It has been directed in two different lines – either into a treatment sector on one hand (represented by non-medical jobs providing medical health care) or into an educational sector on the other hand (Artefiletics). Recently, we have been working on the inclusion of art therapy into the relevant sections of professional societies and its establishment in law within the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Work, Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Education. Our association would like to build more connections with the professional art therapy institutions abroad.

The need for creativity in the field of science and technology as well as in the art sphere still persists. Art expression depends on the harmony between the subjective sensual cognitive processes, the depth of personal experiencing, imagination and fantasy, the quality of a person’s experience, sensations, thinking, volition, temperament, interests,

attitudes and one's needs. The psychological background of art production can be developed within the complex process, where imagination and a fantasy are overlapping with other parts of the psyche. This reflects a desired development, which would represent the main goal of the Art Therapy Association in the Czech Republic.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Prof. MUDr. Rudolf Jedli\_ka (1869-1926) was a prominent Czech surgeon, radiologist and an initiator, propagator and a patron of many socio-medical activities. In 1913 he significantly contributed to the foundation of the first Czech institute for children with disabilities, in Prague. This was later called The Jedli\_ka's Institute in his honour. He was inspired by the idea of giving children with disabilities the possibility of getting professional treatment and education, which would be focused on preparing them for an independent and full life as much as it is possible for them. He tried to preach and promote this idea all his life. In Jedli\_ka's Institute at that time, art production was an important activity.

<sup>2</sup> He was helped during those first years by the principal of the Institute – Franti\_ek Bakule. He was mainly in charge of the school of the fore-mentioned Jedli\_ka's Institute, which was from its very beginning an important part of the entire institution. Franti\_ek Bakule. in the same way as professor Jedli\_ka, Bakule was a quite well known personality in his field at the time. His artistic-educational attempts with children and their results were published in well-known periodicals and they raised great interest and excitement among educators and teachers at the beginning of the last century.

<sup>3</sup> Augustin Barto\_ (1888-1969) was a Czech educator, the second principal of the Jedli\_ka's Institute. He taught and promoted modern teaching methods in education for people with disabilities. From 1945-1951, he was an active lecturer in the field of disability at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague.

<sup>4</sup> Prof. MUDr. Otakar Janota (1889-1969) studied the connection between psychosis and inner illnesses. He was interested in the art productions of the mentally ill population. He wrote a well-known book "The Art Products of Mentally Ill People" which is now available only in archives.

<sup>5</sup> STRNAD, M. and SKULA, E (1960) Ein Fall von Kinderschizophrenie mit ausdrucksvoller Bildproduktion: A case of childhood schizophrenia with expressive picture production. *Acta Paedopsychiatria: International Journal of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 27, p. 52-61.

<sup>6</sup> SOMROVÁ, J. (2007), *Symbolika kresby postavy; Somatická onemocnění a psychiatrie*, Písek, 2007: papers from conference. Haví\_ov: GRACENT.

<sup>7</sup> HERINKOVÁ, L. and HAJNOVÁ, R. (1969) Art Therapy and its Application in Pediatric Psychiatry. *\_eská Psychiatria*, 65 (5), p. 310-317.

<sup>8</sup> Psychotherapy Association is a part of a Czech medical association of J. E. Purkyn\_

<sup>9</sup> PhDr. Milan Kyzour (1932-2000) was a teacher, art therapist and a painter, the principal of first art school in Kaplica, established, first, established the department of music, later, the art department there followed. He cooperated with the psychiatric unit of the Regional Hospital in \_eské Bud\_ovice. He also collaborated with the alcohol addiction treatment centre "\_erven\_ Dv\_r", where he led the art therapy with addicted clients as well as with neurotic clients. After some period of time, he developed his own method of interpretation of the art production of his patients, which was based on complex analyses of the art piece. This method emphasises the relationships between the particular components, which cannot be taken out of the context. It was inspired by the ideas and opinions of C.G. Jung and S. Freud, in connection with developmental theory of J. Piaget.

<sup>10</sup> Miroslav Huptych (1952) is a poet, aphorist, artist, editor, art therapist, and a member of the Community of writers and of the International PEN club, as well as being the head editor of the Czech art therapy magazine called "Arteterapie". He wrote 5 collections of poems so far. Through the use of collages and photo-montage he has illustrated 42 books, more than 130 book covers and 28 calendars. He has presented his work at more than 30 independent art exhibitions.

The author has also found the "The Set of Projective Collages", which is offered as a projective art therapy method for qualified art therapists:

<http://www.huptych.cz/arteterapie/kurzy/kurz-sada-projektivnich-autorskych-kolazi>

More information about the author:

[http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miroslav\\_Huptych](http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miroslav_Huptych)

<http://www.slovníkceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=1030>

<http://www.czechlit.cz/autori/huptych-miroslav/>

Links to the author's collages:

<http://edizionidartefelixfeneon.blogspot.com/2011/07/in-preparazione-il-nuovo-n15-estate.html>

<http://anthropomorphe.blogspot.com/2009/12/good-czech-tradition.html>

<http://tuttalacartadelmondo.blogspot.com/2009/12/miroslav-huptych.html>

<http://edizionidartefelixfeneon.blogspot.com/>

<sup>11</sup> LHOTOVÁ, M. (2010) *Prom\_ny v\_tvárné tvorby v arteterapii*. \_eské Bud\_ovice: Scientia.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.arteterapie.cz>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.arteterapie.cz/index.php?kategorie=casopis>

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