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Opening Editorial Notes

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OPENING EDITORIAL NOTES

Where We Begin

Two weeks before her death, Helen and I had a conversation about this journal. Helen was a role model to me, an author, a teacher, a supervisor, and a woman I admired and appreciated personally and professionally. She left an immense legacy: the art therapy program she founded, several books, her clinical work, and the Helen B. Landgarten Art Therapy Clinic at Loyola Marymount University. She coined the term “clinical art therapy” as an art therapy approach that “affords a wide source of variation and goals [and establishing it as] an accepted therapeutic modality wherever mental health services are offered” (Landgarten, 1981, p. 6). Her second book, *Family Art Therapy*, established the use of art psychotherapy within the context of family treatment (Landgarten, 1987). These are, of course, the foundations of the LMU program, now celebrating its 30-year anniversary.

During our last meeting Helen suddenly said, “OK, now, tell me about this journal again? Why do we need another journal? And are there really enough good writers?” Initially, I was taken aback. I knew Helen strongly believed that art therapists should stay informed of best practices and was an advocate of writing about one’s clinical experiences. We discussed this shared understanding, yet she insisted, “but are you sure you need this headache, and why now?” I explained that our field has grown, and we have talented and interested alumni who understand that research and scholarly publications have become an important way for us to advance both internal and external conversations. The journal could help us form a bridge: informing others about art therapy, furthering our communication with other educators, psychotherapists, and artists. Helen smiled. She said, “Well, good. I just wanted to know you had a vision.”

This vision is, of course, shared by many others who inspired this endeavor. The need for expanded research based knowledge has been resonating through our field for many years (e.g. Kapitan, 2010; Wadeson, 1978). Many have highlighted the importance of exploring connections to other disciplines (e.g. clinical psychology, counseling, art education) as well as the need to identify what is unique that art therapy offers (Anderson, 2001; Betts, 2009; Carolan, 2001; McNiff, 1998).

While this debate was originally carried out by a small number of art therapy educators, over the last decade the push to expand systematic exploration of art therapy is increasingly motivated by art therapists working in the field. It is evidenced as more art therapists seek doctoral degrees, and new PhD programs offer art therapy and expressive therapy specializations (Adler School of Professional Psychology, Florida State University, Drexel University, etc). In addition, numerous electronic and face-to-face

communities facilitate conversations between art therapists practicing in different settings and countries, and using different art therapy approaches.

A recent increase in scholarly publications relevant to our discipline is also part of this trend. The interest in creativity and expressive engagement in mental health in general has inspired scholarly publications within psychology (*Journal of Creativity, Aesthetics and the Arts*) and counseling (*Journal of Creativity and Mental Health*). The creation of this new journal, the *Journal of Clinical Art Therapy*, is part of this trend and best understood within this context.

The intent and purpose of this new journal, as noted in the journal’s website is to develop the understanding and practice of clinical art therapy “through scholarly and clinical exploration of art therapy within a systemic framework” (Aims & Scope, n.d.). The embedded assertion in creating this journal is that systematic explorations of art therapy services, the experiences of our clients, and the incorporation of systemic and cultural considerations would enhance the meaning and usefulness of this work. To this end, we have created an electronic, open-source forum, a peer reviewed, scholarly journal, focused on examining topics and clinical issues relevant to art therapy in a multicultural and contextual environment.

For this first edition we also have a limited printed version available for contributors and interested readers. Since this first edition of the journal is part of the 30th anniversary of the art therapy program at LMU, we specifically solicited alumni contributions. Moving forward this journal will be open to submissions from any interested contributor exploring a relevant topic.

It is important to acknowledge efforts that went into creating this journal. The process of peer review established research standards, developed bias-free procedures to review and select papers, and included experts in the respective fields. Accomplished and published art therapists were invited to join the review board representing nationally established art therapy research leaders and clinicians who have published research findings in scholarly forums. A double blind review process selected three articles for publication, and the authors completed revisions with the help of Professor Debra Linesch (consulting editor), Ann Stenglein (line editor), and Maxine Junge (our special edition guest editor).

This inaugural edition of the journal includes several brief introductory papers followed by three peer reviewed articles. Following this introductory note, Debra Linesch introduces the articles within the historical context of the Marital and Family

Therapy Department at LMU and the field. Maxine Junge offers her reflections as the special edition editor, and Paige Asawa and Amelia Waite report on the recent alumni survey. The three peer reviewed articles that follow were written by LMU graduates, all addressing the meeting places of art, language, cultural considerations, theory and clinical application, and the careful examination of art psychotherapy.

Perhaps most importantly, I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to our authors—Erica Curtis, Naomi Tucker and Ana Laura Trevino, and Malissa Morrell—who worked tirelessly and with a tight time line to prepare and revise their manuscripts. We are honored to have such contributions in our first edition of the journal. I am also very grateful to our editorial team, Debra Linesch, Ann Stenglein, and Maxine Junge for all their work, support of our authors and myself, and for all that I have personally learned from our joint endeavor. I want to wholeheartedly thank all the dedicated reviewers who helped maintain the journal's professional standards and guided our writers with supportive yet clear and critical reviews. Finally, a big thank you to Paul Oxborrow of Digital Commons, our LMU liaisons at the library and University Relations, and Dean Busse, whose support made the inauguration of this journal possible at this time.

Einat Metzl, *Editor*

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