

# Art Therapy, Visual Arts Mediation

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Art therapy is a healthcare practice that uses the process of artistic creation and complements medical care. This practice involves the use of artistic mediations, each with its own specificities: visual arts, music (music therapy), theater (drama therapy), dance (DMT - dance movement therapy), and writing.

Part of a therapeutic journey, this practice is aimed at individuals in fragile situations experiencing physical and/or psychological suffering (the two are connected: physical reality affects the psychological state). It particularly addresses those who have difficulty expressing their emotions and what affects them verbally, especially during medical consultations, or those who need to regain a sense of vitality.

The art therapist offers group or individual support in an environment suited to artistic production. A sufficiently containing, reassuring, and calming framework allows the patient to mobilize their creative potential and reinvest in part of their imaginary life. The patient engages in artistic production, where the underlying creative process allows the emergence and development of psychic movements.

Overall, art therapy aims to improve the quality of life of individuals by helping them break free from a repetitive cycle of difficulties that seem inescapable. The practice helps them stay connected to the present and their environment, attempting to lead them to overcome their suffering toward a better state of well-being.

## **Specificity of Visual Arts Mediation**



« Through their works, human beings surpass themselves. By creating, they create themselves. In the truest sense, *they express themselves*. »

*(René Passeron, Clefs pour la peinture, 1952)*

## **The Visual Language**

In the case of visual arts mediation, the visual language replaces verbal language used in psychodynamic psychotherapy as a tool for communication and expression. The materials and techniques used in this mediation are very diverse, each carrying specific qualities and a potential that can trigger psychic work as well as reinforce the unique resources of each patient. The quality and variety of materials offered, as well as the patient's choice of them, are active elements of the therapeutic device.

## **Getting Back in Motion: Reconnecting with Life**

The goal for the person is to get back in motion, to initiate or revive a dynamic turned towards life, notably through the restoration of self-esteem. It is important for them to first reconnect with themselves in order to re-establish links with their surroundings and environment.

The art therapist, in the silent space of the studio, will try to identify movements around the stages of the patient's creative process; they analyze how the work is being constructed in order to elaborate around the difficulties and resistances that may arise. The created dynamic will nourish or support the person's vital energy.

## **Leaving a Trace**

The works—drawing, painting, or collage—are traces that form a continuity of the self and testify to a moment fully lived.



The production can be viewed, rediscovered, or explored individually, but it can also serve as a basis for communication between workshop participants. The object is not judged aesthetically and is not a medium for interpreting its contents. The finished object is not the most important (it is its development through the creative process that matters). It is a personal object, a part of oneself, not meant to be exposed, much like speech in a psychological interview.