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Art Therapy in St. Petersburg's Museums

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This article examines the different theoretical perspectives, practical applications and social aspects of art therapy used in the museums of St. Petersburg. The main purpose of the art therapy experience in a museum is to facilitate the harmonious development of the personality of children and adults through visual art. The special features of contemporary museums are analysed in the context of their involvement in the social and cultural experience of the application of art therapy.

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INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have seen the increasing use of art therapy in the health, education, social and cultural sectors of Russia. Art therapy was formally introduced in Russia around 1990. Certain forms of art therapy such as cultural performances were used for children and adults across different age and social groups during the Soviet era.

The systematic study of the influence of art on emotional adjustment had previously only been considered within the framework of pedagogy and psychology in general. The understanding of art therapy in Europe and the USA has increased tremendously and advanced techniques are now employed in Russia (Nazarova, 2008). Several art therapy studios have been established in museums and art galleries with the financial support received from charitable foundations and government grants. For example,

an art therapy studio for children with disabilities was initiated as a part of the “Step Forward” programme in the State Russian Museum.

Currently, museums are changing priorities and are turning into multipurpose cultural centres. Art therapy uses inputs from several fields of humanities and sciences including psychology, pedagogy, medical sciences, cultural studies and so on (Cournoyer, 2000; Segal, Gerdes and Steiner, 2010; Platonova, 2000; Nadvozkaya, 2005; Polezhaeva, 2007; Bogdanovich, 2008). The indicated process requires more detailed theoretical research from the perspective of social science and cultural theory. The role of art therapy practices in developing and evaluating cognitive skills, though explored by many researchers (Silver and Lavin, 1997; Manheim, 1998; Graham and Sontag, 2001; Grishina, 2004; Nikolskaya, 2005; Susanina, 2008; Kort, 2011), requires more attention in the context of museum and social work studies.

The Current State of Research on Art Therapy in Russia

Since the 1990s, studies on psycho-correction and diagnostics based on art therapy are being carried out in close consultation with newer treatment options. The original model for art therapy was designed primarily by A. I. Kopytin. Kopytin has authored the fundamental studies on the theory and practice of art therapy, systematic art therapy, techniques of body-oriented art therapy, and family art therapy (Kopytin, 1999; 2001; 2002a; 2010; 2011).

Today, a series of studies devoted to the research of therapeutic, corrective, preventive and other methods of art therapy in health, education and social work are conducted in Russia. For example, the research by Grishina (2004) concerning the development of creativity among teenagers through art therapy in institutions of additional education, Kort’s (2011) study on methods of body-oriented art therapy (Kort, 2011), and Nikolskaya’s (2005) tutorial on art therapy in the framework of child psychiatry. Additional studies include the research of M. E. Burno on creative expression as a domestic clinical-psychotherapeutic method (Burno, 2012), and methods of art therapy within the theory of social work by E. P. Agapova and A. B. Sokolov (Agapova, 2008; Sokolov, 2010). Lebedeva (2001) defended his doctoral dissertation in Russia on art therapy in the Institute of Adult Education of Russian Academy of Education. The results of Lebedeva’s research on pedagogical foundations of art therapy in education and the practice of art therapy including

approaches, diagnostics, and systematic practice were published in several editions (Lebedeva, 2007).

Studies on the effect of art based therapeutic activity on the development of children with mental retardation and autism. (Nikolskaya, 2005; Medvedeva, 2009; Susanina, 2008) confirm that implementation of visual activity promotes sensory development of children, differentiation of perception, fine movements of hands, development of voluntary attention, imagination, speech, and communication. Suchkova (2008) affirms the improvement of the psycho-emotional state, cognition, and creative abilities of children from disadvantaged families undergoing art therapy (Suchkova, 2008). Medvedeva and others (2001) and Medvedeva (2010) analyse the creative activities of children with mental retardation and demonstrate how art therapy creates positive dynamics in the qualitative development of their imagination and creativity, correction of the psychoemotional state and contributes to the development of several significant aspects of a child's personality. Studies on art therapy in the framework of adult psychology have also been conducted by N. E. Purvis (Purvis, 2008).

A study of the existing methods of art therapy in the UK and USA is fundamental for the development of Russian art therapy. (Nazarova, 2008; Kopytin, 2002b). Experiences in the use of art therapy in museums are discussed in publications which help to systematise relevant practice (Platonova, 2000; Nadvozkaya, 2005; Polezhaeva, 2007; Bogdanovich, 2008; Klyukina, 2009). The Russian Art Therapy Association created in 1996 by A. I. Kopytin translates and publishes books on art therapy.

ART THERAPY IN THE MUSEUMS OF ST. PETERSBURG

The State Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg carried out the first Russian experimental programme called "Step towards" for the creative development of children with abnormalities or "difficult children" in 1991. The goal was to demonstrate that art therapy could reduce anxiety and teach pupils to be more patient (Curry and Kasser, 2005). The art works of children were exhibited in an international conference on the issues of social adaptation and creative rehabilitation of children with disorders. The art therapy at the State Russian Museum is conducted to provide the following benefits to children:

- Psychological aid to children and adolescents diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Asperger's syndrome and sensory integration difficulties.

- Cultural programmes for disadvantaged social groups such as the physically disabled, orphaned, and difficult adolescents.
- Training specialists for volunteer work within the framework of the Russian Museum exhibitions.

The Russian Museum Art Therapy Programmes

There are six art therapy programmes that have been developed and are now conducted in the Russian Museum:

1. “In Search of a Treasure” for disabled children suffering from chronic somatic diseases.
2. “The Routes we Choose” for orphaned children.
3. “Mysteries of the Old Castle” for children with high levels of aggression.
4. “A Trip Inside Yourself” for adolescents suffering from dependency behaviour.
5. “Museum without Doorsteps” for disabled persons suffering from musculoskeletal problems.
6. “From Monologue to Dialogue” classes for disabled persons suffering from severe communication disorders.

As stated by Heydt and Sherman (2005) there is considerable improvement in social skills after group work and art therapy sessions. For example, in the programme “In the Museum with Mum” a mother and her child can walk into the museum and play various games that facilitate the development of creative thinking. Museum art therapy includes viewing various artistic works and participating in the interactive forums, for example, playing games and musical instruments, making sketches, and participating in dramatic performances. Especially popular are the weekly classes for pregnant women called “Experiencing the Beauty before Birth”. The guides show expectant mothers paintings that “enhance their mood and positively affect their psychological state”. Even depressed mothers show considerable psychological progress (Ponteri, 2001; Purvis, 2008).

Types of Museum Art Therapy Programmes

The creative classes conducted at the museum can be classified as per the following:

1. *Development classes*: art studios, hobby classes, regular thematic programmes, special artistic programmes and master-classes.
2. *Art therapy programmes*: specially developed by psychologists and museum educators for people who need psychological aid.

Such museum-based classes employ general art therapy techniques, but the main focus is on developing imagination and creating the specific therapeutic conditions that promote the personal growth of a child or an adult. Even a short-term art therapy experience may be positive for people of all ages (Stanley and Miller, 1993; White and Allen, 1971; Platonova, 2000; Nadvozkaya, 2005). When conducting the classes, museum educators and psychologists refrain from making evaluative judgments, and provide empathatic understanding to the child.

Although art-therapeutic programmes are conducted in several museums, the Russian Centre of Museum Pedagogy and Children's Creative Activities (for children from 2 to 12 years) is the singular location of a special centre for the development and training of arttherapy specialists. Special programmes of art and fairy-tale therapy are conducted at the Russian Museum of Ethnography, the Museum of Musical Instruments in Sheremetiev Palace, the St. Isaac's Cathedral and the State Museum of Political History (where a special Children's Centre has been established). In the Museum of Ethnography, the excursions are combined with the "School of Crafts" programme. Under the guidance of the craft teachers, children learn various artistic techniques, and work with natural materials, clay, beads, and so on. These works of the children are then displayed at the exhibitions conducted within the framework of charity events. In Sheremetiev Palace, the participating children and their parents can, not only listen to the sound of exotic musical exhibits and evaluate their musical merits, but also play these instruments. Among these is the work of the Hermitage Youth Theatre and special children programmes conducted at the Palace-and-Park complex "Pavlovsk".

Various institutions for special children are now collaborating with these museum programmes, for example, "Perspektiva" in Saint Petersburg. The organisation works with German volunteers at an orphanage for children suffering from musculoskeletal problems. Several years ago they developed a joint programme called "Art Therapy" in conjunction with specialists from the Museum Centre of Palace-and-Park complex "Pavlovsk".

Benefits of Art Therapy

Several questions have been raised regarding the possibility of reconstructing this creative environment of art therapy classes somewhere outside the museum space? What is specific in the classes conducted at a museum? In the last five years more than ten cultural centres have opened in Saint Petersburg, both independently and jointly with museums. These art-therapy classes have various therapeutic effects for both children and adults. Moreover, these programmes always include special museum-based classes that display exhibitions of authentic artworks. Introduction to art activities in art studios facilitate the harmonisation of a child's emotional state. Going to museums enhances socialisation skills and better adjustment to the environment, widens personal horizons and promotes intellectual development. Additionally, participation in art projects and exhibitions increase self-esteem (Polezhaeva, 2007; Bogdanovich, 2008; Klyukina, 2009) and enhance better perception and understanding of various artistic techniques, styles and methods among the children. One important feature of museum-based classes is that the artists are extremely interested in social projects and willingly take part in art-therapeutic museum programmes.

Some museums entered into joint ventures with other cultural and educational institutions. In 2008, the project "Art Studio Palette" was launched by the Russian Museum. The Art Studio conducted a cycle of programmes for creative personal development called "Museum Firework" in the 2009–2010 academic year, and an educational programme for younger school children called "Planet of Creativity" in cooperation with the staff of the State Russian Museum. The main purpose of the cycle is to facilitate the harmonious development of a child's personality through visual art in a museum environment. The classes include artistic activities, games involving musical and theatrical components, improvisational costume performances, body-oriented exercises, and psychological excursions. Both group and individual forms of work are used.

Social and Pedagogical Significance of Art Therapy in a Museum

Museum art therapy did not come about by chance. Rather it was developing within the framework of museum pedagogy, specifically art pedagogy. Museum pedagogy based on the German model has developed in Russian art museums since the beginning of the 20th century. Unlike the

more pragmatic American model, it paid more attention to studying the artworks as self-sustained aesthetic objects and was aimed at developing the visitor's ability to perceive the artworks in a creative way (Lebedeva, 2001). However, since the 1980's museum pedagogy has been reconstituted with theoretical underpinnings from museology, pedagogy, psychology, aesthetics, cultural and increasingly social studies (Mushram, 2001; Lebedeva, 2001). Museum pedagogy is now "taking over" key positions in museums and is likely to become a new integrative discipline. As a branch which developed at the intersection of several humanitarian disciplines, museum pedagogy employs their methods and techniques to a large degree. However, the theoretical foundation of this new discipline still remains to be further developed.

Museum classes have now proved to be more successful than schools in creative thinking and problem solving. These classes introduce a child to Russian and world culture, visual and associative thinking, creative abilities and emotions (Platonova, 2000; Nadvozkaya, 2005; Polezhaeva, 2007; Bogdanovich, 2008; Klyukina, 2009). Consequently, the museum space enables the formation of cognitive, aesthetic and active and practical elements in a child. Creative initiative is developed in childhood and the artworks and collections presented in art museums have huge potential for the actualisation and development of creative abilities. Besides museum pedagogy, the Russian museums are also working on art pedagogy within the framework of the first Russian art therapy experiment "Step towards".

Russian art therapy has to a large degree developed out of pedagogical work and educators have often experienced positive results such as recovery from "emotional restraint" and noticeable improvement of a child's general emotional sphere. Secondly, many pedagogical approaches originally included creative classes as their inherent conceptual components and have thus facilitated the spread of ideas that are close to art therapy. So, it became clear that museum-based classes might perform health-improving and corrective functions. This proved to be especially important while working with disabled and "difficult" children (Nikolskaya, 2005). This group primarily comprises pupils with serious problems in intellectual and moral development and self-sufficiency. A recent study conducted at schools revealed that such pupils have low spiritual and cognitive needs, low levels of aesthetic sensitivity, low tolerance to errors and failures of other individuals, achievement and success motivation. At the same time, the children exhibit traits of high levels of anxiety, vulnerability, and resentment. Nevertheless, good

results can be achieved through art therapy with children having Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) accompanied by a history of impulsivity (Smitheman-Brown and Church, 1996; Nikolskaya, 2005; Susanin, 2008). Museum-based classes help in the recovery of the psychic integrity of children. Attending exhibitions involves a change of scenery through which a child can express his / her latent problems. “Catharsis” through creative work relieves painful feelings and psychoemotional strain (Suchkova, 2008). In such a situation, the museum becomes a tool which enables children to adapt to the surrounding world.

Humanitarian Aspects of Art Therapy Projects

In modern Russia art therapy is very popular. Art therapy uses an interdisciplinary approach, that is, a combination of psychology and pedagogy (Campbell, Liebmann, Brooks, Jones and Ward, 1999; Agapova, 2008; Sokolov, 2010). It is a complex mix of psychological methods employed to enable medical treatment and psycho-correction of clients through the expression of art (Kopytin, 2008). To avoid confusion between the therapeutic and educational components of art, Kopytin suggested that the terms ‘art therapy’ and ‘art therapeutic’ be replaced with ‘art methods’ which are methods based on creative activity or creative self-expression (Kopytin, 2002; 2001; 2011; 2010). However, some researchers argue that it is impossible to view art therapy as one of the many “methods” or “tools” of psychotherapeutic treatment (Nazarova, 2008; Kopytin, 2001). Similarly, this practice may not be considered as just functional or another “component” of psychotherapy. Instead, it is one of the “growing points” or “development zones” of contemporary *culture as a whole*. The axiological and procedural underpinnings of art therapy find application in the contemporary humanities discourse.

It is important to note that it is not appropriate to consider art therapy for those who want to ‘develop themselves’ or for ‘personal growth’. But at the same time we cannot ignore the fact that art-therapy is becoming a lifestyle component.

CONCLUSION

Problems of Museum Art Therapy in Russia

Participating in museum programmes has now become a fashion in Russia. The groups are small, and the individual approach and selection of the

group participants makes such classes exclusive. Art therapy sessions are conducted at creative studios and exhibitions of the Russian museum once a week and each session lasts for one and a half hours. If parents are unable to understand which programme is appropriate for their child, the specialists may provide additional consultation, but for a fee. Thus, many families with children who need such correctional classes cannot afford the programmes. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the number of museum-based classes. Conversely, it is necessary to restart the free schools of creativity for children lost in the *perestroika* years. Further, the number of special programmes available for adults are few and there are absolutely no developmental and correctional classes for the elderly. It is also necessary to train competent staff for conducting art therapy.

Educational Programmes on Art Therapy

A notable achievement for art therapy was the establishment of the Russian Art Therapy Association (www.rusata.ru) in St. Petersburg in 1997. The association has more than 300 members including psychotherapists and psychologists who prepare programmes on art therapy. Under the guidance of the Association's founder A. I. Kopytin, "Imaton" conducts courses on art therapy are conducted at the State Institute of Practical Psychology. The association hosts an annual international art therapy conference and publishes the multidisciplinary journal *Healing Art* since 1997.

Although art therapy has received widespread interest in Russia, particularly in museums, the educational programmes and courses offered at universities are yet underdeveloped. Unlike the West, where art has a long history of patronage, Russian art therapy lacks qualified personnel. However, there has been considerable work done on the introduction of such courses within the structure of university programmes. (Please see the Appendix for the list of institutions engaged in the field of Art Therapy).

Development of Art Therapy Projects in a Museum

That museum based art therapy programmes exist in isolation from other art-based therapeutic practices such as specialised psychotherapeutic groups working in the field of modern art, which is a drawback. Art therapy therefore needs to develop along (a) Conceptual: develop the theoretical model of psychological and pedagogical foundations of art-therapy; and

(b) Applied: train teachers and museum educators for further application in their professional capacity.

As in many other countries, further development of art therapy and “continuing education” in this field is necessary (Chenery, 2002). Art therapy should consider training individuals from the field of humanities and with sufficient knowledge of art, rather than relying solely on doctors. As art therapy enables individuals to relate to their minds and feelings, it brings harmony in the physical and spiritual realms of the individual. Therefore, it must be ensured that art therapy does not get pushed into the zone of ‘consumer services’ or treated as some sort of entertainment that is conducted for clients. The application of art therapy in education and in out-of-school work with children and adolescents is vast and such classes can be conducted with the establishment of similar cultural institutions in contemporary Russia.

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APPENDIX

List of institutions engaged in the field of Art Therapy

1. The Institute of Modern Psychological Technologies (Moscow) conducts training in art therapy.
2. St. Petersburg State Academy of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education offers a two-year programme of professional training “Art therapy in education, health, social sphere”.
3. The Institute of Practical Psychology “Imaton” (St. Petersburg) conducts “Art therapy in education, medicine, business”.
4. The Institute of Pedagogical Skill in St. Petersburg conducts post-graduate training for art therapists.
5. In Ulyanovsk Pedagogical University under the guidance of Professor L. D. Lebedeva fundamental research is being done on the development of art therapy in education.
6. The Institute of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology (Moscow) conducts training programmes for art therapists with subsequent certification based on psychological and medical education.

Refresher Courses

1. The Institute of Modern Psychological Technologies (Moscow) conducts “Art therapy: a variety of approaches” (135 hours). The programme is designed for practicing psychologists, psychotherapists, teachers, social workers, and representatives of creative professions who are interested in art therapy.
2. The Institute of Practical Psychology “Imaton” (St. Petersburg) offers three refresher courses:
 - (a) “Art therapy: a variety of approaches” (136 hours) for practicing psychologists, psychotherapists, teachers, social workers, representatives of creative professions who are interested in health protection with the help of art training.

- (b) A short-term programme “Methods of art therapy in the complex psychosocial support for persons of elderly and senile age” (24 hours) for psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers and other professionals who are interested in new art therapy techniques for the elderly.
- (c) A short-term programme “New art therapy techniques: art of photography opportunities in psychotherapy, psychological consulting and social work” (24 hours).

