

History of art therapy  
the different ages  
psychology essay



In this paper, a brief introduction of Art therapy is given so that the reader can get an idea of the term. The paper proceeds with a summarized history of this term in such a way that everyone can find the details by the jargons being used.

The history of art therapy is then distributed into three periods, which are related with the best scholars that each period had. The final period is regarded as the most beneficent and related period. It is because it covers the four major approaches which are even practiced now by psychotherapists and other learners of art therapy.

## **What is Art Therapy?**

This form of therapy as defined by Case & Dalley (1992) in their handbook as, a therapy that involves the ideas of the patient to find solution to the issues faced by the person, and leading to psychotherapy of that person through art media. The first and the most crucial and decisive step of art therapy is planning, as it decides what should be made to be spoken out by the patient and what should be observed (Rubin, 1984). In this therapy, generally, a whole scenario of the patient is drawn to study the approach. The other available option is to ask the client or patient to draw a picture which can be studied by the professionals.

Then, there are three main approaches of art therapy, Analytical art therapy, art psychotherapy and then the art therapists (Hogan, 2001) . It is a cure for the treatment for patients facing therapeutic change.

This is a useful tool, especially for the people surviving in today's world as it deals with human beings suffering from mental diseases and almost

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everyone is facing poverty of mental health. Everyone is running to embody his mental health for which art therapy is considered to be the best solution.

## **History of Art Therapy**

Art therapy is as old as the human society's existence, and has just changed its form (Malchiodi, 1998) and is still changing it. In the modern world of 21st century, as Junge & Asawa (1994) said, we can see this as a successful profession, which has developed widely. The history of art therapy focuses on the continuing trends shaped majorly on the practice and theory. Most of the practices which are being followed by art therapy are adapted with inspiration with the scholars of the ancient world, not that ancient, but mid of 20th century- which may be regarded as the origin of art therapy. In this part of the paper, each portion is regarded as a separate thread, which makes the whole cloth named as art therapy.

There are three major periods of art therapy development, and they are as follows:

### **Classical Period – 1940s to 1970s**

This period was the origin of the art therapy. This was the age when new concepts and pioneers came and the world knew a new term which is now widely being practiced.

When history is being studied, one might encounter great names of philosophers in this field but there are certain names like, Margaret Naumburg, Edith Kramer, Hanna Kwiatkowska, and Elinor Ulman. They are the well-known historical art therapy professionals who have written and

forwarded their knowledge and still their ideas are being practiced in the contemporary periods (Case and Dalley, 2003). Starting with the first literature master, this paper will give an overview of the whole period briefly as:

Naumberg is stated as the mother of the art therapy as she is the primary founder of American art therapy (Junge & Asawa, 1994, p. 22). It was Naumberg who began her work with her sister in her school, it was her innovative ideas which are now practiced in psychiatric settings and in 40s developed more ideas which are now commonly known as art therapy (Detre, et al., 1983). After Naumberg, there was Ulman who served as a pioneer of art therapy too. She founded the Bulletin related to it and also, Ulman (1975/1996) published a book, which was the first one that served this field for many workable years.

Then out of the four primary women of this age (three mentioned above) the last woman who is best known for her research and literature is Kwiatkowska (1978). She made the major contributions to the field of research and families and later on her book, full of her experiences became the major family related psychotherapist learning tool.

These were some early pioneers who worked with their heart and soul to make it a successful field for the coming world. In the end one should not also forget other early pioneers such as Mary Huntoon from Menninger Clinic (Wix, 2000), who has made marvelous contributions to this profession as well.

## **Middle Year Period – 1970s to 1980s**

The conceptual perspectives were broadened enough from 1970s to 1980s, more and more publications were issued regardless of the fact of psychoanalysis by art therapy, which always remained the dominant and distinguished feature of the whole analysis (Betensky, 1973; Landgarten, 1981; Levick, 1983; McNiff, 1981; Rhyne, 1973/1995; Robbins & Sibley, 1976; Rubin, 1978/1984; Wadeson, 1980). Two new journals as stated by Rubin (1999) were published in this age and are named as:

Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, in 1983

1973 Art Psychotherapy (also known as The Arts in Psychotherapy later by 1980)

In this way journal publishing regarding this topic was enhanced in this age and then American Art Therapy Association was also evolved in 1969, and it boosted credentials, art therapists and their roles (Shoemaker et al., 1976). Hence, this age can be named as the research age, which helped the later scholars in exploring various other dimensions of art therapy.

## **Contemporary Period – 1980s to Present**

The knowledge in the field of art therapy increased with its run and is still growing. Many scholars published resources for the learners so that they do not have to work much and can find the whole lot of sources helping from the list of bibliographies and making them learn about art therapy easily; as written in the Handbook of Art Therapy (2003). So on, many books were published.

According to American Art Therapy Association, 21% of the art therapists reported their source of information as eclectic (Elkins & Stovall, 2000).

People followed certain approaches and have been following them still in the present age and are as follows:

### **Psychodynamic Approaches**

Levick (1983), Kramer, Ulman, Wilson and Rubin (Rubin, 1987/2001) used psychoanalytical languages and also some other related concepts. New interpretations such as that of Klein (Weir, 1990) help the innovators a lot to enhance their concepts regarding self-psychology (Lachman-Chapin, 1999) and relating objects theory (Robbins, 1976). In this approach, mainly the images from unconscious part of mind are studied to help the patient or the client.

### **Humanistic Approaches**

It is suggested by Elkins and Stovall (2000) that a niche section of art therapist's work with human centered approach which should be their main priority as it is the theme of this approach. This approach is centered to be an approach that works for the optimistic nature of the human mind, the change brought within, growth and development occurring in a human heart and soul (Rubin, 1987/2001, p. 119).

### **Development and Learning Approaches**

Learning is not a phase which may be regarded as a popular topic for art therapists. Cognitive and behavioral approaches are yet important though not perceived to be. This approach is famous with the psychological analysis

of children and helps too. Using cognitive approach, Silver (2000) has given his diversified ideas on this section.

## **Family Therapies along with other Approaches**

It is yet a famous form of art therapy as this approach is becoming popular day by day in Western end. It means a lot and is attracting many psychologists to study relational and family thinking (E. Scholt, 2008). There are many other approaches which have been developed by psychotherapists and are being developed for the betterment of the upcoming years, with the hope of releasing stress out of a human brain.

## **Conclusion**

The art therapist, who develops the art work, knows that there is always a new experience to the end that the therapist is going to explore. New innovation can be studied with every new piece of art being developed because each client has his or her feelings and emotions.

This therapy, is helping nowadays widely to study and cure the trauma effects (usually not particularly) on the patients. The tapestry that is the art therapy is not a barren end but is an art that is continuous and is always in process. Hope the readers found pleasure in reading the history i. e. the experiences of the former innovators.