What a wonderful gathering
Michelle Long

Walking around Melbourne immersed in art and the arts therapies…
Reflecting upon “What does art mean to me?”
Reflecting upon why I ‘do’ art therapy.
This journey prompted me to write the following:

Art...
   It’s everywhere in the world around us
   It’s in the graffiti in our streets
   It’s in the galleries
   It’s political, it’s opinionated
   It’s temporary
   It’s made collaboratively or individually
   In poetry, film, theatre, music
   It tells a story of the past
   Art can be found within art
   There’s art in mundane places

All Around Us
   There’s art we appreciate and that which challenges
   Art allows us to explore our selves
      Our being
      Our sexuality
      Our culture
      Our spirituality
      Our experience
   It regulates, expresses and releases
   Art offends… it shocks; it frightens
      It protests
   Art allows the voices of the silenced to be heard
      It protects
   It connects…
   But most importantly, it…
      HEALS
I utilise the visual arts in a therapeutic setting. In the past twelve months, I have managed and assessed a programme offered to women and children who have experienced family violence. For as long as I can remember, I have known the arts therapies are healing but to see them in action and collect data to back this has been immensely powerful. After the cessation of the programme, attending the conference allowed me the space and connection with others to consolidate my ideas about what creativity provides for those who have experienced trauma. Some of these ideas are reflected in the above writing. I see the therapeutic benefit all around, in the world and in the work that I inhabit. I believe that this is something that absolutely everybody can tap into, whether through witnessing or actively participating. The presentations and workshops were a wonderful way for me to take some time out from daily work pressure and witness and participate in these outlets.

I thank each and every attendee and presenter at the conference for their knowledge and for sharing their skills. Finally, I would like to share an image from the conference – one that accompanies the above writing – that was created at one of the workshops, and that has been digitally altered to reflect my inner processing. This was a silent group activity that was executed respectfully and interpreted in various perspectives. For me this is a house, and it represents a coming home. This is how I feel about finding myself in the arts therapies.

Figure 1: Michelle Long, *Perspective dependant: The elephant, the handbag and the house*. 2018, digital image.
Peer review

The editorial team wishes to thank all peer reviewers who have generously contributed their time and expertise to the peer review of this edition of ANZJAT.

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