



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.

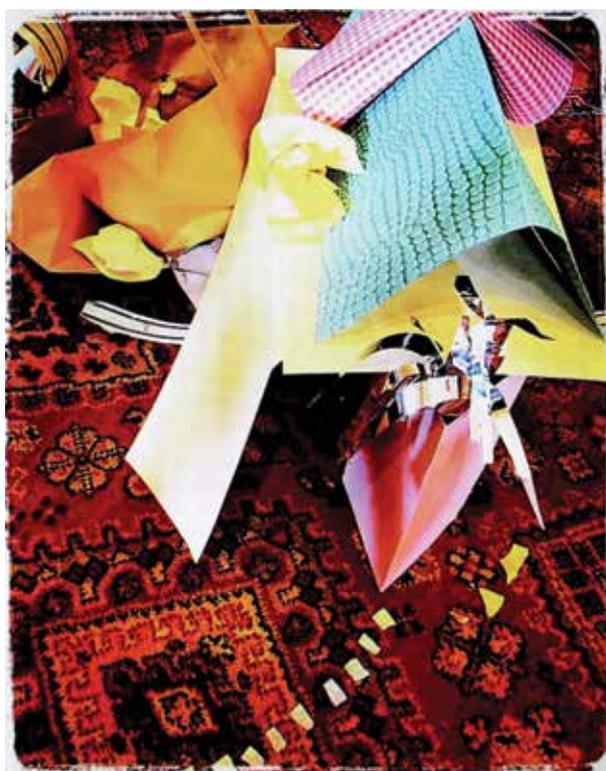


Figure 1: Michelle Long, *Perspective dependant: The elephant, the handbag and the house*. 2018, digital image.

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