Reminiscing on building communities through creative deeds

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Abstract

In building resiliency, art therapists ought to maintain creative practices of their own. This is especially true when the communities and circles they frequent are found to be toxic. Tuning in to our creative needs can be used as a restorative practice and serve to build supportive communities through art-making and sharing. The Creative Deed 365 project is briefly reviewed here as a means to engage community and self through a daily art practice. The photo essay seeks to inspire and ignite similar creative projects that may bring messages of hope and wellbeing to communities around the globe.

Keywords

Creative deeds, community, hope, reminiscing.

These days negativity and violence overtake news and social media like wildfire, burning hot and spreading fast; polarising communities, campuses and families. Reading post after social media post from fellow art therapists, there’s a similar heavy thread woven throughout. As art therapists we often extol the benefits of creative engagement, yet tend not to be creatively engaged ourselves. In building resilient practices as therapists we must nurture our creative selves (Kapitan, 2003; Levine, 1995; McNiff, 2004; B. Moon, 2002; C. Moon, 2002; Robbins, 2000) as well as build hope-filled communities all around us.

Reminiscing on community-building creative endeavours (see Figures 1–6), took me to the work of art therapist and social media guru, Gretchen Miller (2015, January 1). In 2015, in an attempt to share inspiration, Miller took on a project she entitled Creative Deed 365. She later wrote on her blog, “In times of challenge, stress, or moments of tough things going on in the world, I hoped that a creative deed helped bring some kind of light” (Miller, 2015, December 26). For 365 days Miller endeavoured to create a small piece of art daily and place it in a public space to be found by strangers. She documented her endeavours through her blog (2015, January 1) and monthly videos (2015, January 31).

The creative deeds Miller distributed were small (76.2 x 63.5mm) pieces of art with a positive message, assembled on a daily basis and freely shared with strangers. The small pieces of art, once complete, were left in public spaces to be found, or forgotten. Either way, the messages of hope, peace, gratitude and love were often shared on various social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) using the hashtag #creativedeed or #creativedeed365 (Miller, 2015, January 1). In 2015, small groups in various communities around the globe formed around this creative task, creating art, sharing adventures of selfless giving, and providing support to one another along the way (per review of Facebook group discussions).

As a #creativedeed365 participant I recall the endless making, crafting, documenting, and then simply abandoning the art to find its own way (Lorenzo de la Peña, 2016) – hoping it would be found by someone who needed a small piece of positivity that day. In a reflection on mail art, Colletti (2010) captured a similar sentiment of inspiration and catharsis in creating, followed by a sense of freedom once the piece is anonymously released into the world. What if communities from across the globe found themselves filled by colorful and powerful messages presented as creative deeds? In making and freely sharing, there are no certainties, only hope. Hope that no matter how small, what is shared in earnest makes a difference in the lives of our communities.
References


Peer review

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ANZJAT is a peer-reviewed journal and as such all accepted submissions are reviewed by peer reviewers well-versed and respected in the subject of the submission. Full length articles 5, 9, 10, 15, 22 and 24 in edition one, and full length articles 11, 12, 16, 17 and 25 in edition two were double anonymously peer-reviewed.