

Reminiscing on building communities through creative deeds

Sheila Lorenzo de la Peña

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.

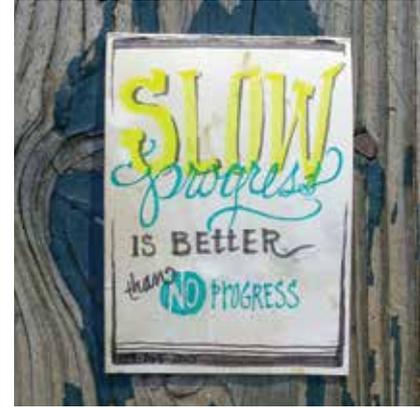
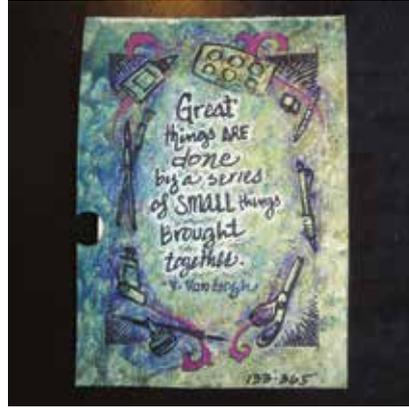
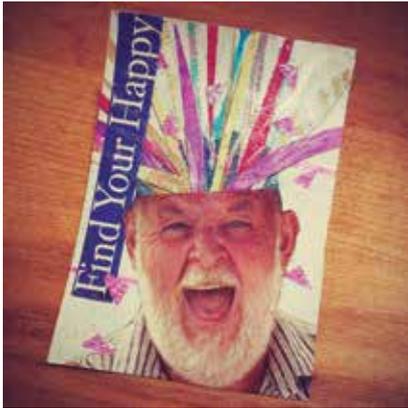
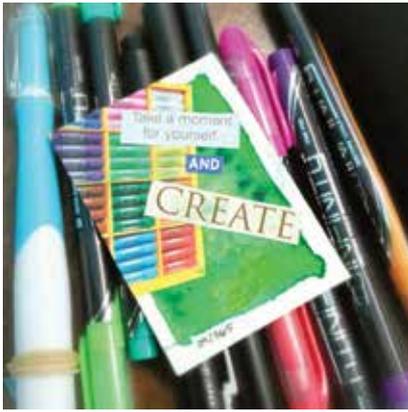
These days negativity and violence overtake news and social media like wildfire, burning hot and spreading fast; polarising communities, campuses and families. Reading post after social media post from fellow art therapists, there's a similar heavy thread woven throughout. As art therapists we often 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.



From top left:

Figure 1. *Take a moment for yourself*, creative deed card for day 29 of a 365-day practice, 29 January 2015.

Figure 2. *Share positive energy*, creative deed card for day 34 of a 365-day practice, 3 February 2015.

Figure 3. *Today is going to be great*, creative deed card for day 78 of a 365-day practice, 19 March 2015.

Figure 4. *Find your happy*, creative deed card for day 117 of a 365-day practice, 27 April 2015.

Figure 5. *Great things*, creative deed card for day 133 of a 365-day practice, 13 May 2015.

Figure 6. *Slow progress is better than no progress*, creative deed card for day 159 of a 365-day practice, 8 June 2015.

References

- Colletti, D. (2010). Inspired by a stranger: Exploring mail art. In C.H. Moon (Ed.), *Materials & media in art therapy: Critical understanding of diverse artistic vocabularies* (pp.183–195). New York: Routledge.
- Kapitan, L. (2003). *Re-enchanting art therapy: Transformational practices for restoring creative vitality*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Levine, E. (1995). *Tending the fire: Studies in art, therapy and creativity*. Toronto, Ontario: Palmerston Press.
- Lorenzo de la Peña, S. (2016, January 3). 365 days of creativedeeds comes to a close [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://symbolicprojections.blogspot.com/2016/01/365-days-of-creativedeeds-comes-to-close.html>
- McNiff, S. (2004). *Art heals: How creativity cures the soul* [Kindle for Android 8.12] eISBN 978-0-8348-2729-5.
- Miller, G. (2015, January 1). *Introducing: Creative Deed 365* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://gretchenmiller.wordpress.com/2015/01/01/introducing-creative-deed-365/>
- Miller, G. (2015, January 31). *Creative Deed 365: January offerings* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qahZUgeI5Oc>
- Miller, G. (2015, December 26). *Creative Deed 365 reflection begins* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://gretchenmiller.wordpress.com/tag/creative-deed-365/>
- Moon, B. (2002). *Working with images: The art of art therapists*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Moon, C. (2002). *Studio art therapy: Cultivating the artist identity in the art therapist*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley.
- Robbins, A. (2000). *The artist as therapist*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley.

anzjat

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARTS THERAPY

Editorial team

Chief Editor Sheridan Linnell

Co-Editors Stacey Bush, Catherine Camden Pratt, Deborah Green

Arts Editor and Editorial Assistant Vic Šegedin

Journal Coordinator Rigel Sorzano

Copy Editors / Proofreaders Marie Shannon and Margo White

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*.

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.

Published by the Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association
ACN 072 954 388
PO Box 303, Glebe, NSW 2037, Australia
www.anzacata.org

© Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association, 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher. The publisher makes no representation or warranty that the information contained in articles is accurate, nor accepts liability or responsibility for any action arising out of information contained in this journal.

ISSN: 1833-9948

Design and production Vic Šegedin

Printing Tender Print, Geelong, VIC, Australia