

A Box Story:
How the Functional Becomes Symbolic

Kate McGuire

A Research Paper
in
The Department
of
Creative Arts Therapies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

August 2013

© Kate McGuire, 2013

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the research paper prepared

By: Kate McGuire

Entitled: A Box Story: How the Functional Becomes Symbolic

and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Creative Arts Therapies; Art Therapy Option)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Research Advisor :

Janis Timm-Bottos, PhD, PT, ATR-BC

Approved by:

Stephen Snow, Associate Professor, PhD, RDT-BCT

_____ 2013

Abstract

A Box Story: How the Functional Becomes Symbolic:

Kate McGuire

This qualitative study is a preliminary inquiry into the ubiquitous box object, particularly its transitional nature from the functional to the symbolic. Drawing from traditional and contemporary art therapy, art history, and cultural literature, this inquiry considers boxes as containers, protectors, preservers and concealers of emotional content. Approached from a phenomenological-hermeneutical methodology, this study examines the subjective experiences of six community art makers who engaged in an arts based workshop combining creative engagement, reflective writing and group dialogue. A select number of post-workshop interviews were also conducted and contributed to the research findings. The emerging themes of *instilled value*, *inside/outside*, *revealing/concealing*, and *being boxed in* are discussed as extensions of the *embodiment of self*, the final culminating theme to emanate from the findings. Additionally, this study draws parallels between the tangible box object and its relation to the metaphorical notions of the therapeutic framework and the therapist as container.

Acknowledgments

My sincerest thanks and deepest gratitude to the six art makers who participated in this study; who through their openness to self-exploration and willingness to share their personal narratives became invaluable co-researchers.

An enormous thank you to my research advisor, Janis Timm-Bottos, whose guidance, wisdom, and motivating words helped to unravel the complexities of conducting research and allowed me to embrace the journey of discovery and meaning making.

My eternal gratitude to my four loving and supportive parents, particularly my mother, whose generosity, nurturance and unwavering belief in my dreams persisted all through my studies and throughout every single circumstance that has led me to this point.

And finally, to the other three entities that comprise the core four- I would not have made it through this transformational journey without your undying support, honesty, and laughter. I am truly grateful to have you beautiful, strong and inspiring women as my friends and colleagues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
A PERSONAL AFFINITY FOR BOXES	1
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	3
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	3
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	4
BOXES IN HISTORY & CULTURE	4
BOXES IN ART HISTORY: CORNELL, NEVELSON & DUCHAMP	7
BOXES IN ART THERAPY	12
CHAPTER 3: FRAMEWORK OF THE WORKSHOP	17
PARTICIPANTS	17
METHODOLOGY	18
APPLICATION OF METHODOLOGY TO THE WORKSHOP DESIGN	20
DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS	21
REFLEXIVITY & ASSUMPTIONS	23
LIMITATIONS	24
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	24
OVERVIEW	24
EMERGENT THEMES	25
INSTILLED VALUE	25

INSIDE/OUTSIDE	27
REVEALING/CONCEALING	28
BEING BOXED IN	29
EMBODIMENT OF SELF	30
 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	 32
HOW THE FUNCTIONAL BECOMES SYMBOLIC	32
THE BOX AS A THERAPEUTIC METAPHOR	37
THERAPEUTIC FRAMEWORK	37
THERAPIST AS CONTAINER	39
CONCLUSION	40
 REFERENCES	 43
 APPENDICES	 46
APPENDIX A: FIGURES	46
APPENDIX B: WORKSHOP FLYER ENGLISH	56
APPENDIX C: WORKSHOP FLYER FRENCH	57
APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM	58
APPENDIX E: INTENTION/WITNESS WRITING FORMAT	61
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	62

TABLE OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. <i>Marcel's Box</i>	43
Figure 2. <i>Hannah's Box</i> (interior)	44
Figure 3. <i>Rebecca's Box</i> (interior)	45
Figure 4. <i>Rebecca's Box</i> (exterior)	46
Figure 5. <i>Eva's Boxes</i> (aligned)	47
Figure 6. <i>Eva's Boxes</i> (nesting)	47
Figure 7. <i>Hannah's Box</i> (side 1)	48
Figure 8. <i>Hannah's Box</i> (side 2)	48
Figure 9. <i>Hannah's Box</i> (side 3)	49
Figure 10. <i>Hannah's Box</i> (side 4)	49
Figure 11. <i>Sarah's Box</i>	50
Figure 12. <i>Louise's Box</i>	51
Figure 13. <i>Hannah's Box</i> (lid)	52

Chapter 1: Introduction

A Personal Affinity for Boxes

Each box has a story to tell: where it came from, where it is going, who it is for and what is inside. It is this inherent intrigue, mystery, and elementary form of discovery that has lured me to develop a true affection, perhaps just short of an obsession, for the functionally simplistic yet richly symbolic box form. As I reminisce, however, this predilection for boxes is not entirely a novel interest; precise moments from my childhood and less distant past readily come to mind accompanied by a flood of nostalgia when I contemplate both the corporeal and emotional space boxes have held within my life. Perhaps this conscious acknowledgement of my fondness toward the three dimensional, self-contained form is equally influenced by my current immersion in the therapeutic realm and my subjective experiencing and objective witnessing of the box as a powerfully symbolic vessel capable of framing, containing and preserving affective content.

Boxes permeate our everyday lives in our habitual routines of consumption and elimination, relocation and offerings to others. They are crammed, jammed and loaded, often cradled in protective layers and sealed along their damaged edges; shipped, moved, opened and then shut again. After their initial purpose has been fulfilled, boxes are often considered dispensable and useless, relegated to the basement or curbside. In this emptied state, however, boxes become the fabric of endless possibilities and it is frequently the instinctive endeavor of the imaginative child to recover these enclosures and imbue them with renewed value. Indeed, the limitless supply of cardboard plumbing supply boxes stacked along the walls of my father's garage were forsaken objects magically transformed into the primitive material from which the shelters, structures and secret hiding places of my childhood were

cleverly architected. Years later, I noted this same intuitive, resourceful and visionary behavior in clinical practice as countless children naturally engage with boxes.

A sentimental anecdote about my parents' marriage engagement reveals itself as yet another significant link to my personal box narrative. Hidden within a series of boxes progressively diminishing in size, reminiscent of Russian nesting dolls, my father stowed a ring within the quintessential velvet case, convincing my mother to continue the puzzling search for her treasure. This notion of layering, one object within another within another, is replete with metaphorical connotations specific to the multiplicity of self, interpersonal relatedness and the therapeutic holding environment, contributing to my conceptualization of the box as an effective therapeutic tool. Present too, are my associations with boxes as the transitional element between a giver and receiver, encasing the intangible elements of surprise, generosity and wonder.

Designed, constructed, and refined at the hands of my grandfather, one box form in particular has become a permanent and invaluable fixture in my life. My cedar hope chest collects, protects and preserves the fragments of my past while beckoning its maker's memory each time the fragrant interior is uncovered. In this instance, both the contents and container itself evoke an intimate and irreplaceable nostalgia ingrained in each damaged edge, faded photograph, and tattered cloth. The almost indiscernible ledge used to open the chest, however, serves to conceal the personal world within from its exterior environment, delineating the polarities of private and public space (Farrell-Kirk, 2001). Pondering my present cross-border move, the act of relocating from one place to another seems to extend this interior-exterior dialogue as I begin to neatly pack the contents of my life into cardboard boxes identified only by the label of the corresponding room from which they came. Though

boxes serve a practical purpose, I always remark how incredible and sometimes sad it is to witness your belongings minimized and compartmentalized in such a way when the contents were once a cohesive whole. Marked fragile, delicate or handle with care, these containers become a protective liminal space; transporting contents from one life to another; symbolically bridging past and future.

Drawing from art history, art education, and art therapy literature, the following inquiry will consider boxes beyond their functional capacity as metaphorical containers, protectors, preservers and concealers. Their symbolic attributes will be further examined through the subjective experiences and art productions of six community art makers who voluntarily participated in an arts-based research workshop and subsequent interview that served to reveal idiosyncratic interpretations. Boxes, as self-contained objects, are examined within the context of therapeutic practice while additionally seeking to draw parallels between the tangible box object and its relation to the traditional metaphoric notions of the therapeutic framework and the therapist as container.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question:

1. What are participants' subjective experiences of making artwork with boxes?

Subsidiary Research Question:

2. Are there symbolic and subsequently therapeutic qualities inherent in making artwork with boxes?

Operational Definitions

Box. In its most colloquial form, a *box* usually refers to “a rigid, typically rectangular container” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, 2013) demarcated by four sides and both a

top and bottom surface. In the context of this paper, however, the term box will be expanded to denote any vessel, container, or enclosure regardless of size or shape and unrestricted to the composite presence of a base, walls and lid. Subsequently, box will be used interchangeably with the aforementioned terms throughout this paper.

Chapter2: Review of the Literature

Boxes in History & Culture

Functionality, commodiousness, and simplicity both define the physicality of boxes and make comprehensible their enduring historical and cultural presence ranging from the utilitarian, to the decorative, to the artistically symbolic. From an epistemological perspective, the term box originated prior to the 12th century (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, 2013), although the fabrication and usage of boxes likely far exceeds this point of reference if we include, as Mogelon and Laliberté (1974) do, the ornately engraved caskets of the ancient Egyptians, the delicately adorned cabinets of the venerable churches, and the sacred reliquaries of the primitive temples. While these antiquated vessels were used primarily for carrying and storage (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974), the contents immortalized within held tremendous value, thus imbuing the boxes themselves with extraordinary significance as preservers of worshipped remnants and protectors of eternal life. These primordial enclosures became cherished ritualistic objects that defined the religious, spiritual, and mystical practices of early societies, evidencing the symbolic legacy inherent in the history of box structures and further supporting the view "...that boxes and people have always been inseparable" (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 16).

This seeming historical inseparability between humans and boxes appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon as well, evidenced by the geographical expansiveness of box production and their customary applications in both Eastern and Western traditions throughout history (Chilton, 1991; Finch, 1994; Sheeks, 1996; Stoodley, 2008). Collectively, these boxes signify “humble objects that combine simple utility with rare beauty” (Finch, 1994, p. 142) and offer a glimpse into the paralleled yet distinctly different artistic approaches to structural craftsmanship and symbolic narratives. Functioning as virtual “time capsules”, boxes “...reveal the fashions, cultural influences and economies of their time” (Papp as cited in Kagan, 2005, p. 42).

The exquisite design of the *tsampa* boxes of ancient Tibet and Mongolia are one such example of a culture that privileged the integration of high art with the fabrication of utilitarian wares (Sheeks, 1996). Intended as practical lidded containers to hold a principle nutriment of the Himalayan diet, a parched barley grain flour mixture known as *tsampa*, these beautifully carved and adorned household vessels were integral to the habitual culinary practices of Tibetan and Mongolian people. Despite their limited amount of material possessions, these early nomadic societies produced extraordinary containers which are now regarded as prized artifacts and are ardently sought after by ethnic art collectors (Sheeks, 1996). While representing different ends of a consumer spectrum, both accounts speak to the remarkable importance these boxes symbolize in past and present contexts.

Craftsmen in eighteenth-century China and Japan shared a similar commitment to interweaving highly decorative elements with simplistic functionality. In fact, the majority of their boxes were designed so delicately with such fine a attention to detail that it is unclear whether they were actually used to contain the valuable belongings for which they were

originally intended or if the boxes themselves were displayed as the cherished objects (Stoodley, 2008). Fabricated in the prestigious Imperial workshops of China and marketed to Asian aristocracy, red-lacquered boxes were “...as precious as the coveted stone sculptures” and as expensive as jade (Stoodley, 2008, p. 72). In the Western world, a similar trend emerged at approximately the same point in history where a modest square container had the power to articulate influential information regarding a gentleman or woman’s social standing (Chilton, 1991). In the age of elegance, the elaborate and vastly manufactured porcelain boxes of eighteenth-century Europe were tangible representations of sophisticated taste, power, and prestige. Made of precious metals and enamels and often embellished with expensive jewels, these delicate boxes became “...indispensable fashionable accessories...” (Chilton, 1991, p. 765) and experienced commercial success as luxury items marketed to the elite. Chilton (1991) discussed that due to their multiplicity of uses, it is difficult to determine the original intent of these porcelain boxes, however, refined consumers primarily enlisted them as containers for snuff, bonbons and toiletries. Small boxes were also commonly given as gifts in the eighteenth century, a practice initiated by Louis XIV and likely the proceeding gesture to our modern gift boxing traditions. Gifted porcelain boxes were not only tangible tokens of favor and esteem, in eighteenth-century Europe, they also symbolized “...the prosperity of Saxony, its political alliance with Poland, the exquisite taste of the donor, and the great artistic and industrial achievements of the first nation in Europe to discover the formula for hard-paste porcelain “ (Chilton, 1991, p. 771). The exquisite external physicality of boxes both in Asian and European cultures appears to have virtually transcended their utilitarian purpose, elevating them to the status of artistic masterpieces and foreshadowing, perhaps, the popularity of art boxes in contemporary aesthetic practices.

Conversely, early American boxes were characterized by their pragmatic value, modesty and “...functional simplicity” (Finch, 1994, p. 144). Unlike the exclusive nature of Chinese, Japanese and European boxes, the wood, stone and metal boxes of the colonial era were vital and ubiquitous in American households until relatively modern times. Housing a variety of domestic goods from food to linens and tools, the most notorious form was the Bible box whose sole purpose was in fact to enclose and protect the family bible within its wooden frame (Finch, 1994). Decidedly, this rustically modest box became instilled with an invaluable significance, much like the ancient caskets and reliquaries, by way of the precious contents it held within and the role it played in the religious rituals of quotidian American life. By virtue of their structural and material dullness, the surfaces of these boxes became adorned with abstract patterns and quaint landscapes reminiscent of the naïve or folk art painting movements of art history. Noting a lack of physical appeal, it appears that people instinctively engaged in creatively transforming these box forms in an attempt to unite their functional and symbolic qualities.

Boxes in Art History: Cornell, Nevelson & Duchamp

True to this American sentimentality, renowned bricoleur and assemblage artist Joseph Cornell constructed provocative and ethereal box assemblages from rudimentary containers, dime shop treasures, and eclectic found objects; simultaneously conveying “...a spirit of naivete and sophistication” (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 77). Now notorious for his “picture boxes” (Mair, 2007, p. 707), Cornell was essentially a self-taught artist (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974), intuitively architecting allegorical and self-contained environments, that seemed to suspend both time and space in the isolated workshop of his family home (Solomon, 1997; Waldman, 2002). Akin to an alchemical process (Simic, 1992) Cornell

conjured magic from the mundane creating “...poetic and often cryptic compositions” (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 77) through a surreal juxtaposition of maps, music scores, photographs, and curious bric-a-brac (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974; Waldman, 2002). Perpetually encased within cabinets, containers and chests and occasionally preserved behind glass barriers, Cornell’s art boxes visually articulate an undeniable dichotomy between a mysterious past and an undiscovered future (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974), between truth and illusion, “...inviting each spectator both to reminisce and to imagine anew” (Mair, 2007, p. 711).

Richly complex in their symbolic representations, several literary works (Solomon, 1997; Waldman, 2002) have emerged endeavoring to deconstruct and decode the metaphorical significance of Cornell’s boxes and assign a finite translation to his subjective nuances. As Mair (2007) explains, Cornell’s works have largely been interpreted within the context of his reclusive lifestyle and frequently emphasize “...the sense of a threshold between public and private spaces” (p. 707), perhaps obscuring their true symbolic nature and marginalizing their creator. Many critics, therefore, view his assemblages as substitutes for the experiences Cornell never lived (Mair, 2007), vicariously expressing his deepest fantasies, dreams, and desires through his meticulous arrangement of appropriated elements. For example, Waldman (2002) interprets the artist’s shadow boxes as theatrical settings conveying the fanciful preoccupations of childhood, personified through Cornell’s aviary habitats, illustrated insects, castles and dolls. The theme of loss, both of freedom and innocence, has also been attached to Cornell’s boxes, specifically in his symbolic use of the birdcage (Waldman, 2002). Waldman (2002) further observes a notable emptiness present in many of Cornell’s work as if there is a “...vacuum of an action that has occurred, of birds that

have flown from the cage” (p. 90) and subsequently the safe confines of the box. Similarly, Mogelon and Laliberté (1974) equate the stark empty areas in Cornell’s boxes with his “emotional isolation” (p. 77). Revealed in Cornell’s vast volumes of journal entries, however, is perhaps a fundamental clue in deciphering his symbolic attraction to boxes: a compelling urge to seize, convert and then contain the impalpable and sometimes random occurrences that surrounded him (Waldman, 2002). This consuming desire has subsequently been linked to the artist’s refusal to accept closure, loss, and the cessation of life (Waldman, 2002), as if the suspension and framing of objects within a box could defy the corrosion of his memory.

“Rather than the traces of a human subject unable to act...” Mair (2007) contradicts, “...Cornell’s collages, assemblages and practices of collection express a theoretically rich phenomenology of everyday life that emphasizes a corporeal consciousness” (p. 707). At once familiar and bizarre, Mair (2007) believes that the objects immortalized within Cornell’s collages are truly visual offerings “...of self to others” providing a participatory interaction with the world (p. 710). The intimacy inherent in Cornell’s boxes, Mair (2007) posits, is undeniably rooted in the experience of making them, which in turn is a reiterative discovery of self and an invitation for the spectator to enter the frame as opposed to passively viewing a sequestered world. Herein lies a prominent structural and symbolic paradox: the box as a catalyst for both engagement and retreat from its viewer, a theme seemingly present in Cornell’s constructed universes and decidedly applicable to the therapeutic realm.

Perhaps less readily synonymous with art boxes than Cornell, Louise Nevelson’s monumental wood installations articulated a psychological closeness and self-containment in the early 1950’s when she began to incorporate reliefs and boxes into her structural repertoire (Friedman, 1973). Like Cornell, Nevelson worked in the tradition of assemblage but

abstracted the “relics of daily existence” (Friedman, 1973, p. 7) such as coat hangers, chair backs, architectural moldings and wood scraps, in such a way that they became reduced to their elementary form and absorbed within the textural plane. In contrast to Cornell’s intimate arrangements, Nevelson oscillated between entire large-scale environments and miniature sculptural vessels that equally played with shadow, shape, and seductive contours. Friedman (1973) makes a distinction between Nevelson’s use of boxes and reliefs.

The “box”, reflecting its crate origins, holds groups of salvaged and processed objects. Sometimes it is hinged to open at the top or front, or is perforated at the sides. By contrast, the “relief” is a deepened picture surface, intended to be seen frontally against a wall. However, as it gains depth, the “relief” approaches the “box” and fine distinctions between the categories are impossible to make (p. 15).

In this passage, we are met with yet another quandary, the seemingly inconceivable task of defining the parameters of a box. Is the box form a rigid finite structure delineated by physical predetermined properties alone or can one view the box as a fluid concept capable of encompassing all structures that frame, contain, and enclose three dimensional space? The orientation of this research paper supposes the latter.

Nevelson’s *Cryptics* series (1959) featuring relatively small, lidded boxes reminiscent of long forgotten treasure chests undoubtedly fell into Friedman’s (1972) characterization as he referred to them as “wonder boxes” (p. 15), emphasizing the natural curiosity that a hinged lid evokes. Nevelson’s proceeding *Dream Houses* (1972) reconceptualized the box form from its more obvious association to an abstract representation of inhabitable space and domestic desires. The blackened geometric structures that comprise *Dream Houses* are

densely compact and rather ominous freestanding buildings, penetrable only by subtle panels jigsawed into their surfaces. Suggesting doors and windows, these openings permit stolen glimpses into the interior space (Friedman, 1973). The voyeuristic quality incited by the design reiterates the box's propensity for the construction of an internal versus external dialectic, often symbolizing the distinction between private and public selves. (Chu, 2010; Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Pifalo, 2002). For Nevelson, these boxes seemed to further channel the magical potential and creative resourcefulness in childhood, capable of embodying an idealistic structural vision. Discussing this series, Nevelson stated, "I've never lived in a place that I've really wanted to live in... So this is what I can do. I feel that we always make do under any circumstances. So I suppose I was searching for the house that I never had" (as cited in Friedman, 1973, p. 15).

Though framed, compartmentalized, and gridded Nevelson's expansive body of art boxes do not appear limited by the geometric shape and instead stretch beyond the boundaries to evocatively engulf the viewer in their enigmatic mysticism and intrigue (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974). Through a repetitive process of stacking, mounting and layering cubed forms, Nevelson seemed to investigate both the traditional functions and metaphorical connotations of the box, constructing paradoxical environments that simultaneously exposed and concealed their identities from the viewer.

The ingenuity and pioneering box approaches of both Cornell and Nevelson are indisputable within the context of art history, though many influential artists such as Picasso and Schwitters came before and others including Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg and Morris followed after (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974). In an attempt to classify art in boxes as an artistic genre, Mogelon and Laliberté (1974) concluded that it is in fact an "indiscernible"

and “indescribable” phenomenon. The box assumes a primitive existence without a precise point of origin. Its material presence seems to endure the flux of artistic styles, trends and movements and is consistently reinvented at the hands of its creator. The authors relent, however, and argue that if “...one artist must be isolated as the embryo of *Art in Boxes*, it is perhaps that of Marcel Duchamp...” (p. 17), the avant-garde visionary who first isolated, preserved, and encased objects in his *Boite-en-valise* (1936-1941). Intended as a portable museum to showcase miniature reproductions of his life’s work, Duchamp fashioned an intricate travelling box that challenged the traditional conceptions of art and experimented with the blurring of rational function and irrational symbolism, that came to characterize his infamous ready-mades (Waldman, 2002). Were it not for the limiting, transportable nature provided by the boxed suitcase, Duchamp likely could not have visually articulated his subversive metaphor about the authenticity of artwork in such an accessible manner nor stimulated countless others to explore the limitless symbolic qualities of this utilitarian form.

Boxes in Art Therapy

In his eloquent literary work *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard (1994) applies the method of phenomenological inquiry to the examination of architecture in order to analyze how individuals experience intimate spaces. In his perspective, boxes cannot be left out of this equation nor omitted from the study of the human mind.

An anthology devoted to small boxes, such as chests and caskets, would constitute an important chapter in psychology. These complex pieces that a craftsman creates are very evident witnesses of the *need for secrecy*, of an intuitive sense of hiding places. It is not merely a matter of keeping a possession well guarded (p. 81).

The field of art therapy is uniquely cognizant of the tremendous symbolic potential of the box beyond its functional characteristics, recognizing its capacity to preserve, contain, and enclose as equal constituents to the element of concealment (Chu, 2010; Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Kaufman, 1996). Additionally, the box's three dimensional design contributes to the metaphorical exploration of intimate space, the multiplicity of self and the unification of opposites (Chu, 2010; Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Kaufman, 1996; Pifalo, 2002). For these reasons boxes, in their infinite shapes and sizes, have been consistently included as a fundamental material in the therapy room.

As self-contained objects, boxes inherently act as frames that define both interior and exterior space. The simultaneous interplay between these polarities has traditionally been a primary symbolic focus in art therapy interventions in the form of *self-boxes*. In this directive approach, the box is presented as a representation of an individual's personality and clients are commonly asked to differentiate between the public and private aspects of self (Farrell-Kirk, 2001). The metaphorical attribute of inside versus outside appears to transcend even language and culture as seen in Chu's (2010) work Rwandan genocide survivors. A ubiquitous object, the box resonated as a symbolic container for these individuals, one that connected to their cultural rituals, and "functioned as a catalyst for expression, healing and reconnection with the self" (Chu, 2010, p. 4). Presented in a more comprehensible manner through a discussion about the types of emotions or thoughts we show to others and those we keep for ourselves, the self-box can be an equally powerful therapeutic tool for working with younger populations. Pifalo (2002), in her work children and adolescents who had been sexually abused, described how the creation of a "concrete holding environment" (p. 17) allowed for the identification and separation of complex internal and external feelings

resulting from having been abused. The clear boundaries between the inside and outside of the box assisted in delineating between public and private emotions (Pifalo, 2002).

Similarly, the house can serve as box; a self-contained and concealing structure that keeps sexual abuse acts private and hidden from view. In this context, the box may become the site for restructuring and working through the past and the discordant emotions that result.

Despite their often conflicted and ambivalent nature, these feelings can find a model for integration and unification by way of the cohesive three-dimensional form (Farrell-Kirk, 2001).

A box's functional capacity to enclose and preserve is another meaningful metaphor in the context of art therapy. As Kaufman (1996) describes, "the very fact of being boxed shows us that the contents are important to someone in some way; whatever is inside is being protected, collected, saved" (p. 244). Within the therapeutic framework, the process of selecting specific items to be placed within the box can be a transformative experience, suddenly imparting a special significance on a previously mundane object (Farrell-Kirk, 2001). For an individual who has recently experienced the death of a loved one, a *memory box* may be suggested as a way to work through the loss and memorialize the life of the deceased. Following the death of her son, Kaufman (1996) described her creative work with boxes as assisting not only in the grief process but serving as tangible markers for the passage of time, commemorative containers in which her pain could be placed. Similarly, Morgan (2004) designed the *Memory Box Project* initiated with a group of mothers diagnosed with HIV in Uganda to provide them a palpable and solid structure on which to relay their personal narratives, a "...deliberate setting up of a safe space in which to contain the telling of a story about life" (Morgan, 2004). Used to disclose their status as well as for

successive planning with their children, the memory boxes organically evolved from themes of death and despair to objects that embodied hope, tenacity and lasting legacies. Both Kaufman and Morgan's work seem to emphasize the box as a transitional object, bridging the here and not here.

The notion of concealment, alluded to by Bachelard (1994), is yet another important symbolic attribute inherent to boxes. The possibility of closing, locking or covering the box with a lid implies an element of safety and secrecy that may be necessary for some individuals in therapy. The box may serve to either guard the contents from the viewer or protect the viewer from the threatening matter inside (Farrell-Kirk, 2001). Verbally exposing overwhelming fears may not be sufficiently therapeutic while placing tangible objects and images representative of the distressing issue in a closed box may facilitate anxiety reduction and emotional reparation. The individual is then in control of the physical contents, deciding when and if they wish to uncover them. Both Kaufman (1996) and Farrell-Kirk (2001) believe that in art therapy, the "limiting context" created by boxes assists in restricting an issue "to the space within the box, thereby providing distance for the client, and making the problem more manageable" (Farrell-Kirk, 2001, p. 89). Likewise, this notion of confinement relates to the traditional psychotherapeutic construct of boundaries and the therapeutic frame (Kaufman, 1996).

Kaufman (1996) described how boxes provide both a physical and metaphorical holding environment conducive to Winnicott's ideas of "transitional or potential space between mother and child, and later, between therapist and patient" (p. 237). The holding provided by the box within the contained framework of the therapy session may be especially effective for children or adults presenting with problems surrounding separation or disturbed

attachment patterns. Comparatively, Dodge (2010) contends that boxes can serve to restructure internal working models in traumatized and attachment disordered children by instilling them with the same value as a transitional object. *Holding You In My Mind*, a specialized technique developed by Dodge (2010), is based on a reciprocal interaction whereby both the therapist and child create a personalized container, often a box, to hold all of the meaningful verbal exchanges that transpire during treatment. The box is repeatedly transported between the therapeutic and domestic setting, allowing the child to capture and retain the therapist's presence and begin to develop an internalized object (Dodge, 2010). The characteristic portability and containing quality of boxes make this an effective therapeutic intervention, conceptually adaptable for working with adult populations as well.

As the cultural, historical and therapeutic literature suggests, boxes maintain a ubiquitous role as universal objects that seem to naturally interface the often differentiated domains of functionality and symbolism. "The box is part of our everyday language and thinking" (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 7), permeating our lives from the cribs of our infancy to the caskets of our passing (Kaufman, 1996; Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974). It is within this rudimentary design that infinite space is created capable of preserving, containing, enclosing and concealing both the materialistic and intangible contents of our lives. The box, as a self-contained environment, becomes "...the conveyor of our needs, our triumphs, our creativity, our ability to produce, our follies, our hang-ups, our memorabilia and finally that which we have reduced to refuse" (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 7). Despite their pervasively embedded presence, however, a limited amount of literature exists investigating the metaphorical qualities and subsequent psychological applications of the box in therapy beyond the conventional self-box technique (Farrell-Kirk, 1996). Subjective meanings and

associations, furthermore, appear relatively obsolete within the discourse and frequently focus on the objective interpretations of a witnessing other. Influenced by their habitual inclusion yet seemingly underdeveloped metaphorical exploration in art therapy literature, the following research paper investigates the idiosyncratic experience of creatively engaging with a box, unrestrained by the guidelines of a conventional directive. Commencing only with a raw, self-chosen three-dimensional form, this inquiry intends to disseminate the powerful personal narratives that emerged from six community art makers while contributing to the sparse evidence-based research on the box's symbolic efficacy in art therapy.

Chapter3: Framework of the Workshop

Participants

Participation for this workshop was solicited through a recruitment flyer (see Appendix B and C), in both official languages, posted at the community setting in which the research took place as well as through a social media event advertised online. Due to the inclusion of human participants, a Summary Protocol Form was submitted detailing the exact nature of the study and approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing research. Inclusionary criteria for the study was simple, seeking approximately six to ten members from the community (18+) to engage in a free workshop focused on the personal exploration of art making with boxes. Exclusionary criteria stated that no individual under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the workshop would be permitted to participate, in adherence with the standard principles of the community setting.

The six individuals who voluntarily participated were representative of a diverse age group, ranging from approximately 25 to 55 years of age, though personally identifying factors such as age, cultural background, economic, professional or educational history were not relevant to this study. In terms of gender, one male and five females participated, once again a relatively insignificant variable within the context of the research design. For two of the six participants, this workshop was their first introduction to the community art studio, while the remaining participants were familiar with the environment.

Written informed consent (see Appendix D) was obtained at the beginning of the workshop after the details of the research study had been verbally articulated to the group. In order to respect the confidentiality of each participant, pseudonyms have been assigned, as stipulated in the consent form.

Methodology

The primary focus of this qualitative research study was to explore participants' subjective experiences of making artwork with boxes and therefore adopted a phenomenological approach of inquiry that "...involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Phenomenological theory departs from the traditional application of preconceived or inferred notions about a situation, and attempts instead to elucidate the richness of subjective experiencing (Betensky, 1995). In the context of art therapy, phenomenology truly centralizes the artmaker and their first-hand experience as essential factors to the method; they "are the chief beholders of their own art expressions" (Betensky, 1995, p. 21). This perspective, I believe, is fundamental to both the practice and research of art therapy.

The subsidiary research question of this study, which strove to determine whether there are symbolic and subsequently therapeutic qualities inherent in making artwork with boxes, demanded a more interpretive methodological framework. Fittingly, phenomenological-hermeneutical investigation, a sub-category of the former, explores “...symbols themselves as the phenomena of human expressivity...” (von Eckartsberg, 1989, p. 150) and “...brings with it an emphasis on historical contexts, on cultural traditions generally and especially on the various genres of art and literature which play into the constitution of meaning” (von Eckartsberg, 1989, p. 150). Historically, hermeneutics emerged as a theory committed to understanding and interpretation (Linesch, 1994) and traditionally looked at written texts as the object of investigation. The contemporary revival of this method, however, when applied to art therapy, positions the creation of art including the thoughts, emotions, physical state, and sensory experience as the “text” to be explored (Betensky, 1995; Carpendale, 2008). In this context, the interpretation of the phenomena under investigation becomes an inter-subjective construction between the researcher and those being researched (Linesch, 1994).

Linesch (1994) adapted the conventional hermeneutic spiral in an attempt to illustrate its functioning in arts based research. The author’s modified circular framework “... reflects the unending dialectical reverberations of the process of understanding...” (p. 189) and illustrates a continual synergistic interaction between the researcher and the participant. Commencing with the establishment of a connection, which in this study was achieved through the safe framework provided by the workshop, the researcher then engages in an open-ended interview eliciting both visual and verbal responses from the participant. The researcher and participant’s internal reactions, organized through metaphor, play a vital role

in deepening the dialogue. This mutual interaction contributes to the joint interpretive constructions that are created, revealing the meanings that underlie the phenomena and contribute to the knowledge being sought (Linesch, 1994). In this instance, the art productions, the creative process, and the verbal and written dialogue become the data that elucidated the phenomena in question.

Application of Methodology to the Workshop Design

Applying the typical observational and interviewing techniques of phenomenological research methods (Moustakas, 1994), this workshop also included a reflective writing exercise to guide each participant's engagement while inciting discussion of both universal and individual themes that emerged from creating art work with boxes within a group environment. Using Allen's (2005) Intention/Witness Studio Process approach (see Appendix E), each participant was asked to begin with an intention, "...a statement of what you would like to receive from the Creative Source at this particular moment" (Allen, 2013, The Pardes Studio Process section, para. 4). The participants then set this written statement aside and were encouraged to select from a wide array of free materials, including a table displaying a vast collection of wooden and cardboard boxes in varying shapes and sizes, and commence their non-directed artistic exploration.

A flexible schedule had been established to provide structure and organization to the workshop process but was modified according to the participants needs. Initially, an hour and a half had been allotted for art making within the four-hour framework, but after notifying participants that the time had lapsed, a collective desire to continue working was expressed and an additional hour was allocated. Food and refreshments were provided while

participants engaged in art making to reiterate the principles of the community studio and establish a safe, comforting and welcoming space.

Once the art making was completed, participants were introduced to the second component of Allen's (2005) writing process by spending several solitary minutes witnessing their creations. The steps to this reflective process included sitting quietly and simply noticing what had been produced, describing in words the actual image that was created, recording thoughts or feelings that emerged in the present moment, and an optional dialoguing with the image. The participants were also asked to contemplate whether their original intention connected to the artistic process they had just engaged in. Entering into a "no comment zone" (Allen, 2013, The Pardes Studio Process section, para. 10), an inclusive, non-judgmental group space, the participants were then invited to share something from their writing if they wished to and to respectfully listen to what the others shared while refraining from commentary of their own or each other's written descriptions. An open group discussion followed in which participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection began with hand written field notes recorded during the workshop. Various observations and direct participant quotations were collected in a notebook. These recordings served as the basis for formulating open-ended discussion questions later presented to the group. All six participants engaged in the group discussion, which was audio recorded as a data gathering procedure. The group dialogue seemed to unfold organically and spontaneously as each participant shared their subjective experience about the process and collaborated on emerging group ideas. Though I was an active participant in this dialogue, I was consistently mindful to allow the participants to dictate the direction of conversation,

thus the group interview questions posed were open-ended and formulated from the group's observed creative process as well as the developing themes brought forward by the participant's throughout the discussion. The group dialogue lasted approximately 45 minutes in length.

Following the verbal interchange, participants were invited to leave their Intention/Witness writing with me as a contribution to the research project's data, although this was entirely voluntary and not required. Four of the six participants chose to do so. Photographs were then taken of each independent art box before the original object went home with its respective creator. Prior to leaving, the participants were asked to indicate whether they would volunteer for an individual post-workshop interview to last approximately one hour at a date and time convenient to them. Four participants agreed to this, however, geographical distance and illness prohibited scheduling resulting in one traditional audio-recorded open ended interview conducted at a participant's home, one cancellation, and two electronic adaptations. In the modified format, one participant filled out the interview questions (see Appendix F) and returned them via email while another provided me with an intimate written account of her process during the workshop including her proceeding reflections.

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis, the compiled research data underwent six phases of investigation. The first was familiarization with the data that included transcribing the group discussion and interviews, reading and re-reading the data and writing down initial ideas and concepts. The second phase focused on generating initial codes by identifying interesting features across the data set and collating each section to a relevant code. Next, the search for themes was undertaken by gathering all the data relevant

to potential themes. Subsequent revision of these themes was required to ensure that they were appropriate within the context of both the chosen extracts and the data set as a whole. Defining and naming themes required an ongoing analysis in order to refine the specifics of each theme while reflecting the overall story that was emerging from the analysis. Clarity and cohesion in description was essential in this phase. Finally, selection of the most compelling and pertinent excerpts relating to the research questions and literature was decided upon, leading to the production of a scholarly and relevant theoretical report.

Reflexivity and Assumptions

In conducting this research, it was vitally important that I maintain constant awareness of my own theoretical assumptions and artistic biases about potential outcomes. Cast in the tertiary role of qualitative researcher, workshop facilitator and interviewer, passive participation was not possible and thus demanded continual attention to my influential position. Throughout the workshop and dialogues, I maintained an open, non-judgmental and responsive position, allowing the participants to guide their own process.

Likewise, because I adopted a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach that centralized the subjective experiences of the art maker, I had to maintain rigorous reflexivity in the analytical process as well, in lieu of my previous immersion in the existing literature on the therapeutic application of boxes. I was cognizant of several themes that had been formerly identified on the inherent symbolism of boxes (Chu, 2010; Dodge, 2010; Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Kaufman, 1996; Morgan, n.d; Pifalo, 2002) and needed to bracket out these assumptions throughout the analytical process in order to fully engage with the immediate and unique content presented by each participant.

Limitations

This study was intended as a preliminary exploration of the subjective experiences of making artwork with boxes within a workshop context and the subsequent symbolic and therapeutic implications of this process for art therapists. The inclusion of only six participants is considered a small-scale investigation within qualitative research and therefore the results are limited in terms of validity and reliability. Furthermore, the sample size represented inhabitants of one particular geographical location and cannot be viewed as reflective of a larger social or cultural context. Additionally, due to the intimacy of the community from which this study recruited, several of the participants had prior affiliations with the researcher through academic or social domains.

Though generalizations to all populations may not be inferred from this study, the visual and anecdotal evidence presented herein holds substantial value as both descriptive and exploratory data illustrating constructed meanings. Collectively, the information presented within this study may hold potential to stimulate innovative inquiry and generate new theoretical understanding on the phenomena of this pervasively familiar yet understated material in art therapy.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

The following section seeks to synthesize and discuss the five dominant motifs that emerged from this study's heterogeneous data collection tools, combining and integrating the six participant's visual, verbal and written productions. Subdivided according to theme, the findings highlight the collective experiences of the art makers involved in the box workshop

while articulating the individualistic, and often interwoven, dimensions of their interpretation and personal resonance. The repetition and overlap in the thematic analysis indicated the strength of particular symbolic qualities while the unique subjectivity brought forward by each participant contributed to my understanding of the compelling idiosyncrasies inherent in the process of meaning making. All citations within quotations are the participants' own words and have been selected to exemplify the poignant nature of their narratives.

Emergent Themes

Instilled Value

Consistent with the existing literature on the symbolic properties of boxes (Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Kaufman, 1996) was the thematic emergence of instilled value, a fascinating and almost magical transformation that occurred in the assemblages of several participants. Their process of deliberately selecting, and occasionally being unconsciously drawn to specific found objects and arranging them within the frame of the box seemed to initiate a metamorphosis from the mundane to the meaningful. For several participants, simple reclaimed items were emblemized as valuable markers of memory, time, and transitioning; becoming sentimental symbols of their makers.

Choosing a 6 x 6 inch wooden frame, reminiscent of a shadow box, Marcel moved with clear and meticulous focus within the studio space briefly contemplating, rummaging, and collecting various mixed media objects to assemble his art box (see Figure 1). Referring to his piece as “une boîte a souvenirs”, Marcel explicitly connected his box with the notion of memory and made a meaningful ancestral association, “ the buttons, for me, are a synonym of the past, my grandmother...something old” (my translation from French, group discussion). Mounted by delicate picture nails on the lower periphery of the box, nostalgic

memory seemed to become permanently embodied and preserved in Marcel's carefully chosen collection of buttons. Similarly, Hannah's cardboard "cave of wonders" (intention/witness writing) showcased an intimate world of miscellaneous articles; a virtual bric-a-brac mosaic of beads, dried flowers, miniature light bulbs and fabric swatches (see Figure 2). Ascribing the words "precious" and "fragile" to the small articles inside her box, Hannah noted how "the lights take on new meaning in the context of my performance" (post-workshop writing) seeming to imbue previously mundane articles with personal significance. Further, her box appeared to later become a sacred place where already valuable objects could be stored. In her post-workshop writing she revealed, "I tucked some of the little flowers my father sent me for my performance", reiterating Marcel's classification of the box as a holder of memories.

Rebecca, who transformed a pre-fabricated jewelry box stated, "...inside will be my treasures because that represents something to me..." (group discussion), echoing the sentimentality that both Marcel and Hannah had attached to their found objects. Although her box remained almost empty of contents, Rebecca worked diligently to adorn the interior space in preparation for the cherished items that would eventually be housed within (see Figure 3). Selecting a thimble, a needle, and a spool of thread to be sheltered in the belly of her nesting boxes, Eva had no conscious associations with her chosen objects although she revealed that a narrative had developed as she worked in which she imagined shipping the three items to an unidentified seamstress. Though the three articles held seemingly little significance for the maker, Sarah made a symbolic connection to Eva's objects, "...you are very well protecting the needle and the thread which are used to fix things, protecting the fixer...the mender" (group discussion). Collectively, these innocuous items: buttons, light

bulbs, needle and thread, came to embody specific symbolic qualities for the participants, preserving memory, intention and the imagination.

Inside/Outside

The bilateral division of space created by the box resulted in the development of the first of several dichotomous themes. The structural design of Rebecca's box, in particular, provided a clear delineation between interior and exterior space, by way of its closing cover, that ultimately resulted in her contrasting treatment of the dual surfaces. Noting that she was instinctively drawn to bold colors for the interior, Rebecca believed the exterior was relatively conservative in comparison (see Figure 4). Similarly, Eva observed that her series of hand-made boxes were characterized by the use of contrasting materials that resulted in a paradoxical mergence of consistently protective "textural" interiors and distinctly "cold or distant" exteriors (group discussion). Both Rebecca and Eva described this delineation as an unconscious occurrence. Fully aware of her opposing treatment approach, Sarah further extended this internal versus external dialect by compellingly describing how she viewed the box as a metaphor for public and private selves, "I looked at it as I do myself, I'm currently looking at the inside...so the outside, it doesn't matter what people see there" (group discussion). Negotiating this divergence, Sarah arrived at the decision to leave the exterior of the box in its raw, untouched state, believing it was a secondary element to the content within "...it's a box, it's a carcass, a skin so you don't need to adorn skin" (group discussion). While the level of metaphorical interpretation was variable, the demarcation between inside and outside was clear for these three participant's as evidenced by their boxes' visually opposing physicality.

Revealing/Concealing

The inherent duality presented by the three-dimensional box form manifested in a second dichotomous theme, namely the notion of concealing and revealing; covering and discovering. With a clear intention in mind, Eva fabricated a series of progressively receding boxes (see Figure 5) that communicated “the idea of layers uncovering layers; something within something within something” (group discussion). Housed like nesting dolls (Figure 6), Louise remarked during the group dialogue that Eva’s boxes seemed to dissolve within each other while Eva believed her intentional layering elicited an exciting element of surprise, a participatory or interactive quality that was integral to her art box (interview). This interplay between selectively veiling and exposing elements also underpinned Hannah’s production as she created a box to represent the hiding place within herself (post-workshop writing). Resonating with Eva’s desire for wonderment, Hannah articulated a “...delight in the showing” (post-workshop writing).

Constructing a dynamically framed environment, the concept of a voyeuristic “looking in” became important for Hannah, as if the viewer were privy to some hidden secret. However, by designing the walls as she did, as “barred up”, “boarded up, with sticks jutting out...” (see Figures 7, 8, 9 & 10) Hannah acknowledged her ambivalence about letting others see in, asking, “Which people deserve to see inside? Which side do I want people to see through?” and finally “Why would I want to hide all the beauty?” (post-workshop writing).

Sarah, who observed the presence of shadows in her box, remarked how the darkness permitted only partial clarity and served to hide certain aspects from view. Here, she equated

concealment with protection and stated that emotions were hiding in the corners of each compartment.

Being Boxed In

The theme of being boxed in was a pervasive metaphor in almost all of the work, although it was interpreted by the participants in multiple ways, as a limiting construct to be challenged, a containing quality to be embraced or a simultaneous blending of the two.

Chosen specifically for its compartmentalization, Sarah revealed that the luring quality of this design was due to “the idea that everything is in its own box within the box” providing both “structure and purpose” (witness/intention writing). The organization presented by the six symmetrical compartments of Sarah’s box (see Figure 11) was “comforting” as if it established a guiding direction, “this gave the structure, gave the frame for what I needed to do on this day” (interview). Comparatively, Eva explained that by constructing her own series of nesting boxes she avoided feeling restricted by the form and could truly experience the pleasure of placing one box within the other, achieving the “compact nature”, “order”, and “containment” that she desired (group discussion). For both Sarah and Eva, the concept of being boxed in was positively associated with aspects of a containing and safeguarded environment.

Conversely, Louise wrote, “life is a theatre and does not need to be boxed in”, explaining to the group that she did not want to limit herself to the selection of a single box and instead chose many. The concept of movement was integral to Louise’s process, an element we do not typically associate with bound and confined spaces. Openness and fluidity was achieved however, through Louise’s conscious elimination of lids, arranging several uncovered boxes within a larger containing frame (see Figure 12). Although many of

Louise's found objects were enclosed within the boundaries of the box, several prominent elements breached the circumscribed perimeter and were mounted on the exterior walls, visually communicating Louise's intent, "I didn't want to be boxed in and I guess I expanded the walls...I didn't want to be closed in" (group discussion). Hannah challenged the notion of being boxed in with similar urgency stating that she chose her cardboard box specifically for its capacity to be destroyed, dismantled and deconstructed. Interestingly, Hannah's desire to break through the walls ultimately resulted in a slow refortification process using stitching, safety pins and glue. An escaping space was presented as an explosive hole in the lid of Hannah's box (see Figure 13) however, and made her question "do I need to have a lid to honor the fact that I'm bursting out of it?" (post-workshop writing).

The ambivalence expressed in Hannah's destruction and subsequent reconstruction experience was also reflected by Sarah who had initially found comfort in being boxed in but later discussed her conflicted feelings towards the compartmentalizing quality of her box and boxes in general. Sarah described her belief that through a process of organization and separation things essentially become "stuck" and limited to a particular space, feeling that she herself had been subjected to this metaphorical confinement on several occasions. Louise also resonated with this inherent liking and disliking of boxes and for this reason, it appeared, all three women subverted the restrictive frame by permitting breath, space and movement through open or semi-exposed covers.

Embodiment of Self

The box as a direct or implied representation of self was the most universal theme to emerge from the participant's experiences, suggesting the box's natural propensity as a tool for symbolic projection. The level of personal identification seemed to vary, with some

participants making explicit metaphorical connections and others only subtle nuances. The personal voice that often accompanied the participants' explanations of their box further evidenced the ease with which this inanimate structure could become an incarnated extension of self.

Linking his box to memories of his childhood, Marcel commented that perhaps like his exposed theatrical setting, he too was "...an open book...an open box" (group discussion). Eva, examining the box's function as a container explored the symbolism in relation to "self-awareness, well-being and the investigation of the self" (interview). Both Louise and Sarah reflected on the complex multiplicity of self through their compartmentalized works. By integrating multiple intimate spaces within a composite structure, Louise, in her "Theatre of Life, stated that she was able to travel between the open boxes viewing each as a symbolic holder for her acquired life roles. In a similar manner, Sarah linked the individually structured chambers of her box to her body, "to me it's the brain...the compartments of my brain". Asked to expand on this metaphor, Sarah deconstructed each of the chambers and the objects held within by identifying them as the various aspects of self, aggressor, mother, and creator. Hannah contemplated whether her box represented her current life or where she one day hoped to be and eventually took her art box to therapy and penned the following powerful passage:

My therapist understood immediately that it was about me and could see the connections I was making through the art. I spent those moments watching my therapist look at it, living in that intention, that gaze. I felt seen.

(post-workshop writing)

For many of the participants, and perhaps most notably Hannah, it appeared that their art box creation became a three-dimensional, self-contained portrait of their maker, providing a malleable framework tolerant of dichotomies, uncertainties, and the complexities of self.

Chapter 5: Discussion

How the Functional Becomes Symbolic

Returning to the roots of this investigation beckoned a reconsideration of what I had initially been seeking to explore, specifically to firstly understand my participants' subjective experiences of creating artwork with boxes and ultimately to discover whether symbolism was inherent in their narratives and could potentially have therapeutic applications.

Four of the five prevailing themes that emerged from the data; *instilled value*, *inside/outside*, *revealing/concealing*, and *being boxed in* seemed to collectively develop from the physical and functional qualities of the box form itself. As Farrell-Kirk (2001) contends, it is the box's utilitarian properties of enclosing contents, demarcating new space, and unifying opposite dimensions that truly underpin its symbolic effectiveness. In my opinion, it is how this symbolism is translated, understood and assimilated by the maker on a cognitive level that determines one aspect of its therapeutic potential. A secondary, and perhaps more internalized understanding occurs through a somatic, and aesthetically intuitive integration, materializing through the heart and the psychic process of creation. The participant's universal connection to the fifth theme, the *embodiment of self*, based solely on metaphorical connotations, appeared to highlight the box's transformative nature from the functional to the symbolic and suggest its presence as a powerful structure for self-exploration and psychological growth.

Diverging from the conventional and directive art therapy interventions in which the box is assigned a predetermined role as an object of self-representation (Chu, 2010; Pifalo, 2002), a container for immortalizing the deceased (Kaufman, 1996), or a vessel to preserve one's legacy (Morgan, 2004), it was my objective to remain indirect and provide only the raw structures to facilitate the unfolding of the participant's introspective exploration. As the findings illustrated, each art box was uniquely reflective of its creator and represented a variable spectrum of treatment approaches, structural considerations, and imagery. Unencumbered by a specified directive and encouraged to utilize any of the mixed-media materials that lined the walls of the studio space, it is noteworthy that these distinctly personal productions, nonetheless inextricably overlapped with one another in their symbolism and largely reflected the dominant themes identified in the existing body of literature.

The theme of instilled value that emerged from several participants' inclusion of found objects and their subsequent articulation of associated meanings echoed Farrell-Kirk's (2001) view that the placement of an item within a box conveys not only its inherent value but can also "...imbue a mundane object with newfound importance" (p. 89). Kaufman (1996) concurred by suggesting that setting specific objects apart from the surrounding space and within a box, signifies a meaningful and action oriented sequence of collection, protection, and preservation. For Marcel and Hannah, inanimate objects became ingrained with nostalgic memories. For Eva, a collection of miniature sewing accessories became the personified characters of an imaginative narrative while Rebecca designed a protective container to store all her future treasures. It is through this implicit value, Farrell-Kirk (2001) contends, that the box becomes an effective therapeutic tool, as "...it enables clients to

signify the importance of the symbols or items placed within it” (p. 89). The incredibly ceremonious act of hand selecting, collecting and placing objects within a box, may be precisely what the psyche needs in that moment, sustaining the passing pleasures of making. Additionally, I believe that by instinctively assembling even seemingly haphazard objects within a box, some clients may eventually contemplate their choices and begin to derive personal meaning from these articles, perhaps bringing into conscious awareness previously latent symbolism. The objects may transition from one meaning to another as they live within the box and in this context the container acts as a keepsake environment, a virtual three-dimensional collage, capable of being tucked away and continuously reflected upon, infinitely metamorphosing its symbolism.

The notion of inside/outside brought forth by the participants was equally consistent with the current literature and another element conducive to therapeutic exploration. Several authors discussed the box as a powerful instrument in the therapeutic process for its innate distinction between inside and outside making it an appropriate mechanism for exploring the coexistence of public persona and inner self (Chu, 2010; Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Pifalo 2002). While many of the participant’s in this study approached the interior and exterior of the box differently, it was Sarah specifically who paralleled the metaphor of the box’s inner and outer dichotomous states to her personal identity, noting that she needed to attend far more to the vulnerabilities within than the exposed shell without. Sarah’s account undeniably emphasized the accessibility of this symbolic construct as her connection to it was intuitive rather than directed.

Intricately woven within the paradoxical discussion of inside and outside, both in the literature and the participants’ dialogue, was the notion of concealing and revealing.

Emerging yet again from the multifaceted structure of the box, Eva and Hannah played with the intricate relationship between covering and discovering and both articulated a delight in the manipulation of this element. Hannah further exposed an important therapeutic application by acknowledging her ambivalence about fully revealing the interior contents to the viewer. The box's capacity to tolerate this ambivalence both physically and symbolically seems particularly pertinent to the ambiguities that are often presented in therapy. Given a box form to deconstruct, dismantle, reconfigure and reorganize, a client can become empowered, controlling the degree that contents are revealed and concealed. In this context, the box can guard the secretive contents from the viewer, protect the viewer from potentially threatening details or simultaneously perform both functions (Farrell-Kirk, 2001). Further, as Chu (2010) discussed, the box holds and regulates the contents within, literally accommodating the expression "putting a lid on it" (p. 6), as seen in Hannah's attempt to cover her explosive box.

The feelings of comfort and containment expressed by Sarah and Eva in regards to the theme of being boxed in reflected Chu's (2010) observation that "...the physical form of the box can offer a reassuring structure..." (p. 6). As Farrell-Kirk (2001) suggested, the safe space delineated by the boundaries of the box correlates with the therapeutic framework established in sand play therapy. The physical limitations provided by the box, like the sandtray, can be powerfully reparative as "...often it is only within this safe space that clients find the security and freedom to investigate and conquer their deepest fears in a symbolic manner" (Fryrear & Corbit, as cited in Farrell-Kirk, 2001, p. 89). The dissatisfaction discussed by Sarah and Louise about being boxed in further echoed the use of the box as a "limiting context" within therapeutic work (Farrell-Kirk, 2001; Kaufman, 1996). Although

both participants challenged what they perceived as a restrictive and constraining concept, the limitations provided by the demarcated boundaries can, conversely, be beneficial for some clients by restricting the space in which an issue can be explored, reducing it to a manageable area (Farrell-Kirk, 2001). As evidenced in the expanded walls of Hannah and Louise's pieces however, the box form can also be manipulated and enlarged beyond its pre-determined form should a client wish to symbolically reach beyond the established frame.

Definitively the most common, and arguably the most effective use of the box in therapy is as a tangible symbol for the self (Chu, 2010, Pifalo, 2002). The ubiquitous self-box is fundamentally derived from the internal versus external dichotomy presented by its inherently multifaceted form. The embodiment of self theme, reflected in the multifarious boxes of the workshop participants however, suggested another compelling phenomena. As previously discussed, five of the six participants directly communicated the personal relevance of their art box creation, viewing it as an incarnated extension of self. Though connection to the inner and outer dialogue was not universal in the findings, these participants nonetheless embraced one or several of the underpinning themes suggesting that instilled value, revealing and concealing and being boxed in are equal constituents in the narrative of self and can thus be considered significant factors in the therapeutic utility of boxes. It appeared that representation of self was an encompassing experience in which all the variable allegories, analogies and metaphors derived from the box were held.

Although the research design demanded a cohesive analysis and synthesis of the emerging themes, the subjectivity and idiosyncratic interpretations of the participants cannot be neglected from discussion, as they are of greatest value in understanding the phenomena in question. The vastness of what was explored, from past to future and all areas in between,

in conjunction with the individual accounts of personal meaning making emphasize the undeniably rich potential of the box as an accessible and engaging material for creative exploration. Furthermore, the unanimous demand for an additional hour and a half of art making time indicated the level of intimacy and interconnectedness that the box form elicits from its transformer. Each of the six participants in this study, without any external influence from the facilitator, essentially constructed their own individual version of a self-box, often interweaving and bridging several metaphors, in order to relay their uniquely personal narrative. Thus, it is my assumption that the offering of a box in art therapy need not be accompanied by a specific directive or objectively predetermined outcome as is the custom; the box need only be offered to a willing other for the functional qualities to become powerfully symbolic.

The Box as a Therapeutic Metaphor

Extending beyond the symbolic and therapeutic applications discussed above lies the box's metaphorical capacity to elucidate two paramount theoretical dimensions fundamental to art psychotherapy, specifically the notions of the *therapeutic framework* and *therapist as container*. Together, these symbolic constructs have underpinned my theoretical approach with clients and have become more deeply relevant throughout my investigation of the box. The following discussion will attempt to briefly illustrate my integration of these metaphorical ideas as extensions of the tangible box object.

Therapeutic Framework

Although a mainstay for attachment theory, and subsequently a pillar of psychodynamic theory, the therapeutic framework remains a lucid and almost indefinable concept, one that depends entirely on the client-therapist dynamic and is forever adapting to

reflect this transitional relationship. Due to its circumstantial nature, the notion of the therapeutic framework is a relative one, described in one sense as a practical and symbolic external structure “...with clear and safe boundaries” (Bass, 2007, p. 1) while in another, as a portable studio, “...an internal structure we carry with us as art therapists” (Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 1999, p.24). The presence of this metaphorical frame, though subjectively determined, is crucial and its role has become most clear for me by relating it to a secure and containing box.

Like the box, Siegelman (1990) maintained that “the frame is there to mark the entry to the symbolic...secure enough to hold symbolic activity but unobtrusive enough to allow space for the transitional properties of the therapeutic encounter to occur” (p. 184). Here, the author identifies the demarcation of boundaries, holding and movement as primary characteristics of the frame, qualities equally inherent in the box as revealed by the participants’ experiences. By comparing the therapeutic frame to that of a painting, Siegelman (1990) stated, “...one type of material cannot be used to frame every painting. Some look best in plexiglass, where the frame is virtually invisible; some require heavy gilded wood; others look best when contained and outlined in thin metal” (p.182). This analogy seems appropriate to the box as well which can be made of any material from the almost imperceptible to the rigid and structured.

Siegelman’s (1990) interpretation is based on Milner’s influential description of the therapeutic frame which she explained “...serves to indicate that what’s inside the frame has to be interpreted in a different way from what’s outside it...thus the frame marks off an area within which what is perceived has to be taken symbolically, while what is outside the frame is taken literally” (as cited in Siegelman, 1990, p. 182). Returning yet again to the internal

versus external dialect, it is my contention that a visualization of a box in which both therapist and client are positioned as objects within a "...protected and protecting space" existing betwixt and between, begins to elucidate the transformative potential of therapy. In this space "...a kind of benign illusion or 'as if' takes place..." where "...distinctions between me and not-me, real and not-real, here and not-here, now and not-now blur and shift...it is the area of imaginative play" (Siegelman, 1990, p. 187). Milner implies the creation of a potential or transitional space, within the frame, akin to Winnicott's archetypal theories where "...perhaps the most important events in a therapy occur at the interface of the real/not real..." (Siegelman, 1990, p. 185). It is in this context that I further understand the powerful and unique potential of the box in art therapy. Within the art therapy space the box becomes layered, much like Eva's nesting boxes, as a tangible box within a metaphorical box, and creates a unique environment where a triad of transitional spaces can emerge, one between client and therapist and the other between client and art box, and the final between the art box and the world.

Therapist as Container

Winnicott's discussion of potential space is interconnected with the idea of holding and correspondingly with "...the analyst as a containing presence" (as cited in Siegelman, 1990, p. 185). The holding a therapist extends to their client can best be compared to the intuitive and protective cradling a mother provides for her baby, contracting and retracting in response to his needs (Siegelman, 1990). In this instance, the therapist becomes a framing and containing object for the client, acting as a malleable yet securely assembled box.

In the container model, the therapist's function as a box is further extended by their designated role as a virtual repository for the client's overwhelming feelings (Delvey, 1985).

Acting as an emotional vessel, the therapist collects, preserves and contains the fragments of their client's experiences to later unpack and explore together. By their characteristic nature however, boxes, as infinite as they may be, inevitably become filled. Therapists therefore, must acknowledge when their internal storage capacity has been reached in order to be the most available and effective box for their clients. Ultimately, I believe, the therapeutic objective is to eventually instill an internal box within each of our clients so they may safely store and regulate their own emotional content. Using an external and palpable box form as a starting point in art therapy may allow this visceral integration to occur.

Conclusion

“A box is a box until it is opened; then it becomes what is inside of it” (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 48). This quote marked the commencement of my research study and its initial appeal, I believe, was what I naively assumed was a succinct and elementary statement, one that could be applied to the process of art therapy by way of filling the box with assembled objects and images reminiscent of those found in art history. As my investigation continued however, this finite view seemed entirely inaccurate, erroneous and narrow; historical investigations of both Eastern and Western cultures indicated a lavish history in which boxes were admired, cherished and guarded for their physicality alone. Engaging in a phenomenological inquiry with six inspiring art makers revealed further insubstantialities with the authors' earlier presumption; so many of the participants described the gravitational allure of the box's material form, from its beautiful geometry to its tolerance for destruction; being drawn to compartments, frames and lids. I began to question then whether the contents were of any importance at all or whether the surface of the box was where symbolism was truly engrained. I tucked the quote away as an irrelevant notion.

As phenomenological-hermeneutics emphasizes, one must engage in a continual and intersubjective spiral of inquiry to ensure that "...the understander and the understood co-create meanings" (Linesch, 1994, p. 189). As an art therapist, this implored me to repeatedly immerse myself with both the dialogue and the images my co-researchers created to eventually arrive at an authentic yet interpretive account of their experiences. Happening upon Mogelon and Laliberté's (1974) quote in concluding this research and believing it presented a synchronistic occurrence reflective of the cyclical research process I had been extensively engaged in, I approached it anew and from the methodological standpoint I had employed within the process of discovery. Reexamining it from a hermeneutical framework, I was guided by Linesch's (1994) recommendation, to look "...where the text points rather than to what lies behind the text..." (pp. 194-95).

"A box is a box until it is opened; then it becomes what is inside of it" (Mogelon & Laliberté, 1974, p. 48). This quotation no longer seemed determinate or restrictive within the context of what my findings presented. Derived primarily from the functional and sometimes superficial characteristics of the box, the themes of instilled value, inside and outside, revealing and concealing, and being boxed in, extended to a deeper identification with self as evidenced through the participants subjective interpretations of their experience. Therefore I reinterpreted the quote to be pointing in the direction that each of my participants had also guided me to: a box is indeed a box, symbolic in its own regard, until it is opened, at which point it takes on new meaning and life; the content becomes the box and the box in return becomes the content. The content, as the participants so profoundly elucidated is not necessarily a tangible or even observable object but can exist as an invisible inner material,

emotionally and symbolically laden. Within the box, one is able to project, protect, preserve and contain all that meets, and often does not meet, the eye.

In viewing the box as a metaphor for the therapeutic encounter, I further acknowledged its role as a permeating presence in the therapy room beyond the material object itself. Both the framework and therapist exist as powerful tools, like the box, but it is only when this space is opened to reveal the client that the truly symbolic interfacing occurs. The phenomenal story of the box thus exists as a complex and layered narrative; as a material for transformation on the therapy shelves, within the therapy room, within the therapist and most importantly, within each and every client.

References

- Allen, P. B. (2005). *Art is a spiritual path: Engaging the sacred through the practice of art and writing*. Boston, MA: Shambala Publications, Inc.
- Allen, P. B. (2013). *The parades studio process*. Retrieved from <http://www.patballen.com/pages/process.html>
- Bachelard, G. (1994). *The poetics of space: The classic look at how we experience intimate places*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Bass, A. (2007). When the frame doesn't fit the picture. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 17(1), 1-27. doi:10.1080/10481880701301022
- Betensky, M. (1995). *What do you see? Phenomenology of therapeutic art expression*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Box. (2013). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/box>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research In Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Carpendale, M. (2008). A hermeneutic phenomenological approach to art therapy. *Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal*, 21(1), 2-10.
- Chilton, M. (1991). Porcelain boxes: miniature masterpieces of the eighteenth century. *Magazine Antiques*, 1397, 64-773.
- Chu, V. (2010). Within the box: Cross-cultural art therapy with survivors of the Rwanda genocide. *Art Therapy*, 27(1), 4-10. doi:10.1080/07421656.2010.10129563
- Delvey, J. R. (1985). Beyond the blank screen: The patient's search for an emotional

- container in the therapist. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 22(3), 583-586. doi:10.1037/h0085543
- Dodge, C. (2010) Holding you in my mind: An approach for working with traumatized and attachment disordered children. *Dr. Cynthia Dodge Word Press Blog*. Retrieved from <http://drcynthiadodge.wordpress.com/2010/07/15/holding-you-in-my-mind/>
- Farrell-Kirk, R. (2001). Secrets, symbols, synthesis, and safety: The role of boxes in art therapy. *American Journal of Art Therapy*, 39, 88-92.
- Finch, C. (1994). Antiques: Early American decorative boxes. *Architectural Digest*, 51(12), 142-147.
- Friedman, M. (1973). *Nevelson: Wood sculptures*. New York, NY: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.
- Kagan, D. (2005). All Lid Up. *Art & Antiques*, 28(2), 42-43.
- Kalmanowitz, D., & Lloyd, B. (1999). Fragments of art at work: Art therapy in the former Yugoslavia. *The Arts In Psychotherapy*, 26(1), 15-25. doi:10.1016/S0197-4556(98)00027-6
- Kaufman A. (1996). Art in boxes: An exploration of meanings. *The Arts In Psychotherapy*, 23(3), 237-247. doi:10.1016/0197-4556(96)00021-4
- Linesch, D. (1994). Interpretation in art therapy research and practice: The hermeneutic circle. *The Arts In Psychotherapy*, 21(3), 185-195. doi:10.1016/0197-4556(94)90048-5
- Mair, K. (2007). Objects of my affection. *Third Text*, 21(6), 707-718. doi:10.1080/09528820701761293

- Mogelon, A., & Laliberté, N. (1974). *Art in boxes*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.
- Morgan, J. (2004). *Memory/life story work manual*. Retrieved from <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/cgc/Jonathan/Life%20Story%20Manual.htm>
- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pifalo, T. (2002). Pulling out the thorns: Art therapy with sexually abused children and adolescents. *Art Therapy, 19*(1), 12-22. doi:10.1080/07421656.2002.10129724
- Sheeks, R. H. (1996). Tibetan and Mongolian tsampa boxes. *Arts of Asia, 26*, 95-103.
- Siegelman, E. Y. (1990). Metaphors of the therapeutic encounter. *The Journal Of Analytical Psychology, 35*(2), 175-191. doi:10.1111/j.1465-5922.1990.00175.x
- Simic, C. (1992). *Dime-store alchemy: The art of Joseph Cornell*. New York, NY: The New York Review of Books.
- Solomon, D. (1997). *Utopia Parkway: The life and work of Joseph Cornell*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Stoodley, S. (2008). Grand openings. *Art & Antiques, 31*(9), 72-77.
- von Eckartsberg, R. (1989). The unfolding meaning of intentionality and horizon in phenomenology. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 17*(2), 146-160.
- Waldman, D. (2002). *Joseph Cornell: Master of dreams*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Appendix A: Figures



Figure 1. *Marcel's Box*, wood & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 1.5"



Figure 2. *Hannah's Box* (interior), cardboard & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 3"



Figure 3. *Rebecca's Box* (interior), wood, paint & fabric, 8" x 8" x 2"



Figure 4. *Rebecca's Box* (exterior), wood, & mixed media, 8" x 8" x 2"



Figure 5. *Eva's Boxes* (aligned), mixed media, varied sizes

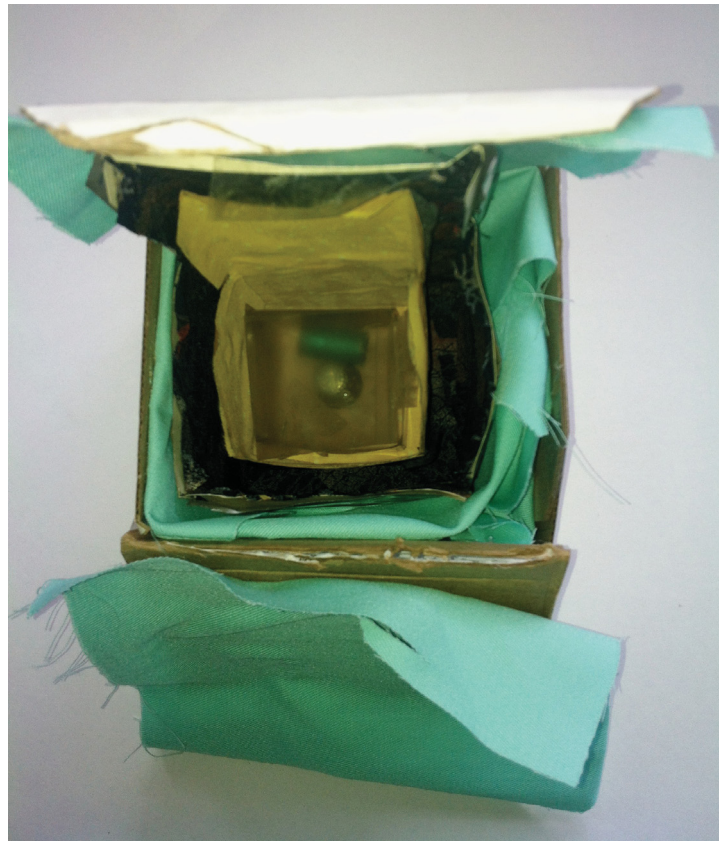


Figure 6. *Eva's Boxes* (nesting), mixed media, 5" x 5" x 7"



Figure 7. *Hannah's Box* (side 1), cardboard & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 3"



Figure 7. *Hannah's Box* (side 2), cardboard & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 3"



Figure 9. *Hannah's Box* (side 3), cardboard & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 3"



Figure 10. *Hannah's Box* (side 4), cardboard & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 3"



Figure 11. *Sarah's Box*, wood & mixed media, 12" x 8" x 3"



Figure 12. *Louise's Box*, wood & mixed media, 18" x 18" x 2"



Figure 13. *Hannah's Box* (lid), cardboard & mixed media, 6" x 6" x 3"

A Box Story: How the Functional Becomes Symbolic

Join us for a **FREE** workshop exploring art-making with boxes
Sunday May 19th from 12pm-4pm @ La Ruche d'Art
4525 St. Jacques (Quartier St. Henri)



This workshop is part of a Creative Arts Therapies Research Project through Concordia University

We are seeking volunteer participants from the community (18+)

The workshop will be facilitated by MA student Kate McGuire and supervised by Janis Timm-Bottos, department professor

Spaces are limited so please email Kate McGuire (kate.mcguire@hotmail.com) or add your name to the sign-up sheet to reserve a place

L'histoire de la boîte: Du Fonctionne au Symbolique

Joignez-vous à nous pour un atelier GRATUIT où vous pourrez explorer la création artistiques à l'aide de boîtes

**Dimanche, le 19 mai à partir de 12 h jusqu'à 16 h @ La Ruche d'Art
4525 St. Jacques (Quartier St. Henri)**



Cet atelier fait partie d'un projet de recherche du programme de "Creative Arts Therapies" par l'université Concordia

Nous recherchons des participants volontaires de la communauté (18 +)

L'atelier sera animé par Kate McGuire, étudiant en Maîtrise et supervisé par Janis Timm-Bottos, professeur du département

Les places sont limitées donc s'il vous plaît envoyez un courriel à Kate McGuire (kate.mcguire@hotmail.com) ou ajouter votre nom à la feuille d'inscription pour réserver une place

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN:

A Box Story: How the Functional Becomes the Symbolic

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by *Kate McGuire* of the *Department of Creative Arts Therapies* of Concordia University (phone: 514-979-7510, email: kate.mcguire@hotmail.com); under the supervision of *Janis Timm-Bottos* of the *Department of Creative Arts Therapies* of Concordia University (phone: 514-848-2424 ext, 4799, email: Janis.timm-bottos@concordia.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows:

To explore individuals' subjective experiences of art making with box structures and their relation to the pre-existing literature of the use of boxes in art therapy, art education and art history. This research seeks to identify and analyze emerging themes from the art making, writing and sharing process.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that:

- This research project is part of a course requirement for the researcher, Kate McGuire. The course instructor is Janis Timm-Bottos.
- My participation consists of participation in a free art making workshop held at La Ruche d'Art, to last approximately 4 hours.
- The workshop will include art making followed by a writing exercise and portions of this writing may be read by the researcher
- My participation also consists of a voluntary post-interview, to last approximately one hour.
- I am not required to answer any questions I do not wish to answer
- I may withdraw from the research at any time with no penalty to me or my participation in the community studio.
- The interview will be audio recorded. The only people that will listen to this recording include: the researcher, Kate McGuire and the professor, Janis Timm-Bottos of the course for which the research is being conducted

- This research will be presented in the form of a final paper including photographs of the artwork created, to be read by the professor of the course and will be made available on Spectrum, the Concordia online thesis database.
- The artwork created in this workshop may be exhibited at La Ruche D'Art along with other community members' artwork, should I voluntarily choose to exhibit.
- The results of this research may also be presented for educational purposes only in professional training workshops or conferences.
- The presentation of the research will not identify me in any way. My name, as well as any information which could identify me, will be taken out of all presentation of the research (conferences and final papers). A pseudonym will be assigned.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that:

- I will be creating artwork in a safe, supportive and creative community space.
- I will have the option to publicly display my artwork in a non-juried exhibition at La Ruche d'Art Community Studio
- There is a possibility for uncovering emotional material through the art making experience. Should I feel any discomfort or distress from the art making experience, a list of appropriate referral sources will be made available.
- I am only expected to create and share within my personal comfort range.
- The use of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly prohibited within the La Ruche d'Art Community Studio.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)
- I understand that the data from this study will be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN A POST-WORKSHOP INTERVIEW (LASTING APPROXIMATELY 1 HOUR) ON A DATE AND TIME OF CONVENIENCE TO ME AND THE RESEARCHER (KATE MCGUIRE).

PLEASE CHECK EITHER YES OR NO:

YES _____

NO: _____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator

Kate McGuire, Department of Creative Arts Therapies of Concordia University
Phone: 514-979-7510
Email: kate.mcguire@hotmail.com

or

Janis Timm-Bottos, Department of Creative Arts Therapies of Concordia University
Phone: 514-848-2424 ext, 4799
Email: Janis.timm-bottos@concordia.ca

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481
ethics@alcor.concordia.ca

Appendix E: Witness/Intention Writing Format

(Adapted from Pat Allen, PhD/ The Open Studio Art Process)

Start by writing your intention in the present tense, first person, without using the word “want”. The sentence can be very specific or it can be a general intention and it can simply be not quite goal directed at all.

Next, set aside your Intention and make art.

When you are finished, “witness” your art work in front of you by free writing. You might include some of the following:

- a) First, sit quietly for a few moments, simply notice what you see, take it in without naming or evaluating what you see. Then describe what you see (Describe the actual image i.e. there is a man sitting on the steps; name colours i.e there is a predominance of orange and green)
- b) Describe the steps of how you made the image/ product (i.e after cutting through the page, I cut out the red balloon, then I pressed it down and glued it.)
- c) Write down what is coming up for you in the moment. Locate self in the present moment, your energy, emotion, boredom, hunger etc. Write down random feelings (i.e It’s cold in here, I’m hungry...) Give an honest assessment
- d) “Dialogue with the image”. Ask a question to your artwork, listen for a response. Write down what freely enters your mind.

Choose a sentence or paragraph to read to the group, should you wish. Remember this is a no-comment zone. Learn to listen, and to briefly hold this intentionally inclusive, non-judgmental space for yourself and your learning community.

Appendix F: Interview Questions

1. Do you have previous experience with art making?
2. How was this experience for you, different from your usual methods or process?
3. How did working with a box influence your art making?
4. Did the social environment/ working in the presence of others influence you?
5. How would you describe your work?
6. How did the writing process impact your process and connection to your work?
7. Describe themes that came from the writing process.
8. What were the main themes that emerged from your artwork?
9. Was there anything that happened in this process that surprised you?
10. Do you have a title for your piece?