



---

# Travelling Back to Our Ithaca – Using Art Therapy in Care Homes and Cultural Settings for Older Adults with Dementia

**Eleni Petridou Bouriti**

A creative workshop exploring how art therapy in care homes and museums helps older adults with dementia reconnect with identity and memory using repetition, art materials, photos, mobile phones, and storytelling.

Art therapy is increasingly recognized as a powerful non-pharmacological intervention that can improve the quality of life for older adults living with dementia. It activates memory, stimulates the senses, and enables both verbal and non-verbal expression. Evidence highlights numerous benefits, including improved mood, reduced anxiety, greater social connection, and enhanced self-esteem.

This workshop draws on the metaphor of *Ithaca*—not just as a final destination, but as a symbol of origin, memory, identity, love, admiration, and the dreams of a life lived. For individuals with dementia, art therapy offers a gentle journey back to that symbolic home. Through repetition and return, core elements in dementia’s cognitive rhythm, we learn to embrace therapeutic cycles that are rich with meaning, emotion, and reconnection.

Participants will explore how to apply art therapy in both care home and cultural or museum settings, treating these environments as spaces of containment, safety, and emotional resonance. Care homes provide continuity and familiarity, while museums offer access to shared cultural memory and multisensory engagement with history and beauty.

The workshop will include experiential exercises where participants will actively use:

- Art materials to create symbolic and expressive works
- Mobile phones to document, record, and reflect on memory-based content
- Personal or found photographs to stimulate reminiscence and emotional storytelling.



---

Together, these tools will support the design of meaningful sessions that guide older adults to reconnect with their family narratives, cultural identity, and emotional world through creativity.

Participants will also learn how to:

- Facilitate open or closed art therapy groups in residential and cultural spaces
- Use museum objects, traditional crafts, and heritage elements as therapeutic anchors
- Transform the challenges of repetition into rituals of rediscovery and empowerment

By the end of the workshop, participants will be equipped with practical techniques to guide clients gently back to their own *Ithaca*—where fragments of memory are not only preserved but reawakened with dignity and care.

### Biography

**Eleni Petridou Bouriti** is a Psychotherapist, Art Educator and Visual artist. She holds a Master's degree in Art Psychotherapy (MSc Art Psychotherapy) from Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. She obtained a degree and postgraduate studies in Fine Arts & Arts Education (BA & Integrated MA Fine Arts – Arts Education) from the Athens School of Fine Arts. She is a registered member of the board of directors at the Association of Visual Therapists and Friends of Cyprus (CARTA) and the European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT), where she follows the rules and code of ethics of the profession.

Eleni currently works in a rehabilitation and wellness unit (St. Nectarios of Nicosia) and focuses on cases of neurodegenerative diseases (Alzheimer's/dementia forms). Additionally, she provides assessments and therapeutic sessions for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders privately, in day centers, and in organizations.

She has worked as an external associate at the Resilient Lives Center, School for the Blind, Ministry of Education and Sports, Deputy Ministry of Culture, mainly conducting group art therapy sessions and discussions in multi-thematic groups aiming to support adolescents and young adults using multisensory tools. Furthermore, she organises festivals, interventions, and psychoeducational/research programs for cultural spaces (Limassol Theater Museum | Leventis Gallery, Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia, State Gallery of Contemporary Art) with the aim of increasing prevention-awareness on mental health issues.



As part of her continuous professional development, she has participated in European conferences on Art Psychotherapy and postgraduate seminars on trauma, child and adult protection 'Training in child and adult protection', care and behavior for people with dementia, as well as Benenzon music therapy levels 1-3.

Regarding her previous clinical practice abroad, she worked in both educational and clinical environments in Scotland, primarily with adults facing serious mental disorders (Royal Edinburgh Hospital), designed and implemented educational programs for prisoners, and individuals with special needs.

Eleni Petridou Bouriti's artistic practice is influenced by biomedicine, clinical work, and psychology. She creates mixed-media paintings and interactive audiovisual installations using materials such as rope, latex, glass, and video. Proceeds from her exhibitions support public health-related charities.

### **Recent Exhibitions & Festivals**

- **2024: Healing Art**, Cyprus Breast Center, Nicosia
- **2024: Art Therapist's Studio**, Latsia Municipality, Cyprus
- **2023 & 2021: Mental Health Awareness Days**, Latsia & Limassol, Cyprus
- **2020: World Mental Health Arts Festival**, Edinburgh, UK – *Short Film & Workshop 'RUN'*
- **2020: Inside Out Degree Show**, Edinburgh, UK
- **2020: Connecting Hearts & Minds**, Online, UK
- **2018: ENDOSCOPY**, Athens School of Fine Arts, Greece
- **2018: Athens Fashion Trade Show**, Metropolitan Expo



- 2018: **Andrianos**, Italian Embassy, Athens
- 2018: **Healed Skin**, UMPUM, Prague, Czech Republic
- 2018: **Athens Science Festival**, Technopolis • 2018: **Oracle**, Delphi Archaeological Museum, Greece