

Affective environments: building new and possible futures. The exploration of placemaking as therapeutic practice in the face of ecological crisis.

Eliza Sweeney

Centring on the geopolitical challenges of climate risk and ecological emergency, this workshop offers possible solutions through therapeutic placemaking practices. A place to feel. We argue that art therapists ‘have a responsibility to consider how we work in response to the ecological crisis’ (Sweeney, 2023: 181). Bradbrook asks us to consider, ‘what is your place in these times?’ and as noted in the call for this conference, Hessel (2011) called us to ‘take’ our place at the bedside of injustice. Art therapists and art makers are called to participate in this workshop which provides one way to *make our place: a place to feel* about the ecological crisis.

Creating spaces to feel, to transform isolation and explore the mountain of emotion associated with ecological crisis is vital. As Gail Bradbrook remarks, ‘Facing feelings is not a substitute for political action, nor is it a distraction from action. Feelings are an important feature of political activity. Acknowledging our feelings – to ourselves, to one another - make us more robust’ (Bradbrook, G. 2019: 67).

Shaun McNiff acknowledges the power of the therapeutic qualities imbued within the prefabricated art studio where ‘the environment transmits creative forces and becomes a primary agent of transformation’ (McNiff, 2004: 17). As part of a current PhD research in Architecture and Art Therapy, we have developed a practice methodology to *create therapeutic environments*, the process of which is transformative.

This workshop provides practical experience with placemaking as therapeutic process that responds to feelings of world in the face of ecological emergency and demonstrates how space and place as both process and product can be therapeutic.

Finally, the workshop investigates the place that the art therapist might take in union with other scientific fields in responding to the ecological crisis and social, individual, political and collective *pathologies* that may or may not arise and provides one practical way of working.

References

Hessel, S. (2011). *Indignez-vous*.

McNiff, S. (2004). *Art heals: how creativity cures the soul*. Boston: Smabhala

Bradbrook, G. (2019). What is your place in these times? In: Farrell, C et al. (ed.) *This Is Not A Drill: An Extinction Rebellion Handbook*: Penguin Random House: UK

Sweeney, E. (2023) (ed.) *Place, space and dramatherapy: international perspectives*. Routledge: UK

Biography

Eliza Sweeney is a scenographer and dramatherapist. She holds an MA in Dramatherapy from the University Paris Descartes and an Advanced Diploma of Neuro-Dramatic-Play. She is currently the recipient of a full PhD research fund scholarship from the University of Northumbria in Architecture, where she investigates therapeutic design within the global environmental crisis. She is a visiting lecturer on the MA in Creative Arts Therapies at the University of Melbourne, Australia and the MA of Clinical Psychology at the University of Caen, France. Her most recent book publication *Space, place and dramatherapy: international perspectives* (Routledge) was released in August 2023. She identifies as a multi-modal expressive arts therapist, engaging with a wide range of creative tools in her therapeutic and artistic practice. Outside of work, she is a climate activist, artist and mum to two children, and she hosts the new podcast *The healthy PhD* which places health and wellbeing in academia under the microscope.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Sweeney, E. (2023) (ed.) **Place, space and dramatherapy: international perspectives.** Routledge: UK

Sweeney, E. (2023). **The Environment ‘in service’ of psychology in the times of ecological crisis.** *Le Journal des Psychologues* 2023/2 (N. 403), pages 42-47 (French Publication)

Sweeney, E. and Messer, S. (2022). **A space of their own: a case-study advocating appropriation of the domestic interior for well-being.** In: J. Scholze *et al.* (ed.) *Interiors in the era of covid: interior design between the public and private realms.* 1st edn. London [England]: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Sweeney, E. (2022). **Solastalgia, sense and therapeutic ecoscenography.** In: S. Levine and A. Kopytine, *Ecopoiesis: A New Perspective for the Expressive and Creative Arts Therapies in the 21st Century.* Jessica Kinglsey Publishers: UK.