



Introducing Phenomenological Art Therapy (PATd) in Education: Repetition and Return as Pedagogical Principles

Fenomenologisk bildterapi i utbildning: Repetition och återkomst som pedagogiska principer

Christina Blomdahl

This presentation introduces Phenomenological Art Therapy PATd for clients with depression (PATd), a manual-based method developed to make art therapy accessible to professionals from diverse therapeutic backgrounds. In Sweden, where few are formally trained in art therapy, PATd offers a pedagogically grounded approach to integrating artistic processes into clinical and educational practice.

Rooted in phenomenological theory, PATd emphasizes openness to lived experience, inner dialogue, and shared meaning-making through art. The method incorporates the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC), which guides the selection of materials and exercises across four hierarchical levels: kinesthetic/sensory, perceptual/affective, cognitive/symbolic, and creative. Educational modules are designed to ensure representation across all levels, with emphasis on exercises that engage multiple levels simultaneously to support processing.

The theme of *repetition and return* is central to both the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of PATd. In training contexts, repetition is used to deepen experiential understanding and foster reflective practice. Return is embedded in the cyclical nature of learning, where students revisit images, concepts, and therapeutic encounters to refine perception and integrate theory with practice. These principles support the development of therapeutic presence, responsiveness, and embodied knowledge.

Courses in PATd for professionals in psychology, social work, and healthcare have been conducted. Participants engage in structured art-based exercises, followed by guided reflection and group dialogue. Through repeated engagement and revisiting personal



imagery, learners gain insight into therapeutic processes and develop confidence in facilitating art-based interventions. The presentation will highlight how PATd supports professional identity formation and prepares therapists to work with art in clinical practice.

Biography

Christina Blomdahl, PhD, is a researcher based in Sweden, currently serving as R&D strategist within Region Västra Götaland. She holds a PhD in Caring Science, an MSc in Art Therapy and has a clinical background in psychiatric care as an art therapist and occupational therapist. Christina has developed PATd, a structured method grounded in phenomenological theory. Christina leads and participates in several research projects.

Recent Publications

Blomdahl, C., & Goulias, A. (2024). **Art Therapy for Adolescents with Depression: Feasibility and Acceptability Study in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.** *Art Therapy*, 42(1), 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2024.2309422>

Blomdahl, C., Guregård, S., Rusner, M., & Wijk, H. (2021). **Recovery From Depression—A 6-Month Follow-up of a Randomized Controlled Study of Manual-Based Phenomenological Art Therapy for Persons with Depression.** *Art Therapy*, 39(1), 13–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2021.1922328>

Blomdahl, C., Wijk, H., Guregård, S., Rusner, M. (2018). **Meeting oneself in inner dialogue: Manual-based phenomenological art therapy as experienced by patients with moderate to severe depression.** *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. 59. 17-24. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.aip.2017.08.006>