



Return journeys: art and post-disaster psychosocial recovery in retrospective perspective.

Viajes de retorno: el arte y la recuperación psicosocial postdesastre en perspectiva retrospectiva

Pamela Reyes Herrera

Chile, a historically seismic country, is highly exposed to socio-natural risks due to its geography. This social and environmental vulnerability, intensified by global climate change, highlights the need to address the multidimensional nature of these phenomena.

Psychosocial recovery occurs in complex relational and temporal contexts (Acuña et al., 2021; Barrios, 2017; Gallegos et al., 2021; Matsushita et al., 2024). Disasters constitute a cultural substrate that shapes the identity and consciousness of affected communities (CIGIDEN, 2024; Mellafe, 2003; Reyes, 2020).

Artistic creation emerges as a form of (re)presentation that responds to the disruption caused by disasters. These practices integrate strategies for survival, solidarity, and collective political action (Capasso, 2019; López, 2013). Artists who work with communities through participatory approaches play a “secondary response” role, distinct from that of emergency teams, providing psychosocial support through cultural frameworks (Smith, 2023; Reyes, 2020, 2023).

Art explores lived experience, resilience and affective relationships with places, promoting non-hegemonic listening and giving voice to participants (Brinton et al., 2016; Cox et al., 2017; Espinoza et al., 2015, 2024). In collective health promotion, popular art and disaster-related memory practices act as resources for resilience, reappropriation, and place-making, fostering social reconfiguration (Bagnara, 2022; Reyes, 2014, 2019, 2020). In art therapy, these interventions support resilience and the development of internal resources (Kalmanowitz et al., 2018; Potash et al., 2020; Scarce, 2022).

Most studies focus on the response phase or the first year after the disaster. A retrospective approach reveals the non-linear rhythms of recovery and the ontological dimensions of



resilience (Schlosberg et al., 2020). From the perspective of art as experience (Dewey, 2008; Eisner, 2004), recovery is here a journey, a sensitive and embodied process of returning to art as a resource for finding meaning and renewal. Theoretical and empirical reflections on art-based research processes related to forest fires are presented.

Biography

Pamela Reyes Herrera holds a Doctorate in Psychology from the University of Salvador (Buenos Aires) and Master's Degree in Psychotherapeutic Applications of Artistic Practice from the University of Barcelona. She is a specialist in Art Education, Culture and Citizenship (OEI). Director and founder of the Master's Degree in Arts in Health and Art Therapy at Finis Terrae University, Santiago, Chile. Her academic, clinical and research work has focused on mental health, community art therapy and post-disaster psychosocial recovery since 2010. Editor and visiting professor at universities in Spain, Brazil and Argentina, she has contributed to the consolidation of the field of art therapy in Chile and Latin America.

Recent publications and presentations

Lemus, M.J., Solo de Zaldívar, L., Regueira, T., & Reyes, P. (2025). **Humanization through art therapy in the ICU: Experience in a center. Revista Chilena de Medicina Intensiva**, 38(1), 70–71. <https://www.medicina-intensiva.cl/revista/articulo.php?id=209>

Moon, C; Bergman, H.; Adhiambo, N., Reyes, P., Luzzato, P., Lyambai, K., Mills, E., Mavis, K., Pearce, J. (2024). **Art therapy in the Global South: Now and next. (2024). South African Journal of Arts Therapies**, 2(1), 63-81. <https://doi.org/10.36615/pk9fjt18>

Reyes,P. (2024). Presentation: **Art as a factor in cometabolisation in socio-natural disasters. 15th Brazilian Art Therapy Conference**. 14, 15, 16 November 2024. Vitória. Brazil.