



Reflective practice and ‘repeat and return’ cycles in supervision: Adapting our approach on the Hertfordshire Art Therapy Masters

Val Huet & Samantha Chilvers

Reflective practice was pioneered by Dewey (1938) and developed by influential practitioners (Schon, 1983; Rolfe, 2002). It is now widely used within counselling and psychotherapy training (Taylor, 2020) and increasingly adopted within art therapy training. Definitions of reflective practice vary, but most include an iterative cycle of reflection on practice, interrogating perceptions and assumptions, enriching understanding and integrating this new knowledge within the therapeutic work. Within art therapy, this process includes clients’ artworks and practitioners’ response art. The iterative pattern supports a creative repetition of a cycle and a return to a practice space enriched by new learning.

When integrated within an art therapy training, reflective practice should sustain the development of professional knowledge and confidence. However, feedback from trainees and evidence from counselling and psychotherapy (Chircop Coleiro et al, 2023) challenge how well this aim is met. Prominent concerns include how a lack of structure affects engagement negatively and the need for a framework when starting supervision, especially within a group setting.

In this presentation, we will introduce the main tenets of reflective practice, its iterative quality, and the value of the ‘repeat and return’ cycles in supervision. We will consider published evidence of how helpful and unhelpful elements of supervision match onto this, and we will share how we have adapted our approach to integrate reflective practice within a structured group framework. We will reflect on how the use of visual diaries has supported and enriched this iterative process, as these hold the image-based narratives of the trainees’ journeys.



Biography

Val Huet, PhD, qualified as an Art Therapist in 1986 and later trained as a Group Psychotherapist and Organisational Consultant. In 2015, she completed a PhD on art therapy groups for work-related stress. Val was the Chief Executive Officer of the BAAT from 2003 to 2021.

Val is co-director of the Oxford College of Arts and Therapies, an online training organisation. She is Visiting Professor at Hertfordshire and Ulster Universities. She is currently involved in several research projects, including piloting online art therapy groups for people with fibromyalgia, and an international arts therapies project on child labour.

Samantha Chilvers

Samantha Chilvers qualified as an art therapist in 2014 and worked as an art therapist and supervisor within several National Health Service (NHS) Trusts, including the Royal Marsden, a world-leading cancer care provider. Samantha became a deputy manager of a Therapies Service in the NHS and trained as an Advanced Mentalization-Based Therapy Practitioner.

Samantha currently co-leads the Art Therapy Masters at the University of Hertfordshire and is a part-time senior Art Therapist / Researcher at Barts Health NHS Trust. She has also developed and delivered Continuing Professional Development training for the BAAT, and teaches on its Foundation course.

Recent Publications

Huet, V. (2025). **Online art therapy groups for fibromyalgia: a pilot project.** *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2025.2555308>

Huet, V. (2025). **Art meets books: A co-produced arts pilot project in public libraries,** *Journal of Creative Arts in Education and Therapies*, 10 (2), 304–319
<https://doi.org/10.15212/CAET/2024/10/1>



Karkou, V., Sacco, P. L., Pelowski, M., Theofanopoulou, C., Carr, C., Huet, V., Bourne, J., Dowlen, R. & Chatterjee, H. (2025). **Comment on 'Can arts-based interventions improve health? A conceptual and methodological critique' by Skov and Nadal - A critique of the critique: Towards a more nuanced evaluation of current research on the health outcomes of arts-based interventions.** *Physics of Life Reviews* (54) 147 -151

Chilvers. S., Chesterman, N., & Lim, A. (2021), **'Life is easier now': Lived experience research into mentalization-based art psychotherapy,** *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 26(1-2), 17–28.