

Art therapy and well-being in museums: cultural mediation in contemporary art with vulnerable groups

Arteterapia y bienestar en museos: mediación cultural en arte contemporáneo con grupos vulnerables

Marta Lage de la Rosa & Carolina Peral Jiménez

Recent reports from the WHO and Culture for Health assert that both artistic practice and cultural activities are crucial for promoting mental health and well-being (Culture For Health, 2022; Fancourt & Finn, 2019). However, for some groups, contact with these practices is still limited, especially in spaces dedicated to contemporary art.

The messages conveyed by contemporary artists often reflect the "dark times" we live in: issues of identity, hate speech, and criticism of power structures. Despite the universality of their themes, art often remains distant from general interests. For this reason, it is necessary to develop sensitive mediation projects that can reach all types of audiences, especially the most vulnerable.

From this need arises the Laboratory of Art, Well-being, and Education (L-ABE), developed by the Complutense University of Madrid within the EARTDI research group in collaboration with the Conde Duque Contemporary Culture Centre of the Madrid City Council. The Laboratory aims to ensure complete accessibility to the museum and offers cultural mediation through art therapy practices, proposing safe and nurturing spaces where passive consumption of art is not the norm (Reyhani Ghadim & Daugherty, 2022).

This presentation introduces the methodology developed over the last three years with vulnerable social groups in the fields of mental health, intellectual, cultural, economic, social, functional, and sensory diversity. It will present the set of strategies planned to achieve the defined objectives with the intervention teams and the results obtained based on the perceptions of the participants in the last two exhibitions.

The results suggest that for the participants, the cultural space transforms into a place of belonging, listening, and well-being, where their critical thinking and expressive capacity are explored, materialising acts of resistance and resilience.

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Recientes informes de la OMS y Culture for Health afirman que tanto la práctica artística como las actividades culturales son importantes para la promoción de la salud mental y el bienestar (Culture For Health, 2022; Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Sin embargo, para algunos colectivos el contacto con estas prácticas aún es escaso, especialmente en espacios de Arte Contemporáneo. Los mensajes de las obras de los artistas actuales en ocasiones reflejan los “tiempos oscuros” que vivimos: problemas identitarios, discursos de odio o la crítica a las estructuras de poder. Pero, a pesar de la universalidad de sus temas, muchas veces el arte permanece alejado de los intereses generales. Por este motivo, es necesario desarrollar proyectos de mediación sensibles, que puedan llegar a todo tipo de públicos, y especialmente a los más vulnerables.

De esta necesidad surge el Laboratorio de Arte, Bienestar y Educación (L-ABE) desarrollado por la UCM dentro del grupo de investigación EARTDI junto con el CCC Conde Duque del Ayuntamiento de Madrid. El Laboratorio persigue garantizar la accesibilidad total al museo y ofrece una mediación cultural a través de prácticas arteterapéuticas, proponiendo espacios seguros y cuidados donde no se realiza un consumo pasivo del arte (Reyhani Ghadim & Daugherty, 2022).

Esta comunicación presenta la metodología desarrollada durante los últimos tres años con colectivos sociales vulnerables, dentro de los ámbitos de salud mental, diversidad intelectual, cultural, económica, social, funcional y sensorial.

Se presentará el conjunto de estrategias planificadas para lograr los objetivos definidos con los equipos de intervención y los resultados obtenidos a partir de las percepciones de los participantes de las dos últimas exposiciones.

Los resultados sugieren que para los participantes el espacio cultural se transforma en un lugar de pertenencia, escucha y bienestar, donde se explora su capacidad crítica y de expresión, materializando actos de resistencia y resiliencia.

Biography

Marta Lage de la Rosa PhD is lectures at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM). She gained an extraordinary PhD Award in Fine Arts and holds an M.A. in Visual Arts. She has thirty years of professional experience in education, art, art therapy and research in heritage conservation and art education for social inclusion in Spain and abroad in public and private institutions: University of Alcalá, Comillas and Autónoma University of Madrid and Mexico. Marta has worked with the European Social Foundation and with UNESCO in Central America and Mexico. In Spain as a researcher for the National Plan for Scientific Research, Development and Technological Innovation (R+D+I) of Science and Education Ministry at the Carlos III University. She currently belongs to the research group EARTDI (Art Applications for Social Inclusion: art, therapy and art education for social inclusion). She is coordinator of the UCM Art Therapy Masters degree and Art Laboratory for Wellbeing and is Education L-ABE coordinator for special education groups and those at risk of social exclusion.

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Carolina Peral Jiménez PhD is an art therapist who holds a PhD in Feminist and Gender Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid. Her doctoral thesis, which focused on art therapy, gender, and trauma, was awarded the first prize by the Government Delegation against Gender Violence for doctoral theses on violence against women, conferred by the Spanish Ministry for Equality in 2021. Currently, she serves as a lecturer at the Faculty of Education of UCM and is a member of the UCM research group EARTDI (Art Applications for Social Inclusion), where she has contributed to various research and development projects. Since 2015, she has been a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Art Therapy: Papers of Art Therapy and Art Education for Social Inclusion (Arteterapia: Papeles de Arteterapia y Educación Artística para la Inclusión Social)*, published by UCM.

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Recent publications and conference presentations

Lage de la Rosa, M. (2023). Conference presentation: **L-ABE. Lab for Art, Wellness and Education. An Art Therapy mediation in Cultural Settings in Madrid.** EFAT Conference: Growing*Together, Riga. (June)

Lage de la Rosa, M. (2022). **Videocards. The video letter in the dialogue of the teaching experience.** CIVARTES II International Virtual Arts Congress: Breaking down borders for understanding: the arts and arts education as catalysts. Jaen, Spain. (July).

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Lage de la Rosa M. and Suárez L. (2021). **Inclusive theatre as a resource in art therapy for recovery in trauma: confronting fears workshop.** Art therapy and arts education for social inclusion papers, 16, 159-170. <https://doi.org/10.5209/arte.74394>

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Peral Jiménez, C. (2022). **Interviews with photo-elicitation based on the therapeutic process: a way to stimulate the implicit memory in research.** Memory-Shaping Connections in the Arts Therapies. 16th European Arts Therapies Conference. (September)

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