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# Bridging Distance and Presence: The Evolution of Art Therapy Training in Digital Spaces

**Elizabeth Stone**

Since the onset of the pandemic, the field of art therapy has entered a cyclical process of transformation — a journey that continuously negotiates between distance and proximity, presence and absence, home and elsewhere. The transition from in-person to online art therapy training marks not only a technological adaptation but also a profound return to questions of what it means to *be* with others in creative, relational, and embodied ways. As programs migrate into digital spaces, the field encounters a paradox: the further we move outward — across borders and screens — the more we are called to return inward, to re-examine the essence of relational connection and professional integrity.

Within this evolving landscape, and amid concerns about the ever-increasing growth of digital training programs, the European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT) established in 2024 a research group dedicated to exploring the viability and equivalence of online art therapy training across the globe. This initiative investigates which pedagogical components can be conducted online without compromising educational and professional standards, how competence and authenticity can be measured within virtual contexts, and how assessment methods can accurately evaluate competence to ensure that online diplomas and certificates meet professional standards.

This workshop, offered by members of this research group, invites participants into a reflective, creative encounter — an experiential space of making, sharing, and reimagining. Through this exploration, we trace the recurring movements that shape art therapy education: the continual re-encounter with ourselves and others, and the search for a sense of home within evolving pedagogical landscapes. As we navigate this shifting topography, we engage with the paradox of destination and return — future and origin — while collectively considering its implications for the future of the profession in an increasingly digital world.



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## Biography

**Elizabeth Stone** maintains a private practice in Grenoble, France, and Oyster Bay, New York, as a New York State licensed, board-certified art therapist and psychoanalyst. She has trained and supervised art therapists in Europe and the US for over forty years. A former faculty member of New York University's Graduate Art Therapy Program, she trained at the New York School for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. Currently, she chairs EFAT's Ethics Committee (European Federation of Art Therapy) and was a past chair of the American Art Therapy Association's Ethics Committee, as well as a founding member of EFAT and APIART. She began as a painter, and currently she lectures and publishes widely on creative expression as it embodies the unheard voice of human experience.

## Recent publications

(October 2022). Volpe, U. (ed.). Chapter. 3: **“Commentary on Visual Art Therapy: On the theoretical evolution of sublimation in art therapy.”** In, *The Art Therapies in Psychiatric Rehabilitation*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing (AG), pp. 34 - 36.

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Chapter (2019). DiMaria, A. (Ed.) **An American Art Therapist in France: 30 Years of Training and Supervision of European Art Therapists and Clinical Practice in France.** In *Exploring Ethical Dilemmas in Art Therapy*. New York: Routledge.

Chapter (2018). Dannecker, K. (Ed). **The Borrowed Image in Art Therapy with Psychiatric Patients: The internalization Process.** In *Arts Therapies and New Challenges in Psychiatry, Vol III of International Research in the Arts Therapies*, A Routledge Book Series, (Eds. Diane Waller & Sarah Scoble). London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Frances Group.