PHOTO ART THERAPY

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PHOTO ART THERAPY

A Jungian Perspective

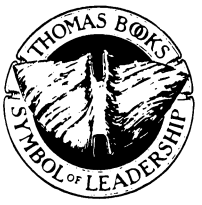
By

JERRY L. FRYREAR, PH.D., A.T.R.

and

IRENE E. CORBIT, PH.D., A.T.R.

With a Foreword by
Shaun McNiff



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FOREWORD

Photo Art Therapy: A Jungian Perspective illuminates and guides the reader through new possibilities for art therapy practice, approached by Jerry Fryrear and Irene Corbit as a creative interaction with different artistic media and therapeutic methods. Although the book is based on Jungian theory and practice, the authors assiduously explore cooperation with other therapeutic perspectives, all of which are in keeping with Jung's belief in transcendent universals and multifaceted therapeutic practices. A spirit of collaboration permeates every aspect of the coauthored book which not only demonstrates innovative ways of combining artistic media, but allows clients to articulate the inner workings of the therapeutic process through an engaging series of dialogues and narrations. The book establishes a twofold landmark in elucidating art therapy's close and vital connections to both photography and the discipline of Jungian psychotherapy.

Notwithstanding the pioneering contributions of art therapists recognized by the authors (Robert Wolf and Judy Weiser), "phototherapy" and "videotherapy" have generally grown in a parallel relationship to the art therapy profession. In addition to early literature on the therapeutic use of photography (Cornelison and Arsenian, 1960) and videotape (Alger and Hogan, 1967) being published outside the art therapy context, there was a reluctance by many art therapists to embrace these technologies. During the 1970s outspoken art therapists argued that the hegemony of drawing, painting, and modeling with clay should be maintained rather than open to the range of current activities within the visual arts community.

Throughout this period, Jerry Fryrear was experimenting with multidisciplinary cooperation among the arts which led to his book *The Arts in Therapy,* written with Bob Fleshman in 1981. Fryrear was guided by the historical observation that the arts have always been intimately related, often inseparable, and "prone to a continual effort to recombine, a tendency especially noticeable in modern art." Opposition to the intro-

duction of photography and videotape to art therapy was correctly attuned to the fact that these technologies naturally include drama, movement, and the presentation of the body and thus cross the boundaries of narrow specialization.

After *The Arts in Therapy,* which included a chapter on media arts (videotape, photography, audiotape, and film), Fryrear coedited definitive publications on both phototherapy (1983) and videotherapy (1981). These books confirm how one of our most intelligent advocates of cooperation across the artistic spectrum, can also make authoritative studies of a particular phenomenon, thus demonstrating how comparative study furthers the individuation of a discipline. *Photo Art Therapy* has emerged from this series of books and it completes the process, showing how concentration on a specific technology, instant photography, not only reaches out to other aspects of the visual arts, but includes additional art forms and a treasury of therapeutic possibilities. Coauthorship with Irene Corbit has resulted in a poetic and intimate book focused on therapy as a soulful dialogue between people and the figures of imagination.

Rather than creating yet another creative arts therapy specialization as an offspring from the union of art therapy and phototherapy, Fryrear and Corbit show how art therapy can expand its scope without threatening the integrity of the discipline. They describe how instant photographs invite the participation of other visual arts activities (drawing, painting, collage, *etc.*) when the images are mounted on poster paper or assembled into sculptural figures. Taking pictures of clients also leads to art therapy innovations such as the engagement of the body in "posing" for pictures. The authors' use of instant photographs is in keeping with the photo and videotherapy tradition of "self-image confrontation." However, in contrast to the conventional methods, they actively involve clients in constructing the image and posing for photographs by imagining feeling states and moods through the body. Although this aspect of the experience might be considered secondary to many art therapists, a therapist concentrating on the body and doing the same exercises, will see them as primary. The emphasis on posing suggests a therapy where mind responds to the body's expression of imagery. I have had similar experiences with the presentation of the body as visual image while doing performance art within my art therapy studios.

There is a kinetic orientation to the use of "still" photographs by

Fryrear and Corbit. Their methods involve shifts in body position in correspondence to changing emotions. The reverse is also encouraged by shifting positions and then articulating how changes in the body's pose affect feelings. Photographs externalize these body sensations and establish the basis for further internalization through reflection on the images. Yet another transformation occurs when the photos are arranged on a poster where the artist is free to alter the images, determine how they will be placed on the surface, etc. The authors cite Aaron Beck's "cognitive" therapy as a model for changing habitual imagery, and within the Jungian tradition, James Hillman has similarly encouraged us to change our stories and the fictions according to which we organize our lives. As the images change, we change in correspondence to them. The basis of therapy is the creative action of change, described by Fryrear and Corbit as "visual transitions." They report how subtle changes in actions can stimulate major transformations in a person's life and this is in keeping with Jung's belief that "the savior is either the insignificant thing itself or else arises out of it."

The "self-portrait box" which is used to explore "persona," exemplifies the book's creative explorations. A photograph of an aspect of the artist's persona is attached to each of the six exterior sides of the box and these are accompanied by six "inside" images of private qualities. The process implicitly questions the existence of a single persona and encourages articulation of the many faces that we show, and do not show, to the world. The image of the box with its qualities of containment and its inner sanctum, is useful to those of us who limit artistic expression to two-dimensional surfaces. The simple form of the box combines picture making and sculpture while evoking the work of Joseph Cornell and other links to art.

I enjoyed the authors' reflections upon Jungian theory which appear throughout the book. Jung believed that imagination is the primary faculty of transformation and he encouraged expression of inner states in pictorial form in order to "bring them closer to the patient's understanding." He tried to stay in close contact with images and avoid "every attempt that the dreamer makes to break away from it." His work still remains an unacknowledged foundation of art therapy practice and this book will help the art therapy community to see that a depth psychology of images cannot overlook Jung.

Irene Corbit's use of "active imagination" in art therapy shows how in-depth psychotherapy naturally involves varied modes of expression

and alternatives to ego's habitual speech. Awareness is expanded and welcomes the contributions of expressions that were previously outside the person's consciousness. Sensitivity and safety are furthered by staying in contact with the image which provides the frame for the purposeful and spontaneous movements of psyche which tells its own story.

Trust in psyche's movement within the frame of an image is illustrated by Harry's dream work in Chapter 6. His long walk through sticky mud and chicken dung carrying a plank is one of the most engaging therapeutic dialogues I have ever read. Patient and therapist enter the context of the dream and stay with its qualities through both reflection on images and active imagination, affirming the mystery of the dream and furthering its articulation. The outcome did not solve a puzzle or decipher a hidden cause but seemed to fulfill Jung's desire for the redramatization of the world. He said that when we try to intellectually explain psychic images, "the bird is flown." The dialogue with Harry demonstrates how therapy helps us to imagine our expressions further, more deeply and personally, and within the discipline of an artistic inquiry.

Although photos are the physical forms through which this book individuates itself and contributes to both art and Jungian therapies, they can also be imagined as the universal "widgit," which manifests itself in an unlimited spectrum of physical forms. I urge readers to experience the archetypal forces embodied by the photographs while also keeping a wary eye on the tendency to make any artistic process, such as photographic collage or playing with figures in sand, into a fixity. When a particular method of creation is turned into a school unto itself, it arrests related movements, spin-offs, formal transformations, and unexpected arrivals.

Archetypal forces depend upon the physical forms of the arts in order to manifest themselves in the world, and the arts similarly need the invisible agents of imagination. The Jungian declaration that "image is psyche" suggests an archetypal mainstream entering consciousness through the continuous and surprising movements of imagination as it makes new images.

Photo Art Therapy: A Jungian Perspective offers an exemplary inquiry into one of the myriad channels through which art therapy can be practiced as a discipline of archetypal knowing. Jerry Fryrear and Irene Corbit have worked together to pioneer the art therapy profession in Texas with an open eye on the world. This book invites a wider audience

to witness and participate in their creative interaction and I am grateful to have the opportunity to reflect upon the legacy that will surely grow from its pages.

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INTRODUCTION

Our purpose in the present book is to strike a balance between a scholarly treatise about the use of instant photographs and other art media in therapy, and a practical "how to" book with many suggested applications. We hope we have succeeded.

The new technologies have found their places in business, medicine, education, religion, and, recently, in psychotherapy. However, there seems to be a great reluctance on the part of psychotherapists to embrace technology. The field of psychotherapy conjures up images of the Freudian couch and Breuer and Freud's "talking cure" (1895). The client talks and the psychotherapist listens. Other variations of psychotherapy place great emphasis on the relationship between the client and therapist and on personal attributes of the therapist such as warmth and genuineness (see, e.g., Rogers, 1951). As a result of this nearly century-old tradition, many psychotherapists think of themselves as the instrument, the tool, of therapy and are reluctant to admit other, more technical or external tools into the therapy session. One major exception has been biofeedback equipment and the use of audio recorders in relaxation training and guided imagery. Another major exception is the arena of the expressive therapies, where therapists are quick to use art and music media. Very recently, video cameras and photography (in our case, instant photographs) have added new dimensions to the field.

Group and individual therapy sessions can be videotaped for later examination by group members and their therapist (see, e.g., Berger, 1978; Fryrear and Fleshman, 1981; Heilveil, 1983). Photographs can be used to review childhood memories, to confront oneself, and to ease transitions (see Krauss and Fryrear, 1983). Instant photography can allow clients to explore feelings and capture personal images through assumed poses. One pioneer, in particular, has influenced our work. Robert Wolf began using instant photography with children and adolescents many years ago (see Wolf, 1976, 1978, 1983). Working with learning disabled children, antisocial children, and acting-out adolescents, Wolf found

instant photography to be helpful in engaging these difficult clients in the therapeutic process. Many of his techniques and ideas inspired our own. The transitional movement work by Houston dance therapist Wynelle Delaney has influenced our thinking, as has other work by people mentioned throughout the book. Interwoven throughout, the concepts of Carl Gustav Jung provide the theoretical thread that holds it all together.

Our work together, using photography combined with other media, began in the early 1980s when we explored the vitality of the expressive arts therapies in group sessions. At that time we led a workshop called "Integrating ancient healing rites and modern technology" in which photography, video, drama, masks, and the arts were used to bring past and present healing methods into force. Since then, we have refined our techniques and added many new methods. Most of the exercises and assignments in this book have come about to fit a specific need for an individual therapy client, a group, or a workshop. They have incubated and birthed as a result of our many therapy experiences and playful brainstorming sessions.

In these pages the reader will find a discussion of art therapy, with emphasis on instant photographs. The invention of instant photography by Edwin Land in 1948 and the modern technology of Polaroid® 600 cameras and film have made it possible to use photos that are taken in therapy, of or by the client, during that same therapy session. From point and shoot to developed color print takes one minute, quicker than drawing or painting a picture. One snapshot costs less than a dollar, certainly not prohibitively expensive. Furthermore, people seem able and willing to take photographs, whereas they may not feel as able to draw or to be "artistic." The photos give a practical and realistic starting place for the creation of works of art, following instructions that are designed to be therapeutic.

For the most part, we approach the scholarly part of the book from the theoretical perspective of C. G. Jung. Of all the great theorists, Jung encouraged multimodal approaches to therapy, and especially mentioned creative and artistic therapies. He did not specifically promote photography, but we like to think that oversight was largely due to the bulky, expensive and impractical photographic technology of his time. Wherever possible and relevant, we shall refer to Jung's writings in the chapters that follow.

By way of introduction, let us quote Jung regarding art therapy. Jung

wrote these words in 1916, in a manuscript that remained unpublished until 1958:

> The emotional disturbance can also be dealt with in another way, not by clarifying it intellectually but by giving it visible shape. Patients who possess some talent for drawing or painting can give expression to their mood by means of a picture. It is not important for the picture to be technically or aesthetically satisfying, but merely for the fantasy to have free play and for the whole thing to be done as well as possible . . . a product is created which is influenced by both conscious and unconscious, embodying the striving of the unconscious for the light and the striving of the conscious for substance (Collected Works, Vol. 8, pp. 78–79).

We firmly agree with Jung about giving an emotional disturbance "visible shape." Further, we would say that many, if not most of the issues that come up in psychotherapy can be dealt with better if they have visible shape. Not only disturbances, but moods, relationships, memories, fantasies, anxieties, frustrations, worries, and goals often have no concrete referents. It is much easier for people to confront, discuss, change, and otherwise deal with a concrete referent than an abstract idea. By giving the abstract a "visible shape" the client creates a referent that is quite tangible. It has shape, color, and size and can be directly confronted, discussed, and visibly altered. With a photograph, a client can create a body pose that is a visible shape for an emotion or memory, and can confront, discuss, and alter the photograph in ways that can ultimately and obviously be therapeutic.

We do not believe that patients (or clients as we prefer to call people who seek help) need much artistic ability. It takes very little artistic ability or creativity to pose for a picture, or to cut out and mount a photograph. Artistic ability or training is definitely not a requisite for photo art therapy. A therapy client made this statement: "One unique thing about photographs is the freedom they gave me to not have to worry about not being able to draw! A nonartistic person can take adequate photos; therefore, this technique gave me permission to go for it and not worry about how I would stand up against the work of others."

We do agree emphatically with Jung that the picture need not be technically or aesthetically satisfying. Art therapy departs from art in that the emphasis in art therapy is on the therapy, not the aesthetics. It is a matter of encouraging clients to value the process as an authentic expression, not as some product that will be judged for its artistic expertise. The final artistic product is valuable for therapeutic reasons,

and rarely for aesthetic ones. Clients are sometimes embarrassed or frustrated by the inadequacies of their artistic skills, and need extra encouragement by the therapist, but other clients might eagerly create aesthetically pleasing and strikingly dramatic works of art.

Art, with its many media, allows the "fantasy to have free play" as Jung put it. Photography alone is too restrictive, so we supplement the photographs with a large variety of artistic media. We believe in allowing the fantasy to have free play, and subscribe to the idea that the psyche is complex and must be approached in a diverse fashion. Jung wrote, on another occasion in 1935: "The more deeply we penetrate the nature of the psyche, the more the conviction grows upon us that the diversity, the multi-dimensionality of human nature requires the greatest variety of standpoints and methods in order to satisfy the variety of psychic dispositions" (Collected Works, Vol. 16, p. 9).

More recently, McNiff wrote:

> Perhaps the most distinctive feature of an artistic philosophy of therapy is its orientation to multiplicity. Varied images emerge naturally from the psyche, making it necessary for us to be ready for them with as many sensitivities and resources as possible. Inflexible intellectual perspectives make it hard for images to manifest themselves and make it even more difficult for them to be experienced and known by those who work within environments that are not equipped to engage them. . . . The psyche expresses itself in a variety of forms. Individual expressive styles differ, and more than one expressive modality may be useful (1987, pp. 260–261).

One of our clients stated, "With the added paper, glitter, boxes and so on, the photos come to life; all of the 'extras' help define the exercise in a personalized manner." Another group member wrote, "Unequivocally, I experienced a therapeutic efficacy when the art materials were combined with the photos. The combination was marvelously succinct yet facilitated a great deal of conscious and unconscious processing. It amazed me how the art materials that I chose added to the confronting, emotional impact that I thought, at first, was sufficient with the photos alone. In addition, upon observing art products by other group members, it became increasingly apparent how each of us uniquely sought to resolve each issue with colors, shapes, various sizes, and materials that served to direct each of us to explore how we felt about what we did, the feelings our projects stirred in us, and how the integration of art materials and photos together serve to answer profound questions."

In our photo art therapy work we provide clients with instant cameras

and film, marking pens, paint and paint brushes, colored yarn, magazines, construction paper, tissue paper, poster board, crayons, scissors, glue, sequins, feathers, glitter, ribbon and whatever else we might have available.

The photo art therapy activities we have developed are designed to provide structure while allowing for a maximum of "free play." We provide broad outlines and direction, but allow for individual creativity.

It is important to provide a structure that is not completely cognitive in nature. There must be allowances for the creation of a product that is "influenced by both conscious and unconscious, embodying the striving of the unconscious for the light and the striving of the conscious for substance." Art therapy, if structured properly, allows for the emergence of unconscious fantasies of which the client may be only dimly aware, if at all. To quote Jung once more: "Critical attention must be eliminated. Visual types should concentrate on the expectation that an inner image will be produced. As a rule such a fantasy-picture will actually appear" (Collected Works, Vol. 8, p. 83). In our work, we encourage clients to play with the art materials, to pursue their first inclinations, to avoid thinking or planning too much. Certain shapes and colors demand to be used in the art work, and if a client is not too cognitive, too intellectual, the fantasy has free play and there is in fact an interplay of conscious and unconscious psychic forces.

The combination of art and photography facilitates this interplay of conscious and unconscious forces. Lambert (1988) remarked, "Art and photography approach the self from two different directions. Art draws first upon the unconscious bringing to the surface that which had been sublimated and frequently unknown to the self. Photography begins with an image outside of the self (objective data as well as a rich source of symbolic data.) The external image can then be generalized and integrated with the internal self. Therefore, I see art and photography complementing each other." In our work, we usually ask that people compose the photographs before actually taking the picture or having it taken of them. Therefore, the resulting image is a portrayal of a conscious, prior concept. Even when people take "snap" shots, no doubt there is some conceptualization before the shot is snapped. After the photograph develops, we then add the subsequent step of artistic augmentation of the photograph with a variety of art media. This second step, the art augmentation or decoration, is not as clearly conceived beforehand. Most people simply let the art proceed without a clear plan. Furthermore, most people report that they become absorbed in the art work, and enter a

kind of trance while they are using the materials. This second step, adding the art to the photograph, may help the client come in contact with feelings, thoughts and memories that are not readily accessable to active, conscious thought. In other words, the photographic part of the assignment is conscious and intentional. The artistic part of the assignment is more unconscious and automatic.

A pervasive theme in Jung's writings is the tension of opposites. With regard to conscious and unconscious, Jung writes over and over again that the conscious psyche compensates for the unconscious and vice versa. The compensatory nature of the psyche makes it inevitable that tension will exist in the individual. The person overcomes that tension of opposites by the transcendent function. That is, by becoming more than simply a bundle of tension. The transcendent function depends on the process of individuation, whereby a person becomes all he or she can be. Jung wrote:

> The transcendent function does not proceed without aim and purpose, but leads to the revelation of the essential man. It is in the first place a purely natural process, which may in some cases pursue its course without the knowledge or assistance of the individual, and can sometimes forcibly accomplish itself in the face of opposition. The meaning and purpose of the process is the realization, in all its aspects, of the personality originally hidden away in the embryonic germ-plasm; the production and unfolding of the original, potential wholeness. The symbols used by the unconscious to this end are the same as those which mankind has always used to express wholeness, completeness and perfection: symbols, as a rule, of the quaternity and the circle. For these reasons I have termed this the *individuation process* (Collected Works, Vol 7, p. 110).

The individuation process is possible only with increasing knowledge of one's personality. The particular combination of photographs and artwork, as we have discussed above, is a powerful method for assisting a person in the quest for personal knowledge and transcending the tension of opposites.

The present book is divided into four sections: *Self-understanding, Alleviating Distress and Symptoms, Group Therapy,* and *Discussion.* Where possible and practical, we reproduce photo art therapy work done by clients as illustrations of the concepts.

The first section contains six chapters that have to do with understanding oneself in the quest for individuation. Chapter 1 is a discussion of photo art therapy assignments that aid in understanding oneself in relation to the natural world. Chapter 2 contains methods for understand-

ing one's relationships to other people. Chapter 3 gives instructions and methods for exploring the "persona," or that personality that we project onto others. Chapter 4 concerns the "shadow," that part of the personality that is not easily acknowledged or valued. Chapter 5 is a discussion of photo art therapy and archetypes, particularly with reference to folk tales and fairy tales. Chapter 6 concludes the first section of the book with a photo art therapy approach to dreams and active imagination.

Section Two contains specific suggestions for direct therapy of psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and phobias, with illustrated examples. Chapter 7 has to do with fears, with special reference to children, including work with sandplay combined with photographs. Chapter 8 addresses the use of photo art therapy in resolving intrapersonal conflict. Chapter 9 is the use of photo art therapy in dealing with apathy, indecision, and depression. Chapter 10 is a case study of an adult survivor of childhood abuse who used the photo art therapy methods to nurture that hurt child within and to overcome the effects of the abuse.

In Section Three we have three chapters on group therapy. Chapter 11, "The Visual Transitions Group," is a description of a photo art therapy group technique developed by the authors that is multimodal in nature, incorporating art, photography, video, movement, and verbal discussion. Chapters 12 and 13 address the common problems in group therapy of developing group cohesion and breathing new life into a "stuck" group.

Section Four consists of two chapters only. Chapter 14 is primarily a discussion of the ethics of confidentiality, and practical matters, such as art materials, with some brief descriptions of photo or video art programs that are new, not completely developed, or that do not fit conceptually within any other chapter. Chapter 15 is a brief summary of the book. We conclude the book with a list of references.

To avoid sexist language and the awkward he/she, herself/himself construction, we arbitrarily use feminine pronouns in some passages and masculine ones in others. The identities of clients are disguised and all art reproductions of clients are reprinted with permission.

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CONTENTS

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SECTION ONE
SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The self is a central concept in all personality theories and in everyday life. We say a person is selfish, we talk about self-concept, self-esteem, self-motivated, self-made, myself, herself, self-realization, self-actualization, and on and on. Talking about "self" is easy. Defining "self" is not so easy. At one point, Jung described self this way:

> Conscious and unconscious are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but complement one another to form a totality, which is the *self.* According to this definition the self is a quantity that is superordinate to the conscious ego. It embraces not only the conscious but also the unconscious psyche, and is therefore, so to speak, a personality which we *also* are . . . It transcends our powers of imagination to form a clear picture of what we are as a self, for in this operation the part would have to comprehend the whole. There is little hope of our ever being able to reach even approximate consciousness of the self, since however much we may make conscious there will always exist an indeterminate amount of unconscious material which belongs to the totality of the self. Hence the self will always remain a superordinate quantity (Collected Works, Vol. 7, p. 175).

If we can't ever really understand ourselves, why try? Is self-understanding or self-knowledge worth the effort? Jung (Collected Works, Vol. 7) emphasized that self-knowledge, and the action that follows that knowledge, allow one to free oneself from the tyranny of the ego. Instead of being bound by the egotistical world of personal wishes, hopes, and fears, one can be freer to participate in the larger world of more objective interests.

Clearly, Jung felt that self-knowledge is a good thing. We agree wholeheartedly and have designed photo art therapy activities with self-knowledge as the goal. In this first section, we give details of six different approaches to self-knowledge. Chapter 1 addresses the question of self as it relates to the natural world. Chapter 2 is concerned more with oneself in relation to other people. Chapter 3 has to do with the persona, that part of our personality that we groom for presentation to the world. Chapter 4 delves into the dark side of the personality, the dimly per-