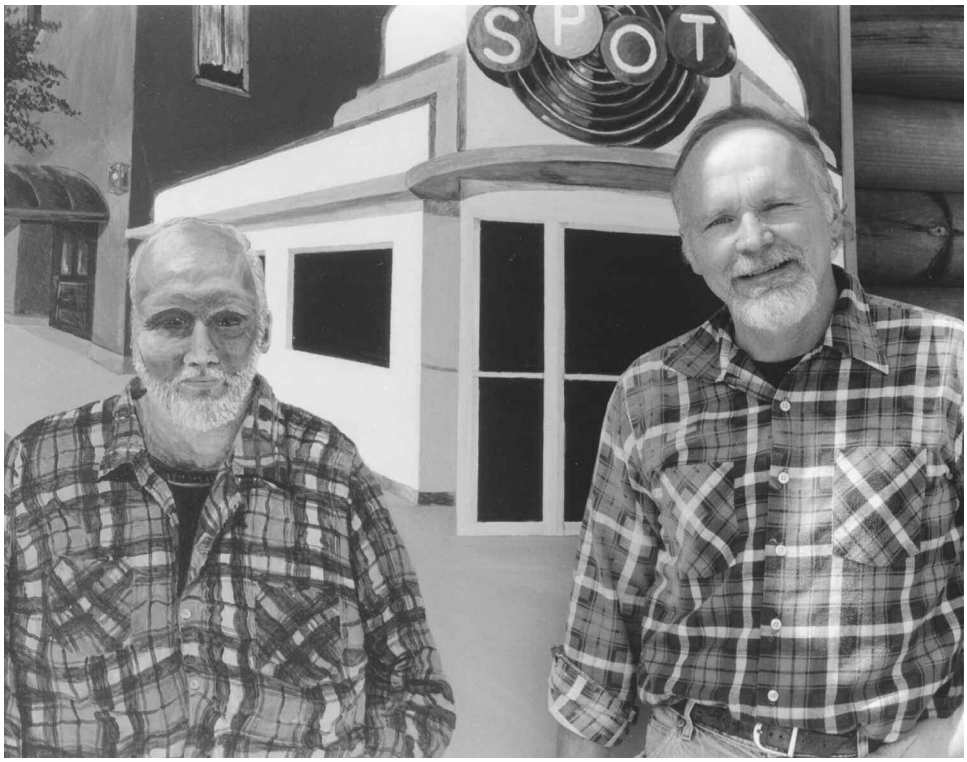
ESSENTIALS OF ART THERAPY EDUCATION AND PRACTICE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bruce L. Moon is an artist and art therapist with extensive clinical, teaching, and administrative experience. He is a registered and board-certified art therapist who holds a doctorate in creative arts with specialization in art therapy. Bruce is the Director of the Graduate Art Therapy program at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee. His clinical practice of art therapy, focused on the treatment of emotionally disturbed children, adolescents, and adults, has spanned over 25 years. He has lectured and led workshops at many colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

Bruce is the author of *Existential Art Therapy: The Canvas Mirror; Introduction to Art Therapy: Faith in the Product; Art and Soul: Reflections on an Artistic Psychology; The Dynamics of Art as Therapy with Adolescents; Ethical Issues in Art Therapy;* and *Working with Images: The Art of Art Therapists.* He has also written a number of journal articles. Bruce brings to this second edition of *Essentials of Art Therapy Education and Practice* many years of experience in art studios, clinical settings, and educational settings. His educational background integrates a rich tradition of interdisciplinary training in theology, art therapy, education, and visual art. He is an active painter, songwriter, and performer.

On the cover: Photograph taken by Lisa Hinkle.

Second Edition

ESSENTIALS OF ART THERAPY EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

By

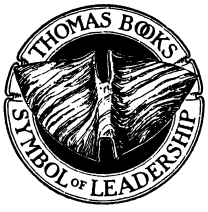
BRUCE L. MOON, PH.D., ATR-BC

With a Foreword by

James Lantz, PH.D.

And an Introduction by

Catherine Moon, MA, ATR-BC



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FOREWORD

Bruce Moon is an artist, a psychotherapist, an art therapist, and a teacher of existential art therapy. Moon challenges the common attitude that the psychotherapist should be trained to be a technical practitioner whose interpretations are based upon cookbook prescriptions that are designed to confront psychopathology or maladaptive behavior, without understanding the personhood of the one who comes in pain to ask for the therapist's help.

Central to Moon's approach is the manner in which the mentor and the beginning art therapist come together in their efforts to learn and grow. Moon demonstrates the deep, intimate, alive, and complex training relationship that can lead to the awareness of meaning in the lives of both. The concern for authentic engagement in the training relationship enhances the beginner's ability to use the *self* to help clients learn to use art and artistic expression to identify and integrate new insights in their lives.

Bruce's excellent book is ultimately concerned with the use of art and the artistic relationship to promote human growth. His deep understanding of both art and existentialism makes this book a high point in the ever-evolving fields of existential psychotherapy and art therapy. It is an important contribution to the development of creative, effective psychotherapists who value human growth and who refuse to slide into the dehumanizing trends of modern society. I highly recommend this book for those who are interested in art, art therapy, existential psychotherapy, and the development of a future generation of psychotherapists who will dare to be creative, continuing to cherish the caring core of the helping process.

JIM LANTZ, PH.D.
Ohio State University
Worthington Logotherapy Center

Author's Note

The clinical accounts in this book are in spirit true. In all instances, however, names have been changed and identifying information regarding clients has been so obscured as to insure the privacy and confidentiality of the persons with whom I have worked.

The case illustrations presented are amalgamations of many specific situations. Factual data has been fictionalized in order to protect the individual.

INTRODUCTION

At the close of one chapter in this book, Bruce Moon says, "Attend to your passions. If you have lost the zeal that once powered your journey, return to the studio, for it is there that you first stumbled upon the power of images and art processes." If there is one essential element to this book on the essentials of art therapy, it is Bruce's belief in art as the core of our profession. He does not suggest that we value *art* above *therapy*, but rather that to be an art therapist means there is no way to tease out one from the other. An art therapist who is "passionately disciplined" is willing to plunge into the dark depths of the soul and use what is found there as the very stuff of his or her art making. It is this fierce faith in the process of art making that undergirds our profession. This is what, at the most essential level, we art therapists bring to the client-therapist and educator-student relationships.

With this "passionate discipline" as the warp that holds together the weft of his book, Bruce goes on to enumerate the various elements necessary for the training and practice of art therapists. His experience as an artist/clinician/educator gives the book credibility. He is not speaking theoretically about the necessary intertwining of these disciplines. He speaks with the voice of one actively engaged in these three aspects of art therapy. So it is that he can make assertions such as:

> Educators of art therapists must resist the seduction of training their students to be *as-if* psychologists or pseudo-counselors.
>
> Students who want to become art therapists must insist that they be educated as art therapists and nothing less.
>
> If we abandon the art process for ourselves, we art therapists will eventually dry up and be blown away like dust.

Although you, as reader, may not agree with all that Bruce writes, his words are likely to engender a response in you. His writing is clearly born of passionate conviction and the authority of lived experience. For this reason, what you read in this book may at times comfort, at

times irritate, at times challenge, and at times inspire you.

I think Bruce would say this is how it must be. It is not easy to be an art therapist, to be passionately disciplined. It is comforting, irritating, challenging, inspiring work. Bruce writes, "The work of the artist is not easy, covered with blisters both physical and emotional, tired muscles, cramped fingers, and weary eyes. The work of an artist is a testament to faith that the struggle is worth it, that it mattered." If we art therapists bring this kind of faith and conviction to our work as educators and therapists, the students and clients we work with are sure to reap the benefits.

CATHERINE MOON, MA, ATR-BC

PREFACE

During my career, I worked for 22 years as an art therapist at Harding Hospital, in Worthington, Ohio and as the co-director of the Harding Graduate Clinical Art Therapy Internship Program. I have provided clinical services to thousands of clients and educational services to hundreds of students. For the past several years, my work has been focused on art therapy education and, to a lesser degree, private practice.

Currently I am the director of the Mount Mary College graduate art therapy program and an associate professor. I am in the unique position of being an educator who has: (1) been an on-site supervisor to art therapy practicum students, (2) served as a clinical program director, (3) provided art therapy clinical services in institutions and in private practice, and (4) written about art therapy theory. Through these different responsibilities, I've had many opportunities to observe and influence educational processes. I hope this second edition of Essentials of Art Therapy Education and Practice will offer another chance to encourage and inspire future art therapists.

The title of this book, *ESSENTIALS OF ART THERAPY EDUCATION AND PRACTICE*, reflects my efforts to explore the crucial components of the education of creative arts therapists. The first edition of this book was born of my desire to describe what my colleagues and I do as we integrate the complex fields of art, therapy, and education. Since its publication in 1992, there have been significant developments in the profession of art therapy, important modifications in the educational standards of the American Art Therapy Association, and profound changes in health care. In this second edition, I update specific portions of the book to reflect these changes and attempt to articulate the elements of art therapy and art therapy education that are essential to helping students become knowledgeable and skilled therapists. I originally conceived of this book as being written for art therapy educators and supervisors, but have come to see the benefits it can offer to students and seasoned practitioners as well.

Art therapy educators are keenly aware that our success or lack of

success with educating our students will one day affect the lives of clients who come to them seeking help. Thus educators have an important responsibility to students and future clients alike. I hope this book adds to our development as a profession.

Over the past 28 years, I have worked with clients through music, drama, creative writing, and sculpture, but it is in painting and drawing that I feel most comfortable. I hope that readers who specialize in other media will forgive me for sharing clinical vignettes that primarily feature drawing. While I embrace and appreciate the use of all of the creative arts, I am most at home in the visual medium.

In writing, I have drawn from the experiences of experts in the field of art therapy education: art therapy students. I have asked them to teach me and I am grateful that they have been willing to do so. Their candor has allowed me to get as close to their experience as possible. They have even allowed portions of their daily journals to be shared here. Much of this book is also built around my interactions with the students I have taught and supervised. Without the contributions of students over the years, my understanding of the essentials of art therapy training would never have taken form.

This book is also about the practice of art therapy and the essential role art making plays in both practice and education. It is impossible to write about educating art therapists without reference to the clinical and artistic work that students are in training to do. Likewise, it would be difficult to write about the practice of art therapy without regard to the educational and artistic experiences that precede it. These subjects are tightly interwoven.

BRUCE L. MOON

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to many people who have, in their ways, contributed to the writing of the second edition of this book. Perhaps most important are the students and clients I've come to know these past 27 years. They are truly the ones who taught me most of what I believe to be essential in art therapy training and practice.

Special thanks go to Ellie Jones, the editor of the first edition of this book. Ellie and Cathy Moon made significant editorial suggestions for this second edition and I am deeply appreciative of their efforts. Ellie worked wonders, smoothing and trimming my sometimes-awkward presentation. By working with Ellie and Cathy I have learned to write coherent sentences.

Thanks also go to the contributors to this work, Jim Lantz, Cathy Moon, Joan Selle (now Joan Zeller), and Lou Powers. Debra DeBrular, a cherished colleague, also made significant offerings to this book. I am forever grateful, Deb.

For 22 years, I was deeply affected by creative, conflicted, painful, and pleasurable encounters with my former colleagues at Harding Hospital. They were interested in my work and encouraged me to pursue putting my ideas into words. Most important, they gave me time to write.

I've also been fortunate to work in very supportive academic settings. My colleagues at Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee have challenged my ideas, sharpened insights, and helped to sustain my efforts. I am thankful.

B.L.M.

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Chapter I

THE IMAGE

The First Essential–We regard images as living entities.

> Images and metaphors present themselves always as living psychic subjects with which I am obliged to be in relation . . . A particular image is a necessary angel waiting for a response. How we greet this angel will depend on our sensitivity to its reality and presence.
>
> James Hillman, *The Blue Fire*

> Those who will not slip beneath
> the still surface on the well of grief
> turning downward through its black water
> to the place we cannot breathe
> will never know the source from which we drink
> the secret water, cold and clear,
> nor find in the darkness glimmering
> the small round coins
> thrown by those who wished for something else
>
> David Whyte, *Where Many Rivers Meet*

Let us turn our attention to the place of *the image* in our profession. Although absolutely central to the existence of the creative arts therapies, image has received less attention in published works than one would expect. Authors seem comfortable describing art processes, art-making materials and tools, and, of course, therapeutic strategies. However, the image has received relatively little press. When I speak of image in this context, I am referring to the inner visualized form that emerges within an individual's imagination. When image has taken center stage, it has often been in the service of a fixed psychological scheme or theory of explanation. This does not, in my view, give images their proper respect. Image has been pressed, pounded, or poured into intellectual frameworks of understanding generally related to interpretation. From such efforts come interpretive equations

such as *that* means *that*, or *this* equals *this*. Invariably these cookbook interpretive formulas focus on specific images as indicative of pathology or illness, leading to a rather sick view of imagery. Such interpretive equations become popular because they reduce or eliminate ambiguity and give the pretense of precision. For example, if a particular interpretive formula suggests that images of caves are indicative of issues related to feminine sensuality, then there is no mystery, no uncertainty or vagueness about the meaning of the image. Thus, when an art therapist who embraces such systems of interpretation encounters an image of a cave, she immediately "knows" the issues the client is struggling with.

I hope that readers of this text will abandon all hope of arriving at a systematic, verifiable formula for understanding images. In Moon (1990, 1995), I coined the term *imagicide*, the killing of image. As art therapists, we must avoid external pressures that would turn us into imagicidal practitioners. McNiff (1991) refers to images as autonomous entities. The first essential aspect of the arts therapies is that images are regarded as living things. Whatever the form–the words of the poet, the tones of the musician, the brushstrokes of the painter or the fleeting gestures of the dancer–the image has life (Fig. 1).

In the early years of my career, influenced by the ideas of Picasso, I often asserted that all things we create are self-portraits. As my work has evolved, I've found it necessary to amend this view. I still contend that all things I create are at least a partial self-portrait, but I now know that there is more to the image than just me.

In a lecture to the students of the Harding Graduate Clinical Art Therapy Program, Shaun McNiff used the metaphor of children to demonstrate this point. While certainly our children reflect characteristics of their parents, he insisted, children are *not* their parents. "They have a life of their own" (McNiff, 1992). My children have certainly confirmed that McNiff is correct in this assertion.

I have often referred to H. W. Janson's (1973) description of art making as a birth process (p. 10). So, if the image I release upon the canvas may be likened to my child, I am forced to modify my previous conviction that it is no more than a portrait of me. My real-life children remind me constantly that they are not me. When I look at the images in my art, I am confronted with this same reality. I must speak to my painting respectfully, regarding it both as a part of me, and yet, not me.

Figure 1. The image has life.

The notion that an image has a life of its own and its own stories to tell can be demonstrated at an art exhibit. If the viewers of any piece are asked to tell the story of the work, it is intriguing what will emerge! No two stories are exactly the same.

I admire the work of Edward Hopper and one of my favorites is his painting, *Nighthawks*. I have not read a description by Hopper of his intent with this painting. I have actually avoided doing so. The stories this image tells me are far more interesting to me than any he may have written or spoken of. The painting has a life of its own, separate and distinct from that of Edward Hopper. To be sure, it may represent some facets of Hopper the man, but it represents itself to me without my having knowledge of Hopper's personality or biography. According to Hillman (1989), it is a necessary angel awaiting my response to its message (pp. 50–70).

In April of 1991, I was a presenter at the Midwestern Illinois Arts Therapy Conference hosted by Jerilee Cain, Ph.D., at Western Illinois

University. The keynote speaker was David Whyte, a poet from the Pacific northwest. During his presentation, he recited his poem, *The Well of Grief.* As his resonant voice rose and said, ". . . in the darkness glimmering, the small round coins thrown by those who wished for something else," I was caught up in wonder. I have no idea what Whyte intended with these words, what personal pain or loss they might represent, but when I read them, I have a very clear image of myself lying deep in the murky well waters as the shiny slivers of another's wishes tumble past. I recall the faces of grief I have known. I remember the tugging, gnawing, longing to be on the surface, away from my own mourning. David Whyte's image, ". . . glimmering, the small round coins . . .," becomes my image. A necessary angel, it waits for my response. It will not leave me alone. It calls me into dialogue. I speak with the image and it teaches me, not only about David Whyte, but about myself as well.

To regard the image as being greater than, or more than, a reflection of the self who created it requires a willingness to let go. I can best explain this by referring to my own artwork. The painting in Figure 2 is of the little cafe in my hometown where my friends and I gathered throughout my adolescence. I painted it during a period of intense reflection and introspection about my past. It is one of a series of paintings with similar themes, that is, scenes of my childhood. When I look at this painting, I can smell the hamburgers and fries. I can hear the laughter of my buddies. I remember standing on the corner, heartbroken after breaking up with my girlfriend. I remember the feel of sitting in the 1965 VW beetle that is parked alongside the building.

These memories and sensations are rich and meaningful for me. However, when I exhibited the painting in the Harding Hospital auditorium, I was fascinated by the comments others made about it. Each viewer made up his or her own story to fit the scene. Of course, none of their stories matched my own. There was a moment of artist-indignation as I eavesdropped on others' reactions to the work, but it became clear that the stories others told about this image had some personal meaning to the storyteller. My painting called them into a dialogue that was different from the one I experienced. I began to understand the meaning of letting go. I could not control how the image conversed with someone else. The image asserted its own existence. Had I intervened and said, "No, you misunderstand . . . this painting is about . . ." I would have committed imagicide (and perhaps

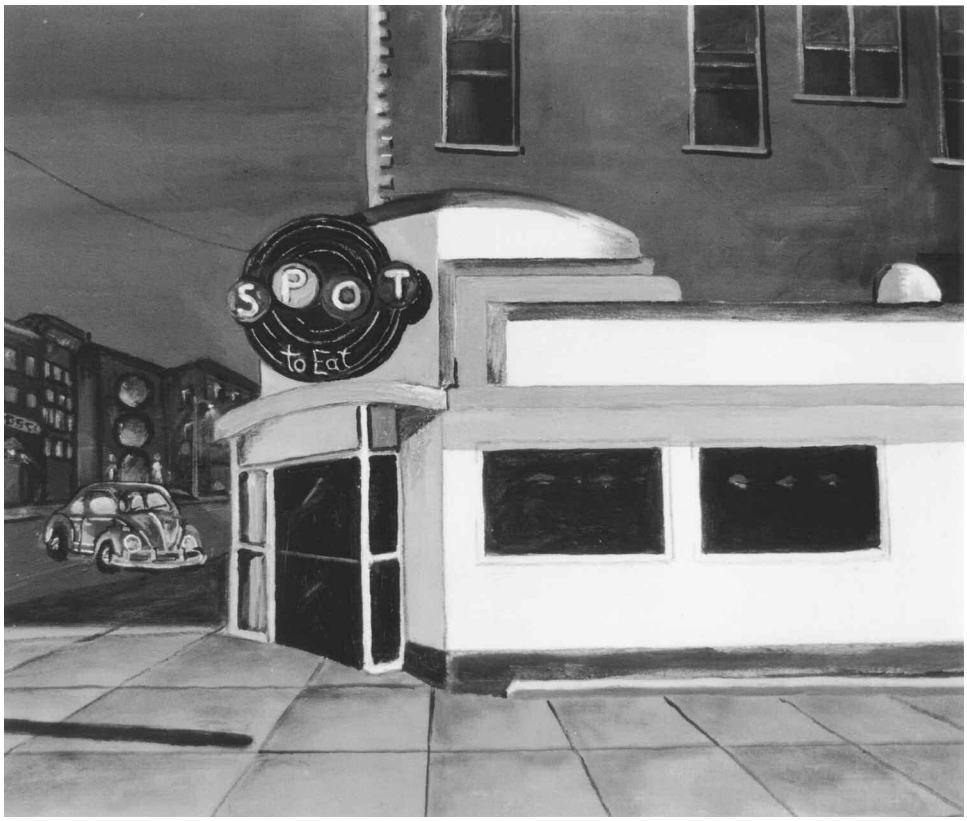

Figure 2. Each viewer made up his or her own story to fit the scene.

symbolic infanticide as well). All I could do was let go.

Catherine Moon describes this process of hearing others dialogue with her images as like trying on someone else's perspective. It is instructive, for it deepens and expands the artist's own dialogue with the work (Fig. 3).

Those who embrace a psychoanalytic theoretical framework might classify these encounters as *projections*. I do not object to this term if projection is seen as the cornerstone of empathy and not as a building block of pathology. Ultimately, it is the ability of the creative arts therapist to project himself or herself into the image of the client that lays the groundwork for the establishment of a therapeutic relationship. It can be argued that all good relationships are formed through disciplined acknowledgment of and willingness to work with projective experiences. It could be formulized as follows: I project upon you, you project upon me, and then we attempt to make sensible meaning out

of the process.

This is a possible description of the interaction among the creative arts therapist, the artist/client, and the image before them. The image is the intermediary. It is not only an object-thing to be used as the basis of client revelatory conversation. It is a subject capable of teaching both client and therapist about themselves and one another.

It is helpful to think of art therapy relationships as being comprised of three equal partners: the client, the artwork, and the art therapist. When there is dialogue among these three partners, the rights of all are respected. Having compassion for images and regarding them as independent entities, separate and distinct from the persons who made them, opens possibilities for how we think and talk about what we do in art therapy. It also opens us to ways of behaving toward our clients and their artworks. These ways of thinking and acting foster relationships that are respectful, empathic and deeply therapeutic.

If one regards images as autonomous, separate entities, one begins to view them as sacred, living things. As arts therapists, then, we are those who attend to living images as well as to the living persons who made them.

Kirkegaard (1956) touches on such a perspective as he discusses devotional listening. "In a devotional sense . . . to listen in order to act, this is the highest thing of all" (p. 179). I propose that we art therapists adopt the phrase *devotional seeing*. To see in order to act (the action being the attending to the client artist) is devotional seeing.

Hyperattention to pathology has had a damaging impact upon our ability to regard images and their creators as entities worthy of our respect. From a pathological perspective, it is possible to view images as signposts of disease, and artist-clients as diagnostic categories or symptom clusters. Yet images need not simply be objects of analytical inquiry. They can also be subjects capable of teaching. If the image has a life of its own, with its own purpose, then we who involve ourselves with the image must regard our work as sacred. As art therapists, we deal with living images and the living artists who made them. Both subjects command deep respect.

If we regard images as having lives of their own, it is impossible to establish any formula for interpretation or equation for analysis. In art therapy relationships, the reality is that *this* does not always mean *that*. In my work with clients' images, I resist the urge to see images as specimens to be dissected, measured, and classified or diagnosed. I believe