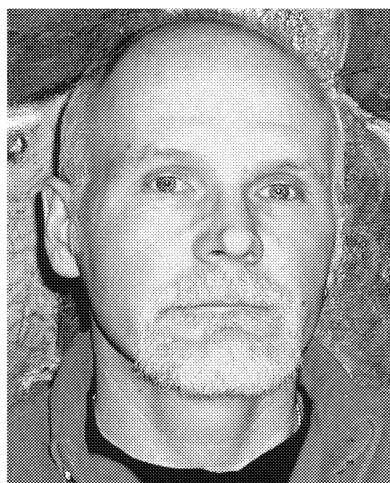


WORD PICTURES
The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Bruce L. Moon is an art therapist with extensive clinical, teaching and administrative experience. He is a registered and board-certified art therapist and 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

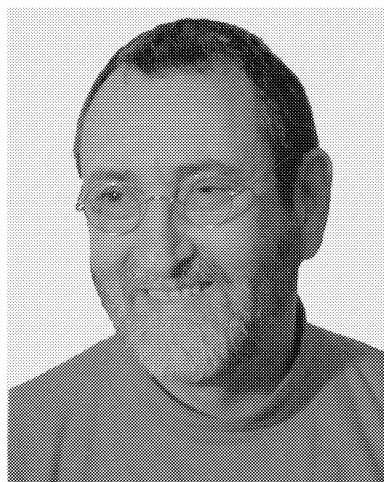


practice, focused on the treatment of emotionally disturbed children, adolescents and adults, has spanned over thirty years. He has lectured and led workshops at many colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

Bruce is the author of *Existential Art Therapy: The Canvas Mirror*, *Essentials of Art Therapy Education and Practice*, *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 project many years of experience in art studios, clinical 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, poet, songwriter and performer.

Robert Schoenholtz is a registered and board-certified art therapist and licensed professional counselor in independent practice in Philadelphia, PA, and director of The Inward Eye, Center for Learning in Art Therapy and Imagery. He has been a part-time faculty member of the Graduate Art Therapy Program at Marywood University and has been a guest lecturer in the Mount Mary College Graduate Art Therapy Program. He has presented numerous times and in many places on the importance of direct interaction with the imagination for personal growth and healing. In his practice, Bob offers psychotherapy, personal growth counseling, and workshops. He is also an active artist and musician. More information regarding his work is available at his web site, www.theinwardeye.com.



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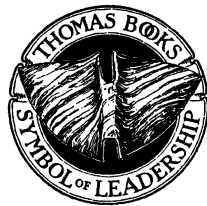
The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists

Edited by

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

and

ROBERT SCHOENHOLTZ, M.S., ATR-BC



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EDITORS' NOTES

Each of the contributing poets in this book submitted three poems for consideration. The majority of the poems and statements appear as submitted, but in a few instances minor editorial changes were made for presentation purposes.

The poets also provided photographs of themselves. Some sent studio portraits while others submitted candid snapshots. This, of course, leads to a wide range of portraiture style. Enjoy.

The contributors were asked to write a brief biographical sketch. Some of the bios are written in a very personal style while others present a more formal style.

Each contributor authored a poet's statement related to the poem(s) accepted for inclusion in this text. They were asked to comment on their motivations for writing, the inspiration for, and significance of works included in the text, and how poetry writing is incorporated in their personal and professional lives.

The editing in this book has been minimal. We did not want to do anything to change the spirit or intent of the poets' words. As a result, you may find phrases that seem awkward, or idiosyncratic. We have made very few changes, and only done so in the service of citation, grammar, spelling and syntax. Still, there are no doubt grammatical errors in this text. If you listen closely as you read, perhaps you will hear the voice of the writer. Many of the poets' statements are written in conversational style. We saw no reason to change them.

PREFACE

*Let these words
quivering as grass in wind be a gentle plea
a confession of faith*

THE SUBJECT OF THIS BOOK

This book is about poems and the people who wrote them. It so happens that all the poets presented here are art therapists or students of art therapy. This may be the first book of its kind in art therapy publications and I hope it is not the last.

Arranging words in idiosyncratic strings in such a way as to evoke images—like painting, drawing, sculpting—is powerful stuff. For me, making poems is often an act of confession about the way life is. As you will see in these pages, poetry has to do with the intent to express some essential aspect of human existence. For art therapists, writing poetry involves the use of skill and creative imagination in the production of word pictures that convey fundamental qualities of life. Poems affect us by revealing meanings—deepening, enriching and ensouling daily experiences. Poetry provides opportunities for validation from, and attachment to, others. Poetry celebrates the commonplace and the awe-inspiring, the everyday and the bewildering aspects of existence.

Rationale

The majority of art therapy literature has focused primarily on the therapeutic aspects of the discipline. I suppose this is as it should be, yet I am convinced that many art therapists in the world were smitten by artistic and poetic muses long before mastering therapeutic jargon. This book is an attempt to honor our poetic roots, our collective poetic shadow.

For most of our history, the professional identity of art therapists has been tightly entwined with the psychological and therapeutic aspects of the

work. There have been many reasons for this, including a desire to be regarded as “truly professional” by colleagues in other helping disciplines and a perceived need for recognition by licensure boards and insurance companies. These forces often kept art therapists from involving too closely with the artistic and poetic aspects of our professional identity.

Traditionally, in institutions such as psychiatric clinics or medical hospitals where many art therapists worked, the professionals whose disciplines were anchored in science, physicians and psychiatrists have held the most professional power and prestige. In order for art therapists to be recognized as professional colleagues, and thereby assume some measure of influence and status within such institutions, it seemed necessary to adopt the language and methods of the aforementioned disciplines. Many art therapists embraced the language of these disciplines and accentuated the therapeutic aspects of art therapy while simultaneously de-emphasizing their artistic/poetic roots.

In an effort to address a concern that I had neglected my own poetic side I presented a lyrical case study at the American Art Therapy Association national conference in 1996. The presentation offered a poetic portrayal of my work with emotionally disturbed children and adolescents.

The following is a brief excerpt from that presentation:

Antoine has a razor in his heart
everyone can see it cuts him apart
stand close to him
you can feel the wind blow, 'cause
Antione has a razor in his heart

He comes to the asylum in the
winter of his eleventh year
he is failing in school
he is fighting at home
he is always angry
he is running away
he bangs his head
he punches his face with his small
dark hands till his face bleeds and his
hands bleed
yes, Antoine has a razor in his
heart

This “case study” could have been presented in a more traditional manner. I could have talked about my theoretical approach to working with a difficult and troubled boy. I could have spoken in clinical terms such as *dys-*

thymia or *attachment disorder*, to convey the essence of Antoine's sadness, rage and pain. I could have discussed the process of exchanging introjects, but I believe something essential would have been lost. The wistful beauty and angst of Antoine's life, and our relationship would have been sanitized beyond recognition.

The tendency of art therapists to assimilate the communication styles of other professions remains common today. Efforts to emulate other disciplines' research methodologies, certification processes, and legislative endeavors are evidence of this mindset.

Over the past several years there has grown a movement to re-ignite our poetic passions and to welcome them back into our professional identity (Henley, 1993; Moon, B. 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001; Henley, Schoenholtz, Moon, B., Moon, C., Horovitz, 1997). *Word Pictures: The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists* is an effort to give voice to the poetic underpinnings of our identity as art therapists.

The Process

When Bob Schoenholtz and I decided to create this book we were confronted by several tasks. First, we needed to secure a publisher. We developed a book proposal and sent it to Charles C Thomas. Within a few months we had a contract for the book.

We then decided to solicit submissions of work from the art therapy community. In the Spring 2003 *Newsletter* of the American Art Therapy Association we published a call for submissions. Art therapists and art therapy students were asked to submit three poems for consideration.

The next step in the process was the selection of jurors who would evaluate the submitted works. We wanted jurors who would be free to select poems on the basis of their aesthetic and expressive sensibilities. We decided the jury should consist of non-art therapists, but persons who have prior experience with poetry and a degree of professional understanding of the therapeutic use of the arts. We selected two jurors, Mr. Charles Rossiter and Dr. John Reece.

Charles Rossiter is Book Review editor for the *Journal of Poetry Therapy*. He is a former Vice-President of the National Association of Poetry Therapy. Charlie has over twenty years experience teaching workshops about poetry, self-expression and creativity in schools, libraries, prisons, community centers, mental health facilities and social service agencies. He has received fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois Humanities Council and the New York Foundation for the Arts. He hosts the audio website, **poetrypoetry.com** and his poetry has been featured on NPR/PRI's "Poet and the Poem." As Special Projects Coordinator for NAPT he co-edited *Giving*

Sorrow Words, published by the NAPT Foundation. His recent poetry publications include *Back Beat*, *Cold Mountain 2000* and *What Men Talk About*, which was awarded the first Red Wheel Barrow Prize from Pudding Press Publications. He serves as mentor for trainees in poetry therapy.

John Reece, Psy.D., is a clinical psychologist in central Ohio. He earned his B.A. from Otterbein College, his M.A. from the University of Dayton and his Psy.D. from Central Michigan University. Long interested in psychological and healing aspects of the creative arts, John has conducted therapeutic groups using music, poetry and drama. John now folds elements of creative arts into his traditional psychotherapy practice, recognizing the power of creativity to harmonize thoughts and feelings.

Structure

Word Pictures: The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists is structured in the following way. The *Preface* and *Introduction* are followed by invited works by art therapists, some of whom participated in *Image and Word: The Use of Poetry by Art Therapists*, presented at the 1997 National Conference of the American Art Therapy Association. The invited poets section is followed by the selected poets and their work. Each poet's section begins with a brief biographical sketch and a picture of the art therapist. Following the biographical sketch is a statement by each poet that serves to anchor and give context to the poet's work.

In addition to selecting poems for inclusion in the book the jurors were asked to select ten poems to receive visual art responses. Jean Paul Richter (1973) said that, "The essence of poetic presentation, like all life, can be represented only by a second poetic presentation." The visual art responses were created by art therapists other than the poem's author. The artists were asked to reflect on the poem they were given and create a visual reaction, or second poetic [artistic] presentation. Finally, we conclude with a brief epilogue.

Poetic/Artistic Inquiry

Bob Schoenholtz and I have had several motivations for the creation of this book. For me, *Word Pictures: The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists*, has been a fascinating research project. In his 1998 text, Shaun McNiff describes the emergence of a new vision of investigation that he calls art-based research (pp. 21–82). He states, "Over the course of my career I have progressively come to the realization that it is the arts, the primary contributors to the emergence of creative arts therapy, which have been conspicuously absent from the profession's discourse about research" (p. 21).

Bob and I were curious about the poetry our colleagues make. Creating this book has afforded us the opportunity to look inside the motivations,

aspirations, and inspirations of other art therapists. We are deeply grateful.

As you will read, writing poetry is a form of investigation for many of the art therapists in this book. Preliminary analysis of the poets' writings suggests five prominent modes of artistic inquiry. They are:

1. Poetry as self-exploration and reflection,
2. Poetry as a form of documentation of therapeutic work,
3. Poetry as a method of responsive interaction with clients,
4. Poetry as a way to clarify and contain the art therapist's feelings that surface in therapeutic work,
5. Poetry as a form of spiritual practice.

It has been fascinating to be given glimpses of our colleagues' thoughts about these things. As you reflect upon the poems, artworks and poets' statements, if you identify other modes of inquiry, please forward your ideas to me. I will be very interested in your thoughts. As McNiff (1998) states, "We need to find ways to communicate the truths that we experience within the art therapy experience (p. 120). The poems, works of visual art, and accompanying essays presented here are simply that; truths experienced within the art therapy context. I hope you will find *Word Pictures: The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists*, an inspiring example of artistic inquiry.

Conclusion

I believe the time is right for this book. It presents art therapists as committed poet/artists. This is a significant contribution to the literature and identity of the art therapy profession. I hope this book will help to shape the professional identity of future generations of art therapists in America and throughout the world.

Again, please let us know what you think of this effort. We are breaking new ground here and look forward to your feedback regarding this project. May this book be, as grass under wind, a gentle plea, a confession of our faith in art therapy. Enjoy!

Bruce L. Moon
Milwaukee, WI

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INTRODUCTION

Painting is poetry which is seen and not heard, and poetry is a painting which is heard and not seen.

—Leonardo Da Vinci, *Trattato Della Pittura Di Lionardo Da Vinci*

Simonides calls painting silent poetry, and poetry speaking painting.

—Plutarch, *Whether the Athenians Were More Warlike or Learned*

HISTORY

This book is the culmination of a process which, for me, begins with the keynote address of the 1994 conference of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) in Philadelphia. The keynote speaker at this event was the poet Jimmy Santiago Baca whose readings were breathtaking in their perception, self discovery and revelation, and dedication to honesty. I left that presentation transformed, with a fresh awareness of myself and my goals. Part of that awareness was to develop renewed energy and discipline for art making in whatever form necessary to fulfill the specific or general need for expression.

The particular event which gave rise to this book is an informal gathering after a day of meetings at the annual conference of the AATA in Milwaukee in 1997. In my memory, the discussion came around to ways each of us present and express our creative urges. We discovered that most of us present sometimes use poetry for this purpose, in addition to the expected visual media. It was during that conversation that the idea arose to present our poetry together as a panel with the theme of how we use poetry in the context of our art therapy practices. Included in that panel were Ellen Horovitz, Cathy Moon, David Henley, Bruce Moon, and myself, chaired by David and me. Each of us presented two poems which addressed the therapeutic process, the relationship with the client, or was written in response to a

client. Each of us wrote in a different, personal way and our content varied as far as the parameters of the panel guidelines. I recall the experience of presenting those poems with the other members of the panel, to our art therapist colleagues, as exciting and satisfying.

Being focused on poetry within the context of art therapy led me to a categorization of such poetry under several headings: the concerns of the experience of doing therapy, the engagement in the therapeutic relationship, the response to the poetry and other art productions of clients, and the personal experiencing of aspects of the creative process. My offerings fell into two areas—response to the poetry expressions of a client, and self-reflection about the processes of creativity. The following poem was conceived by way of response to a poem given to me by a client who chose this medium to imagine a commentary to her father.

A Song for You

Starting these slow lines for you in the park
a presence from behind is felt,
uncomfortably close, confirmed by the eyes of others.
Turning on the bench I find a specter
a street saint carefully offering a gift of water
to the lamppost near.
Then to the tree, the grass, the curb, and the pavement
all from a 7-11 soda cup, a slurpee,
jumbo size.

Crosses of sticks and string and beads
and a scepter of colorful cardboard and leaves
provide the meaning for his momentarily startling gifts to the Earth.

The pigeons know him as they gather and mill about
awaiting another smiling toss
of dry bread crumbs

Only then do I know what I try to write to you,
when I am reminded that where I sit is sacred ground
and my gratitude rises for the stones and squirrels and sun.

The passers-by and other bench-sitters
seem closer, more familiar
as I grope for words for the wordless
The mystic of the park chants a soulful R&B riff

his face awash with delight
nearing again with an offering for the cement from his holy cup,
pouring carefully in three deliberate drops, the mark of a moist heart.

And as that heart slowly disappears into the ground and the air
I know that I honor in you not only that which is strong and grows,
but, too, that which suffers and shrinks,
For of this do we all need more.

Robert Schoenholtz
Rittenhouse Square
Autumn Equinox

The second poem I read that day was one of reflection about the creative,
self-reflective process, a plea to a muse of the imagination.

Come to Me

Come to me softly,
insinuating your presence,
on my skin,
and behind my eyes,
and in my marrow,
and most of all, the spaces between.

Come to me like a collision,
smashing your inevitability
on my complacency,
shredding my excuses,
stomping my reason
into the soil of decay and return.

Come to me like a kiss,
so hard and insistent,
as to render useless
the boundary of my body
to the flow of your
darkness and light
into flesh and bone.

Come to me in that way
which brings me to breathe,

to sing, to shiver, to jump and kick,
 so salt tears displace soft skin
 like warm rain
 on yesterday's snow.

—Robert Schoenholtz, November 16, 1996

Rationale

It could be said that poetry is imagination in words—the expression in words of imagery and its flow. Poetry is the sister of painting, drawing, sculpting, and the other arts in that its mother is the same—the deep knowing which precedes language. If all the arts provide an avenue of expression to that deepest knowing, poetry is simply the one that does it with words.

In trying to find adequate expression for imaginal experiences I experimented with narrative writing, visual art in the forms of painting, drawing, sculpting, and music. With writing, I described my experience as accurately and precisely as I could. While this provided an exposition of the facts, it was lacking in that there were more aspects of my experience for which I could find no words. With visual arts I also found a lack, although painting, drawing, and sculpture helped me to express other aspects of my experience, they had similar limitations as writing. I found these media to be very helpful in the expression of a relatively narrow aspect of a particular experience. This limitation is based in part it seems, on the structure of the medium, the internal logic of the mode of expression. Visual arts are built on the logic of form, space, color, line. Narrative writing is built on the logic of sequential time and description. Music and movement are built on the logic of the direct knowledge of atmosphere and pure experience. With language as its medium, the poetic form makes use of imagery and rhythm, not just describing but creating or recreating. With poetry, I can make use of elements from all the other expressive forms in a way which often can most closely describe my experience.

Poetry, whose material is language, is perhaps the most human and least worldly of the arts, the one in which the end product remains closest to the thought that inspired it. . . . Of all things of thought, poetry is the closest to thought, and a poem is less a thing than any other work of art. . . .

—Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Language is certainly a part of my experience with imagery. As the flow of images passes through me, as I engage with the images, as I open to the

sensations which accompany the experience of the imagery, I put my experience into dialogue in words with the images, and into descriptive language in order to induce the linear, rational aspects of my consciousness to remain present so that I may hold my intention in the moment and, later, my memory of the events. The experience is, like a dream, evasive without the constraint of language to fix it in linear time and memory. But the process of relating to the imagination is not, itself, in language. Language is a medium of expression for the imaginal, whether that be the language of words as in writing, the language of images as in the visual arts, or the language of movement as in music and dance.

Creative expression can be used either to describe experience or to evoke it, with the latter including its description embedded in the artifact of the process of discovery. Poetry uses words and their organization into language in a way which comes closest, for me, to describing my original experience. The poem will often not follow the linear sequence of the memory of the experience, nor every detail, but rather, often with the use of one or two prominent images and a feeling or two, the poem can be so constructed as to convey the atmosphere and the overall experience most fully. Perhaps this reveals my shortcomings in the use of the other modes of creative expression for it is clear that some can use these with great skill to convey experience. The art therapists represented in this collection by definition must have skills in visual art expression but have chosen, in these instances, to use poetry to say what they must. I prefer to think that this simply shows how the various modes of creative endeavor may be suitable for one person, or one purpose, or another.

*You must give birth to your images. They are the future waiting to be
born . . .*

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

An important aspect of all creative modes is the discovery of the image. In writing about writing, the late poet William Stafford (1978) said, “A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought of if he had not started to say them. That is, he does not draw on a reservoir; instead, he engages in an activity that brings him a whole succession of unforeseen stories, essays, plays, laws, philosophies, religions . . .” (p. 17). The act of creating in any medium can bring forth an image and an experience with it. While an art therapist commonly uses visual art media to stimulate imagery, poetry may also be used in this evocative way. Most of our experience with writing has been to describe an idea, thought, or feeling of which we are

aware, the act of writing can also awaken the image. Just as the approach to the blank canvas offers a world of opportunity, so does the blank page.

In discussion of the common interests between the surrealist art movement and art therapy, Shaun McNiff (1992) wrote about “imaginal realism,” which he called a “direct engagement of inner movements” (p. 47) in the creative process. To begin to write without specifying content, but with the intention to reveal, especially to one’s self, whatever makes itself known, to risk one’s expectations for the direct experience of one’s deepest and broadest knowing, to provide only with intention the generous constraints within which knowledge may freely arise, is the process and product of such discovery writing.

The first green night of their dreaming, asleep beneath the Tree,/God said, “Let meanings move,” and there was poetry.

—Muriel Rukeyser, *The Sixth Night: Waking*

All in all, poetry, like all expressive forms, has its characteristics which can make it suitable to fill the needs of someone who has something to say, whether or not they know what it is at the outset, and finds that a poetic form is the way which best fulfills that expectation. For me, the use of poetry is an exercise in the practical, leading to the experience of the sublime. The poetic form can be the most practical way to express an experience if I want to include the fullness of each moment, represent the experience of the flow of time, and include meanings the way they arise for me.

For me, the excitement of this book is in the multilayered creative imagination of the many participants, for it is the imagination which brings forth the visual art, the poetry, even the book, itself. The use of the ten paintings in this book which were requested to respond to ten specific poems is an example of how expressive media may work together. The poet and the painter in each of these examples are not one and the same. So this is not an example of how one person might express the same idea two different ways. Rather, this is an example of how one artist responds to the expression of another in a different medium. What the painter experiences in the reading of the poem might not be exactly what the poet intended but what they get from that poem will influence nonetheless the ensuing painting. What is the meaning of a poem or of a responsive painting? Is the painting an expression of the same concepts meant by the poet? Maybe or maybe not. Is the painter following a process of description, or discovery, or both, as the poet may have? Although a poet or an artist may have an intended meaning in their work, I do not believe that meaning is merely intrinsic to the work. Meaning, rather, is in the mind of the observer, influenced by the work and

always in the context in which it is observed. All these factors influence the perceived meaning of any work of art. Perhaps these are some of the rich mysteries of the creative process. Either way, in the context of this book, what can be seen is the creative process in action.

. . . it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are—until the poem—nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt. That distillation of experience from which true poetry springs births thought as dreams birth concept, as feeling births idea, as knowledge births (precedes) understanding.

—Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

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I am indebted to many colleagues, teachers, and mentors who shaped my understandings of the role of poetry in the lives of art therapists. Don Jones, A.T.R., H.L.M. helped to lay the groundwork for my understanding of the importance of all art forms in his professional identity. I am thankful for the encouragement received from Don regarding this project. I wish to thank our jurors, Charles Rossiter and John Reece for their hard work and expert advice. Bob and I are grateful to all the poet-contributors who took the risk of making public their endeavors. We also thank the visual artists who accepted the challenge of making an art piece in response to a poem. Their work enriches this book. Special thanks go to Mount Mary College for supporting this effort through a grant. Finally, thanks go to Norma Winters and Marianne Oberbillig in the art therapy office at Mount Mary for their help along the way.

Bruce L. Moon

I am grateful to mother and father for the gifts of life, safety, and love. I am grateful to my children who were my first teachers about unconditional love and simple being. I am grateful to Tenzin Wangyal, Rinpoche for his gift of the Bön dharma illuminating the path and the experience of the natural mind. Thanks also go to Maya for her critical eye and, along with Noah, for considerable and continuing inspiration. But most of all I am grateful to my wife Sandy for her gift of persistent love and support, often in spite of myself, and for her open sharing of herself, which has helped to guide me to almost everything which is important in my life. Also, for Janie Rhyne who I was fortunate to know in the last years of her life and whose encouragement is surely a part of this endeavor. To these people, my gratitude is endless; I return their love with all my heart. May all beings be free of suffering.

Robert Schoenholtz

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WORD PICTURES
The Poetry and Art of Art Therapists

THE JURORS

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Selecting the Poems

Upon the envelope's arrival . . . immediately I'm faced with conflicting thoughts. This is a good assignment, helping to create an anthology of poems written by art therapists. Then again, suppose I don't like the poems. That could make a lot of art therapists angry with me. That won't do. I want this to work out like that music therapy conference in Albany. Everyone had a good time and I made a lot of friends. Being a music therapy conference there were something like twenty men and 200 women in attendance. The guys got the idea that the men of music therapy should create a chorus for the conference variety show. I wrote a humorous little song and the guys made up some interesting harmonies to go with it. We even rehearsed in the men's room, so the women of music therapy wouldn't get a sneak preview. When we sang in the show it went over like gangbusters. What a night.

But this is different. Here I'm the critic. Who likes critics? Who likes grades? Who likes rejection? How did I get into this?

Hold on. I need some perspective here. This task is interesting. I love reading poems, and picking the five to be responded to visually is an especially appealing idea. How will I pick the poems to get visuals? I could settle for poems with the strongest visual images. No, that's too simplistic. Perhaps I should go for the vaguest poems and leave more room for visual imagination. Wait, perhaps I shouldn't think of that yet. After all, this is conjecture. The poems are still in a stack by the envelope, beneath my page of directions. I haven't yet looked at a single one.

Now, I've flipped through the manuscripts without reading them. The first thing I notice, is that the poets use a lot of "center justification" when they put their poems on the page. Is this an effect of spending a lot of time with visual art? Obviously centering the lines gives a poem a different "look." On the other hand, I didn't notice any concrete poems nor did I see a lot of messing around with varied indentations to get the lines all over the page a la e.e. cummings. When I actually read the poems I'll need to consider if the center justification seems to go with what the poem is trying to convey. Could this be a workshop topic for a future art therapy conference—visual elements of poems? Some artists these days are mixing words in their visuals. What about looking at the verbal/visual issue from the other side?

Later . . . further thoughts as I prepare to read the poems.

Knowing these poems are written by art therapists, people adept at visual art, makes me think of the relationship of visual art and poetry. Visual art is apprehended holistically. Verbal art presents reality, with rare exception, linearly. Yet, poetry, because of the Image, is the least linear of verbal forms, or at least has the potential to be the least linear. No matter what the medium, all art is right-brain activity.

What will I look for in the poems I nominate for inclusion? My directions are really open. Basically, they instruct me to select the poems I like best and indicate the five I recommend for visual treatment. I'm free to go for anything I like. In that case, the best thing to do is fall back on basic principles.

Show, Don't Tell. That's the byword in every creative writing workshop in the world. Don't say "oh, I'm so depressed." Find a way to show it. I'm reminded of that great image from an old Richard Brautigan poem. "I feel like a turd that's been nailed to a garbage can lid." Now, there's an image that conveys a state of being.

Universality. It's ok to use "I" in a poem, as long as the universality of the experience is evoked. If it comes out as nothing more than what happened to the character in the poem, it will be of limited interest. We had to deal with that issue when we edited the *Giving Sorrow Words* anthology after September 11th. A lot of the poems we received were about what the person/poet was doing that day. It's not that we don't care about individual experiences, but the telling of those experiences becomes more interesting when it makes a larger point.

That brings up another issue, the difference between creating art (in this case, poems) for one's self and creating art for publication. That's some-

thing poetry therapists and art therapists understand, the idea that art can be created for one's own self-exploration, clarification and understanding, as well as for exhibition or publication for the wider world to experience. With that in mind, I'm happy to see all of these poems. As honest expressions of human experience and creativity, they have already served a positive purpose for their creators.

Coherence or logic. Inconsistencies in logic can ruin an otherwise interesting and well-written poem. Errors, in fact, are also jarring. Gary Snyder once said that anyone who wants to be a poet should learn all the flowers. He's got a point. The thoughtful reader will be seriously distracted if the poet's forsythia come into bloom in September.

Diction. Poetry is the most concise and intense form of verbal expression. By definition, wordiness in a poem is a no-no. For this collection, I'll also lean away from anything too obscure and toward poems with good surface accessibility.

Finally, I want to keep in mind that this project is a celebration of poetic creativity.

At last . . . I begin reading the poems.

On the first read-through it's never easy trying to withhold judgments till all the poems have been read, but I want to get the big picture first. There are a number of poems about art therapy. I decide not to be concerned about that. Poets write from their life experiences so it makes sense for these poems to be here.

The selection process takes several readings. I drop the philosophizing when I'm into it. Generalizations don't matter now. I focus on the poems in front of me. Each reading produces more notes to myself. I don't think much about what I'd like to recommend for visuals. I'll make that a separate decision I can save for the end.

Finally, after I don't know how many times through the poems, I have a selection of manuscripts with check marks on them for inclusion.

Now I'd like to say some things about a few of the selected poems. If you're a person who prefers to look at art in a gallery before reading the catalog and signage to see what the curators think, you should STOP reading this essay now and PROCEED DIRECTLY TO THE POEMS. You can always return after you experience the poems if you're curious about what I have to say about them.

Mary Andrus, "A Song for Ben," though poignant, made me smile. I think the line that hooked me was "Soon there'll be dates and liftin' weights." That's a perfect characterization of the early teen male and coming from a