

Psychophonetics, anthroposophy and art

Kate Casey 2009

Introduction

Over the last year or so Anne Holland and I have taught a series of art workshops using pastel drawing and clay. As psychophonetic's practitioners our work draws on the sequences and techniques taught to us by the modalities founder Yehuda Tagar. It also is deeply connected to the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner particularly around the role of art and creativity in activating people's higher self. Our work also draws on artistic techniques taught to us during our student years by practitioners such as Lea Rose and Catherine van Wilgenburg, our own life experiences as an educator and instructional designer and our readings on art therapy in general.

In response to challenging times Anne and I decided to offer one more workshop to the general public before my baby is born in July and our teaching will be halted for a short while.

Why this article?

I would like to share some of the core elements of our workshop process, in the hope that other practitioners may begin to join with us in offering such inspiring work. The response to the workshops is similar to what we often see as counselors working with individuals. Participants leave with a warmth and gratitude that arises from the creation of a respectful, safe and inviting space where people are welcomed and where all experience is honoured. Anne and I would really like to share what we have learned so that others who might also like to offer or begin to teach workshops may have some practical strategies for creating effective workshops.

Why are the art workshops so effective?

Of course Anne is a natural born teacher. This helps! And I have a long history of creating educational materials and working with organisations to create engaging learning experiences. But on top of that we do utilise very conscious strategies for creating a safe, warm and welcoming space for participants, so that their creativity can be expressed. Here are our top five things to consider if you wish to run something similar.

What makes the workshops so effective? Our top 5

1. Safety

How might a participant who has not done any artwork since primary school feel on arriving at an 'art' workshop? Exposed? Enthusiastic? In any number of ways. Anne and I always begin by conducting a group safety contract. We take it very seriously and start by having participants sense into their bodies and connect with the part of them that is feeling vulnerable about being here, right now. The participants put their hands on this part of the body and pass a message to the vulnerability promising three core things: non judgment, confidentiality and freedom to do (or not do) anything that Anne and I suggest. The participants then nod their heads if they can also promise this to each other. With safety as the foundation of our workshops people immediately start to breathe easier.

2. Spirit of generosity

It's a simple idea. We try to share with our participants the spirit of generosity. We only use best quality materials and provide these for our group to take home with them. We encourage them to use lots of paper (or lots of clay). We share our own work with them in an open hearted way and we provide good quality morning or afternoon tea for people to share. We also teach the workshops together to ensure people have lots of individual attention and consider our service to be more important than our total profit. Additionally we are available for follow up work after the close of the workshop itself.

3. Bringing it back to the body

We do not begin an activity until we have encouraged participants to connect back to their bodies. Psychophonetics is of course a body based psychotherapy. We believe that all emotional experience can be traced to their origin through the traces left in the body and that through art we can

Psychophonetics, anthroposophy and art continued...

directly express these sensations.

Prior to any artistic experience the participant will be talked through the process of being in touch with the sensations in the body. As part of this we also conduct an initial 'enlivening' session where we encourage people to move and make sounds to get things flowing and to start to be aware of blocks in the body. Depending on the length of the workshop, we may do this a number of times during it.

4. Effective exploration/resourcing sequences

Psychophonetic's general principles and in particular the exploration and resourcing sequences hold us in very good stead when people are exploring an issue using art. In particular we find these sequences useful (nb: described below assuming readers have some familiarity with Psychophonetics):

Enter, exit and behold - the artwork (clay, drawing, painting) can be considered the equivalent of a gesture. It can be entered deeply into and exited from and beheld to gain perspective. Beholding the 'astral' forces at work in the artwork leads to the experience becoming more manageable (and observable)

Russian doll - zoning in on a particular aspect of the artwork and then exploring that in another artwork to more fully gain a better understanding of an inner dynamic

Bamboo - useful when a participant is having trouble gaining perspective...a series of quick drawings showing where they are at 'right now' is enough to bring the participant to a clearer perspective

Resourcing - drawing the qualities that are needed or missing

The Wish - focusing the Will. Once a participant has completed a series of artworks and has had an opportunity to share their experiences with the facilitators and the group and have identified their emerging growth point they are asked to make 'their wish' about it? Participants are encouraged to write this down.

5. Shared experience

Leaving enough time to discuss and share experiences and drawings is crucial. At least one quarter to one third of the workshop time is needed to share, discuss and witness drawings and experiences.

What next?

These are simply some basic sharings at this stage. Anne and I would like to create a more formal written book/article outlining workshop strategies and lesson plans and/or tools people can use at home. We imagine showing a lot more examples of people's drawing processes and to show how we work with them.

Our workshops for 2009-2010 will most likely be limited to four only as I look after my new baby girl and Anne counsels and works with indigenous youth at RMIT.

Please contact us if you would like more information or wish to have information about our upcoming workshops.

Warm wishes to you,

Kate Casey
katemcasey@gmail.com
 0419 246 389

Anne Holland
 0407 324 593



Expressive Drawing workshop 2009