WHO AM I?: REBUILDING NEW AESTHETICS FOR THE SELF WITH TBI/ABI (TRAUMATIC/ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY)

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OVERVIEW

- Intro & Bio : 10 mins
- Theory Application: 30 mins.
- Experiential activity: 20-25 mins
- Summer Workshop: 20 mins.
- Question & Discussion: 10 mins.
BIOGRAPHY & EXPERIENCE

- **BFA Art Education: Concordia University (Montreal)**
  - Art Animator for Centre Bienvenue Mental Health (1992-1994)
  - Art Director and Dance Instructor for Batshaw youth Services (Summers 1992/1993)

- **MA Creative Arts Therapies: Concordia **
  - 2001-2005 (PT)
  - Therapeutic Arts Facilitator for Adults in Mental (2000-now)
  - Creative Arts Therapist for QC TBI Ass. (2010-now)
  - Creative Arts Therapist for MBIA (Summers 2015-2018)
TRAUMATIC & ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

• **Traumatic**: Congenital- birth, stroke, meningitis

• **Acquired**: Fall, Automobile, Sport, Assault.

**IMPAIRMENT**: ABI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting:

- Thinking (i.e., memory and reasoning);
- Sensation (i.e., touch, taste, light, sound and smell);
- Language (i.e., communication, expression, and understanding); and
- Emotion (i.e., depression, anxiety, personality changes, aggression, acting out, and social inappropriateness).
RX: BRINGING OUT THE INVISIBLE

SEQULEA AFTER ABI

• Significant impairments in memory, organisation, behaviour, cognitive.
• Fatigue, frustration, anxiety.
• Sense of self and being in their space.

INTERVENTIONS

• CBT (Neuropsychologist).
• Multi-disciplinary team.
• Pharmacological.
• Creative Arts Therapies.
MECHANISM USING CATS WORKSHOP

- Multi-sensory approach enables to reconnect to past experience.
- Movement (cellular level) evokes cell body memory—activates memory.
- Integrated experience can reveal itself as tools of coping.
- Manipulating reality: empowering patient to process and understand their new reality.

«Tailored Epidermis» (created 1997), images of 27 scars on my legs, switched in a Patchwork. Created for Multimedia class at Concordia University.
NEED FOR RECONNECTION & USING C.A.T

- Alter an ABI/TBI it is difficult in recognising and expressing oneself.
- Brings out & clarify effected sensations.
- Motivation, reperation and perseverance enabled for mind/body connection to occur.
HUMAN CONNECTION WITH THE MUSEUM

**INCOME**
- Museum space emulates the mind space of the ABI recipient.
- Object-based and space-based information.

**OUTCOME**
- Art becomes the “transitional object” for what Simon depicts “Self-interpretation/”Self-aspects”.
- It is a cognitive category or concept that serves to process and organise information and knowledge about one’s self.

CONSTRUCT OF “I” IDENTITIES IN MUSEUMS

SIMON, 2009

IDENTITY MOTIVATION

- Museum becomes a malleable place to construct and try-on different identity from their I-identity.
- Direct connection to the limbic system
Feedback from the environment that helps an individual to adjust their self-image accordingly and be in line with the cues received.

Thus, according to Carl Rogers, the self theory is composed of several perceptions of “I” or “me” and the perception of relationships of “I” and “me” to others.
Museum experience cycle

I think that the museum can satisfy certain needs (either because of past personal experience or word-of-mouth recommendations from others)

- Opportunity to enter new experiences.
- “Shapeshifting” & entering the ‘worlds’ in the art pieces.
- Bringing up new thoughts & perspective.
- Empowerment to make choices.

FINDINGS TO SIMON’S SPECIFIC MUSEUM EXPECTATIONS

- Things that supported their entering needs and interests.
- Things that were novel.
- Things that had high emotional content for the individual.
- Things that were supported by later experiences.
FALK’S 5 FIVE IDENTITY-RELATED REASONS FOR VISITING MUSEUMS.

1. EXPLORER: curiosity driven.
2. FACILITATORS: with social group.
3. PROFESSIONAL/HOBBIEST: desire to satisfy their content.
4. EXPERIENCE SEEKER: Perceive the museum as an important destination.
5. RECHARGERS: Seekers choose to relax and experience a spiritual experience.

• P.S Falk recognise that there is a psychological connection with the association between memory and emotion. Emotionally arousing events are likely strongly remembered because of the increased activation of the brain’s limbic system, which has been correlated with enhanced explicit memory for both pleasant and unpleasant events.
REINACTMENT AT WORCESTER MUSEUM ACTIVITY: WORKSHOP 3  (FREE MUSEUM ACCESS IN AUGUST)

• Observe around the room with the images on the wall, table.
• Choose one that you are drawn to.
• Draw what you see. (10 mins).
• Discussion in pairs (5 mins).
QUESTIONS TO WRITE, REFLECT & DISCUSS WITH PARTNER. AUGUST 3RD 2016

• QUESTIONS:

• What drew you to your particular piece?

• How is the subject for your drawing different to the original one?

• Do you have a stronger connection to the one you created?

• Relating to the Identity Related Model, which one are you?
“TRANSFORMATIONS FROM WITHIN” WORKSHOP
JULY 19TH – AUGUST 17TH 2016

• In a 5 weeks weekly Creative Arts Therapies series starting July 19th - August 17th 2016, 5 A.B.I participants explored diverse creative tools of: Drawing, Collage, Developmental transformation, journal writing & reflections that facilitate opening of the self in a restorative and safe space.
EXPECTATIONS & PREPARATIONS

• Creating appropriate exercises the museum visit.
• Creating questions for each activity, layers a cognitive aspect and awareness to what is created.
• Making each activity adaptable in case of absence.
• Coaching them with similar activity one week prior.
WORCESTER ART MUSEUM VISIT  (AUGUST FREE MUSEUM ACCESS)
TUESDAY AUGUST 3RD 2016
WEEK 2 PREPARATIONS RECONSTRUCTING REALITIES

- Practicing novel activity builds confidence and building expectation to the unknown.
- Recognise these individuals when they come into the museum; want to be acknowledged as possessing expertise and passion.
WEEK 3 WORCESTER MUSEUM VISIT  AUGUST 3RD 2016

- The museum visit was well liked by all participants. There was an omnipresent quality that the building seemed to have transcended to them. All were quite concentrated and found themselves lost in the myriad of images they had to view. It seems that first interpreting the image, then reflecting on what they created, created a positive impact of realisation about themselves.
“JULIE” CLOSED HEAD INJURY FROM FALL (RECHARGER)

• Haymaker by Julien Dupré

“Julie” connection to this piece was on a nostalgic base of her ancestry to Ireland. She mentioned how she likes the simplicity in their life. She expressed the downshift from the Urban life to more rural rhythm.
What it interesting here is that she choose to sketch the human and not the angel. She expressed how she is humbled by the humanity & journey of the person facing the angel. It appears that she explicitly expressed this by choosing to only draw the person. She made reference that she chose not to draw the angel due to its complex gold ornament around it. It appears that her own humility drew her to encounter this angel as her way to find an angel to guide her through her journey with her unknown. She describes how she was drawn to the soulfulness of the eyes.
George is a **strong man** with what he has and he uses them to his best capacity with confidence. He has an impeccable memory in relation to visual special ability. His **photographic memory** is his tool in excelling to who is. He just mentioned descriptors to the image he chose. It is interesting that he wrote not having a stronger connection to the piece he chose. It seems that there could be an impasse to the **connection to his logic** than to what he feels.
It appears that the dinner table image may be imply how the “nourishment” of exploring the unknown that is within herself. It is interesting that there is one chair instead of two in the original; inviting a solo seat for one person to be present. The dimension of the room and shading of both areas have volume on both the room and shaded unknown ones. As she mentioned in her commentary that she was “thinking of drawing something from the black side of the room……but decided not to”
One of my goals with Caroline is to find confidence in the way she works, which is very detailed oriented to a more whole approach. Today she surprised me to how she was able to complete the dimension of the image, which is remarkably similar to the original. It is interesting how she did not share that she has no direct connection to this piece. It appears that she chose this piece as going to a meditative & peaceful place to relax and create the piece she replicated.
PROCESSING & INTERNALISING WEEKS 4 & 5

- Most participants kept the box that was placed for their installation piece.
- Many had questions on how they would interpret their piece in their potential new space.
- It took time for them to seize the process and be comfortable in recreating their new space.
He describes his first cylinder as one of the main building in the painting and being the centre of all aspects of anything we connect to. The two red posts are his supports that are connected by the white pipe-cleaner to consolidate the structure: he mentioned about the union of man & woman coming together.
GEORGE’S INSTALLATION
“JILLIAN”

She enjoyed the expression of this exercise because it brought awareness to her inner spirit resting after her estranged experience. Her lying down, her spirit is taking a fetal position and what looks like a placenta attached to her in replenishing her. The part that she positioned the black & skin tone plasticine, is what she describes is her injury. The beads that she affixed around her spiritual self.
“CAROLINE”

The overall composition of this installation is very decorative and compositionally attuned to the image part of the paper. There seems to be an **unconscious sublimation** from what she wanted to create from the mountains to transforming it to this same serene quality of the tree. She fused what the felt from the twisting of the plastercine to **blending** the elements that she added. The twisting of the could suggest the ying & ying of balance.
“JULIE”

“My hands are a tool with then I’m my jewels.”
Her process was one to accept what may come out and be aware of its transformation. Just the small adjustments that she added to the box interpretation, was an emotional process of acceptance of change and to be ready to adjust to what is presented.
“JULIE’S” POEM

Sunny fields that have Amazing yields
Tooling Dry grass.
Working hard, Working fast
No time to spare.
Pullying, gathering, the old dry grass
Should this labor be done by horse or ass?
“BARBABRA”

Her process was one to accept what may come out and be aware of its transformation. Just the small adjustments that she added to the box interpretation, was an emotional process of acceptance of change and to be ready to adjust to what is presented. It seemed to be a life skill that she may apply in her everyday life. She shared at the end that she may not be completely at ease of what has transposed as a reality, but is able to find the space to be at a better understanding of what is shifting.
BARBARA’S INSTALLATION
OVERALL FINDINGS OF “TRANSFORMATION FROM WITHIN”

• The group as a whole became a collective, where they sensed the support from the art materials as instruments to express their inner world.

• They were assertive to know what were the parameters and wanting to execute while regulating their choices.

• They appear to be a resonance of healing as each participant was navigating with what materials they wanted to affix to their expression to the sketch they represented from the initial museum visit.
WORDS LEFT BY PARTICIPANTS

• “I can use my hands- grateful……and trying to stay positive with all the things I do”.

• “Materials opened ideas to expand & explore my filters for where I’m at.”

• “I choose to ask for help as needed to personally grow & heal and pass as OK”.

• “What motivated me during creation, was trying to find words that point/distill the sort of vague, ever present thoughts, feelings, questions, worries that are usually swirling in the background”.

COMPARING WORDS FROM PROCESS NOTES
AT MUSEUM  IN THERAPY ROOM

RECREATING REALITIES-AUG. 13TH
• Julie: NOSTALGIA BASE, SIMPLICITY, RURAL RHYTHM.
• George: CONFIDENCE, CONNECTION TO LOGIC THAN FEELING.
• Jillian: OWN HUMILITY, SOULFULNESS.

CREATING SPACE FOR THE SELF-AUG.20TH
• AWAKENING, ACCEPTANCE.
• SUPPORT, CONSOLIDATE.
• AWARENESS, REPLEANISH.
CONTINUED WORDS FROM PROCESSING
AT MUSEUM IN THERAPY ROOM

RECREATING REALITIES-AUG. 13TH
• Barbara: NOURISHMENT, THINKING.
• Caroline: CONFIDENCE, MEDITATIVE & PEACEFUL.

CREATING SPACE FOR THE SELF-AUG. 20TH
• PROCESS OF ACCEPTANCE, BETTER UNDERSTANDING.
• UNCONSCIOUS SUBLIMATION, BLENDING.
UNDERSTANDING WORDS THAT WE USE AND WHAT WE DRAW FROM THEM

*HOW DEEPLY PERSONAL MUSEUM VISITS ARE, AND HOW DEEPLY TIED TO EACH INDIVIDUAL’S SENSE OF IDENTITY.

*TO DESCRIBE AND UNDERSTAND THE MUSEUM VISITORS’ EXPERIENCE.

THE ENTRY NARRATIVES APPEARED TO CONVERGE UPON A RELATIVELY SMALL SUBSET OF CATEGORIES THAT COULD BEST BE UNDERSTOOD BY THINKING OF THEM AS DESCRIBING AN INDIVIDUAL’S MOTIVATIONS FOR VISITING THE MUSEUM.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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• Would like to thank the participants who trusted me to led them in their journey towards self-discovery.

• Tress Tricker, MA, CWS for being supportive of this CATS process for ABI/TBI survivors.

• For any questions: sonjaboodajee@gmail.com
“We often hold the tacit assumption that all of our suffering stems from events from the past. But what ever the initial seed of trauma, the deeper the truth is that our suffering is more closely a result of how we deal with the effect that these events have on us in the present”. Peter A. Levine, PhD (2005)