

Magdalena Urlińska
Joanna Zubeł
Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Report from the 14th European Arts Therapies Conference: “Traditions in Transition: New Articulations in the Arts Therapies” Krakow, 13th–16th September 2017

The 14th European Arts Therapies Conference took place in Krakow from 13th to 16th of September 2017. The conference theme was focused around “Traditions in Transition: New Articulations in the Arts Therapies”. The Conference Directors were Sarah Scoble (University of Worcester, UK), Richard Hougham (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, UK) and Jan Vandromme (PXL University College, Hasselt, Belgium). The Local Organising Committee was chaired by Professor Klaudia Węc (Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, the Faculty of Education). The International Scientific Conference was supported with the patronage of the Krakow City Council, Polish Academy of Sciences and the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Krakow. Other conference partners were the Ludwik Solski Academy of the Dramatic Arts in Krakow and Cricoteka – Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor.

After two years of preparations and negotiations, the Jesuit academic centre in Krakow was granted the privilege of becoming a partner institution for ECArTE (the European Consortium for Arts Therapies Education). The choice of Krakow for the conference venue had additional significance. Krakow, as a European

SPI Vol. 21, 2018/1
ISSN 2450-5358
e-ISSN 2450-5366

multicultural city, symbolizes the combination of tradition and its extensive cultural heritage with modernity and innovation. The city of Krakow itself offers – as the organizers emphasized – a wonderful example of the dynamic relationship of the traditional and the contemporary.

The 14th ECARTE conference was an excellent opportunity to engage in a critical and aesthetic examination of such questions, prompting a re-evaluation of techniques, establishing orders, theories, philosophies and approaches to education. The thesis contained in the title of the conference was also the starting point for considerations. Traditions in transition – for the organizers – means a movement, an openness to the new, with a simultaneous reviewing of custom and the established order. The main questions posed during the conference concerned the relevance of the traditions and their operation, whether artistic, cultural or religiously embedded and also at what point traditions become custom-bound and the impact of cultural revolutions such as the digital and social media. It was one of the key questions asked during the conference. It was emphasized that nowadays we can observe a fundamental detachment from the domain of tradition, where new processes in social and national relations, religions, technique or mass movements can lead to a shattering of tradition. This invokes questions about the new roles of the arts and arts therapies in this period of transition. The emerging questions are a reflection of the contemporary culture and its emerging concerns, but it also prompts a fresh and radical perspective in both clinical work and educational practices.

The issues addressed during the 14th European Arts Therapies Conference aroused great interest, as evidenced by the number of speakers. Over three hundred people, from thirty-three scientific centres from all over the world, participated in panel and group discussions. The participants represented international communities of practitioners and scientists, associate professionals and students, which allowed all of them to exchange their experiences and share their knowledge. Thanks to the kindness of the local municipality, who supported the conference, the Opening Ceremony took place in the magnificent Juliusz Słowacki Theatre. During the opening ceremony, the floor was taken by the Chair of ECARTE, Richard Hougham, the Rector of the Jesuit University in Krakow, Professor

Józef Bremer SJ and the Chair of the Department of Social Prevention and Resocialization, Professor Klaudia Węc. After the official opening, the participants had a unique opportunity to attend the lecture entitled *My Birth Will Be Tomorrow* delivered by Jolanta Gisman-Stoch, followed by an outstanding performance of Teresa and Andrzej Welmiński from Tadeusz Kantor's Cricot 2 Theatre *Shadows, Nightmares, Melancholy or 20 Minutes Before Evaporating*.

The intensive programme of the three-day conference covered thirty-three papers, six discussion panels, thirty-one workshops and five masterclasses. The main idea of the conference programme was to address issues related to art therapies and their functioning in the past, the current situation and the implications for the future. The participants of the conference had the opportunity to present and hear the opinions of practitioners and scientists representing art therapy centres from around the world. Innovative solutions, reports from scientific research, best practices and ways of working with clients in a crisis – all of this gave participants a comparative perspective and showed best practices which could serve as signposts for future activities in the field of arts therapies.

The lectures, workshops and discussion panels raised issues related to the area of art therapy, dramatherapy, dance movement therapy, environmental arts therapy, education, music therapy, mixed arts therapies and other research fields. A variety of initiatives, therapeutic, social, educational research and development centres and organizations operating in the field of arts therapies, gave the participants a unique opportunity to confront their ideas, focus on developing their own potential, improve their skills and gain new experiences related to the different types of arts therapies. Discussions focused on problems related to: the relationship of the unconscious and the conscious; the triangulating relationship (between therapist – client and artwork) in therapies; individual short-term art therapy; emotional regulation strategies in arts therapies; creative minds and brain activity in the service of individual change; neuroscience and art therapy contributions to psychotherapy; sharing the space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy; music therapy in supporting the well-being of clients; good practice and arts therapies programmes supporting the mental health of clients. During the workshops and masterclasses, participants had the opportunity to get to learn how

diversity can be treated as a potential and base for (self)development; how communication can be a starting point for building relationship with others; how to implement experimental methods in working with people with crises and special needs. These are just a few of the many issues raised during the conference.

The whole programme was complemented by accompanying events such as: artistic performances, exhibition of paintings and a poster session. There were three artistic performances: the dance performance *Indigenous beauty of butoh dance – searching for the dimmest light in the total darkness* by Chiaki Mima and Toshiharu Kasai, screening of *The Dead Class* in Cricoteka and the performance *The Quest of an Idiot* by Colin Campbell. The exhibition of paintings by Beata Bigaj-Zwonek perfectly matched the theme of the ECArTE conference. Her works are based on imaginary situations which could have occurred in everyday life, focused on her emotions, resulting from the reflections upon the world and thoughts of people (especially those on the verge of a breakdown). As part of the conference, the organizers planned an alternative form of speech and field for discussion for the participants – a poster session. Scientific posters also provide opportunities for open communication between participants. Reported graphic presentations covered various issues including education broadly understood, the space of activities of educational institutions and school experiences, co-existence in a multicultural world and forms of supporting people with special needs and in a crisis. Another, innovative option prepared for the participants was a special Open Space area in which everybody could add to the content and essence of the conference theme, with the possibility of personal or group reflection and expression in the form of art medium around presentations and workshops.

After three days of discussions and deliberations, it was concluded that the path for the future arts therapies needs to draw on tradition, but it must also recognise the diversity of contemporary cultural practices and beliefs. It may both support and limit the development research, theories and practices. Undoubtedly, the 14th European Arts Therapies Conference was a great opportunity to invite new articulations of how art therapies engage with the emerging concerns of the times in which we live. For the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, the possibility to enter into a partnership with ECArTE

was the first step in becoming a part of the international community of art therapists. Granted the status of an associate member, Ignatianum was granted the privilege and honour of launching a new dimension of partnership with ECArTE. It also brings new perspectives for tracing fresh directions of research and actions in the field of art therapies in Poland.

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

Magdalena Urlińska
Jesuit University in Krakow
Institute of Educational Sciences
e-mail: magdalena.urlińska@gmail.com

Joanna Zubel
Jesuit University in Krakow
Institute of Educational Sciences
e-mail: joanna.zubel@ignatianum.edu.pl