

Editorial

编者按

Debra Kalmanowitz¹ and Ka Kit Lai²

¹Academic College for the Arts and Society, Israel

²European Graduate School, Switzerland

This special edition on Hong Kong comes at a time of turmoil for the entire world and an especially a long period of turmoil for Hong Kong. Since 2014, until March 2020 Hong Kong has been, more or less, preoccupied with social struggles. For a period of time Hong Kongers returned to life as usual until June 2019 when the activities erupted once more. This time they were sparked by a plan to allow extradition to Mainland China. The bill was withdrawn in September 2019, but demonstrations continued until the coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic hit Hong Kong in January 2020. At this time the protests as they had been before ended but did not stop, rather they changed their form. With a health crisis emerging protests dissipated, but a new kind of activity emerged in the form of online petitions, worker strikes, and mobilization into unions.

This led to large scale stress and disruption. For some a chasm was opened between the generations and a generational divide has been exposed. Many of the older generation cautioned against placing politics before economic stability. Some of this generation had fled Mainland China during the Mao Zedong era and found stability in Hong Kong. This was now being threatened by some of the younger generation who had different opinions.

The articles in this special edition were written under this stress. The attention of all the authors was divided. Despite being preoccupied with the struggle, the fear, and the urgency for their future, their articles reflect their work, and their attempts to focus on the concerns as budding professionals. These articles reflect an understanding that there was need for personal expression, as well as their need to continue to grow, and not to be all consumed by the discord with which they were surrounded. There were some authors who found this too difficult and pulled out, some submitted articles without a mention of the activities they were attending, while others tentatively mentioned the circumstances under which they were writing. Nevertheless, and importantly, the articles in this edition represent the current state of Art Therapy in Hong Kong and the efforts of the authors to integrate their Western training with their Chinese traditions.

The editors of this special edition, Debra Kalmanowitz and Ka Kit Lai each have each written an introduction to this special edition. Kalmanowitz explores the advances and changes in Art Therapy in Hong Kong over the last 8 years since she co-edited the book *Art Therapy in Asia. To the bone or wrapped in Silk* (Kalmanowitz, Potash and Chan, 2012) and Ka Kit Lai explores the articles from a Taoist perspective.

Rainbow Ho's article looks at the notion of independence in an interdependency and the interaction between tradition and modernity, East and West. She ponders the current tendency or tension between the push to independence in an interdependent

culture in what she refers to as an Asian global city. Esther Yau Ching Nam looks at Chinese calligraphy and its relevance to working with teenagers in a school and group setting. She explores the model of the expressive therapies continuum (ETC), according to Hinz (2015), as a way of conceptualizing how and why particular art interactions can be therapeutic. Joanna To explores the connection between metta meditation (loving kindness meditation), Chinese Buddhism, Chinese calligraphy, and their applications to Expressive Arts therapy. She also looks at this in relation to the ETC (Hinz 2015). Leung Wai Yu engages traditional Chinese landscape, Zen Buddhism and Daoist ideas into her understanding of herself as well as her practice as an Expressive Arts therapist. Sara Y. Chu illustrates how, she in her own particular way makes meaning of the models she has learned, both from China and her Expressive Therapy training and gains insight on a personal and professional level. Bianca Lee explores the reality of working in Hong Kong and how she had adapted her practice to form what she calls home-based art therapy. Aleck Kwon Man Kit looks at the use of the expressive therapies model and how this helps to integrate multiple identities, those of being Chinese, gay, and HIV positive. Gracelynn Chung-yan Lau takes a different perspective, born in Hong Kong, but growing up in Canada, she explores her identity as a Chinese Canadian and speaks about decolonizing her identity through an arts-based enquiry.

Update: November 2020

Since the writing of this editorial the entire world has undergone a massive change as a result of the spread of COVID-19 worldwide and Hong Kong itself is in the midst of a continued transformation. On June 30, 2020 the National Security Law was passed in Hong Kong. This is officially the Law of the People's Republic of China on safeguarding National Security.

Hong Kong was one of the earlier cities affected by the coronavirus. The first confirmed patient was diagnosed on 23 January 2020, and several more were identified after this. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government kept schools closed after the Chinese New Year holidays, on the 27 January 2020, and civil servants were told to work from home. Businesses followed soon after. Since then the city has remained vigilant. The socioeconomic toll, however, has been significant. Many businesses have crumbled, and employees are losing jobs with companies that are having to restructure. Cathay Pacific, the airline of Hong Kong, for example, has announced a corporate restructuring plan involving cutting 6,000 jobs, and health services are also being effected.

Towards the end of 2021, a fourth wave of COVID-19 is anticipated by the medical experts and the government of Hong Kong. For the mental health industry, the practitioners have shifted to the online alternative (e.g., the Zoom platform) in order to continue working with the clients and much effort has been invested into understanding the benefits of employing online technology to practice of Expressive Arts therapy.

With regards to the practice of Expressive Art therapy online we can break down our current situation into three discoveries. Firstly, people have shifted from being skeptical to being surprised by the effectiveness of participating in online workshops

due to the fact that facilitators were well prepared and adapted the creative exercises accordingly to the platform. On the side of participants, the experience of turning their living space into art studios has been experienced as novel and interesting. Despite this, most agree that it is not a replacement but a new and alternative mode for delivering Expressive Arts therapy. Secondly, many participants have reported that they have managed to experience a strong connectedness to their online communities. Thirdly, newcomers to the field have much less concern in terms of enrollment and participation due to the fact that they can “work” from home. This has allowed them to feel safe and seems to have led to increased courage and readiness to engage in new experiences, for example, movement and dance. After initial experiences, there seems to be a decrease in anxiety and a willingness to take up new creative challenges. This in turn, has also led to a greater openness to participation in the physical, live studio. While COVID-19 continues to challenge the world, we have found enormous creativity, resource, and capacity amongst our communities, both professional and personal.

In spite of our shifting worlds, the articles in this special edition remain relevant and pertinent. It may be interesting to read these articles taking into account the introductions to this journal as they place the articles in a broader context and give perspective to the important work being carried out in this emergent but fast-growing local milieu.