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Usefulness of art therapy to treat mental disease

Posted July 8th, 2008 by harminka

Elizaberta López Pérez, a Bachelor of Fine Arts and doctor in Painting at the University of Granada, has carried out one of the first studies in a Spanish university on the use of art therapy for the treatment of acute **mental sick** persons.

Her work, based on psychoanalysis principles, starts from a basic premise: A work of art is a sign formed as a vital trace and its essential material is the humanity of the human being who leaves his memory in the world.

Art therapy or therapy through art, a current started in the middle of the 20th century, uses visual arts with therapeutic purposes. It is based on the idea that visual representations, objectified through plastic material, contribute to the construction of a meaning of the psychic conflicts, and favour its resolution.

Plastic representation would be, from this point of view, a process for thought construction.

Therapeutic community

In order to carry out her research work, López Pérez worked for more than one year with 20 acute mental patients from the Therapeutic Community of the Northern Area of the Virgen de las Nieves Hospital of Granada. Those who participated in these sessions took part in them voluntarily two days a week and they adapted paintings of artists such as Modigliani, Munch or Van Gogh, offering their own vision.

The researcher of the University of Granada highlights the liberating nature of art for these patients, who project their inner world and their repressed desires through their paintings. This

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way, they deal with their fears and desires, which get real during the artistic process where it is possible to give them life or to destroy them.

The peculiar works of art carried out in this art therapy workshop gave rise to an exhibition called The fugitive memory, organized by the Vice-Rectorate of Extramural Studies of the UGR held in the Corrala de Santiago in 2003.

Attached images: Some of the paintings carried out by the participants of the art therapy workshop.

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