

Integrative art therapy and depression: a transformative approach, by Vibeke Skov, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015, 360 pp., £26.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781849055772

The author, Vibeke Skov, is a Danish art therapist and artist. She has a PhD in Psychology from Aalborg University and in 1987 she started the Institute of Art Therapy in Denmark, where she trains students in art therapy. This book is a comprehensive study of her work in developing an integrated art therapy approach for individuals with depression. Her development of a working model based on Jungian theory, through to applying it to her study group, is well documented and takes the reader through the process methodically. Throughout the book, Skov shares valuable insights into the role of an art therapist by way of her 30 years experience in clinical and education settings. She shares her use of dreams within her work and her understanding of myths in relation to the art therapy process and psychological creativity.

The chapters are well structured and strands of theory are woven together to support her work. Skov's use of diagrams and tables aid the reader in understanding the connections between different theories and the development of her Jungian model. They are also a useful tool in her descriptions of her research methodology. She states that her writing style is to be understood by laymen or professionals. While I think Skov's book offers much to students, art therapists and other professionals in psychotherapy and counseling, I sometimes felt that the description and interweaving of many theories from different areas was difficult to follow in the initial chapters. However, when she shows examples of artworks and speaks about them, her ability to marry theory and analysis to the artworks gave me better insight into the theories and showed a solid method of teaching, which must benefit her students.

In her study, she is working with individuals with mild to moderate depression. When looking at depression, her Jungian thinking allows for a perspective that sees depression as a sign of something being unbalanced or a need for change in a person, rather than a symptom. Her psychological approach within the book is based on Jung's understanding of human development, referred to as the process of individuation. She uses this classical approach with her study group, believing that the individuals in her study need a stronger more stable ego-self axis. Through interweaving the fields of anthropology, biopsychology (Dissanayake), neurophysiology (Rosen, Siegel), neuroscience and art therapy into her research she aligns Jung firmly alongside current research and theory. Her interest in the transformative process within the Jungian model of art therapy is key to her study.

In looking at other therapies recommended for people with mild depression, Skov emphasises the lack of a transformative quality in their process. She thinks that there is currently a challenge regarding how to use cognitive therapeutic methods in relation to emotions in a transformative way (p. 39). Interestingly, she sees the approval of mindfulness for people who have emotional problems as leading to less awareness of inner emotional states, instead of emotional integration. She sees value in mindfulness, but views it as a non-transformative method in itself as it does not create any connection between the conscious and unconscious. Indeed, when looking at the transformative process she sees limitations in Schaverien's view of art works in art therapy. Skov argues that Schaverien's description of the diagrammatic image which needs words to be explained and the embodied image which needs no words, exemplify the missing imaginative dialogue, which Skov sees lacking in mainstream art therapy. I feel I must defend Schaverien. She herself is a Jungian analyst and her study of imagery in relation to Jung's archetypes leads her to a view that, at times, images are made which relate so deeply to a non verbal and archetypal space that speaking about the image does not help in its understanding. In Schaverien's view, it takes time for these images to become more conscious through the course of therapy.

Skov's chapter on 'Transformative Art Therapy' is the heart of the book. The previous chapters

build our knowledge, introducing us to the thinking which supports the processes involved with the study group. Here we see the model explained and in action. Six individuals, all female, took part in thirteen workshops whereby every second workshop was lead by a directive and the other workshops were based on the group members' own individual dreams. Skov's use of directives is aligned to parts of Jungian thinking on ego state, the inner judge, the shadow side and the anima and animus. For Skov, directives are 'suggestions to start a creative process' (p. 134). Skov used a technique known as the reverse method developed by Bertelsen (1975) when working with the individuals in relation to their dreams. Skov sees it as a transformative tool that allows unconscious material to be revealed. She demonstrates this method thoroughly in a case study before showing its process within her study group. Throughout the study, she encourages imaginative dialogue between the maker of an image and their work. It is through this form of verbal dialogue that she sees the image becoming explored and understood and this is a crucial part of the transformative process.

Her work as a researcher, her bricolage approach and her research methodology are skillfully described and an invaluable read to those involved in study and research. Her research brings the use of images and processes in art therapy centre stage and demonstrates her integrated model at work. The results of Skov's study made me wonder if her model would also benefit another group type. In her final chapter on the implications of her research, Skov gives her opinion on this saying it could be used with any group motivated to strengthen the ego-self relationship.

In his forward, Dr. Arthur Gibbons says of the book that the reader embarks on a journey that witnesses a master art therapist. The reader definitely has a sense of a vastly experienced art therapist at work. In addition, her work as a researcher is masterful and places this book in the fields of art therapy and psychology. This book is an important read that brings a theoretical foundation for a Jungian approach to art therapy and depression.

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