Collective Memory and Creative Subjectivity:
A Living Conversation

Alba Torres Robinat
Alexandra Katherine Goodall

Abstract

This article is the record of a dialogue between two artists and Expressive Arts therapists, Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Katherine Goodall. They chose to undertake this conversation in the form of letters that were written back-and-forth over a period of time in a shared document, which places their correspondence in the tradition of epistolary writing. This decision to write the article as letters lends the conversation an immediacy, a warmth, a sense of time, distance and familiarity, and a feeling of intimacy.
The authors invite readers to witness the deepening of a relationship and the development of their conversational themes. Here, witnessing is a type of co-creative engagement. In the thread of this conversation emerges some of the core explorations in their practices such as intergenerational trauma, the role of bodily experience, and what responsibility and safety mean in the context of artmaking, facilitation, and therapy—in public spaces such as art galleries and private ones such as their home studio or therapy spaces. The conversation is a candid non-linear unearthing practice, a connecting practice, as they circle towards the central themes of their life and work. The conversation happens through multiple mediums: writing, spoken word and visual media art (a video entitled “A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow” and still video images). The work reveals its “spine” as the art is created, reaching its fullness in a media piece. The conversation then folds back in on itself through more integration of media works and text in the letters themselves, an ouroboros-like process, illuminating even deeper themes, spoken and unspoken.

Resum

[Abstract translation is in Catalan language that was prohibited and persecuted during Franco’s dictatorship in Spain, from 1939 to 1975]

Aquest article és el registre d’un diàleg entre dues artistes i art-terapeutes, l’Alba Torres Robinat i l’Alexandra Katherine Goodall. Van optar per dur a terme aquesta conversa en un intercanvi de cartes. Així doncs, el seu text s’inscriu en la tradició de l’escriptura epistolar. Aquesta decisió aporta al text sensacions d’immediatesa, de calidesa, del sentit del temps i la distància, de la familiaritat i la intimitat. L’interès de les autores és que això convidi al lector a ser testimoni de l’aprofundiment d’una relació i dels seus temes de conversa. Així, ser aquest testimoni és una mena d’apropament co-creatiu a l’obra. En el fil d’aquesta conversació emergeixen algunes de les exploracions centrals de les seves pràctiques, com el trauma intergeneracional, el rol de l’experiència corporal i el que significa la responsabilitat i la seguretat en el context de l’art i la teràpia, tant en espais públics com les galeries d’art o en espais privats com els seus tallers o sales de teràpia. L’Alexandra i l’Alba comparteixen amb franquesa. La conversa va desplegant-se de forma no lineal, com si anessin donant tombes i desenterrant a capes els temes centrals de la seva vida i obra. El diàleg es desplega a través de múltiples mitjans: l’escriptura, l’oralitat i l’art visual. Les imatges que creen queden amalgamades en un vídeo titulat “A World : A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow”, traduït com “ Un Món: Un Mapa / Nu Apam: Nu Nòm). Un treball visual que ha anat revelant la seva pròpia columna vertebral a mesura que s’ha anat creant, arribant a la seva plenitud en la peça final audiovisual. Una obra que integra moments de tot el procés i de tots els mitjans expressius utilitzats. A través d’aquesta obra s’il·luminen encara més les profunditats d’aquesta conversa, d’allò dit i allò no dit. Un diàleg que acaba replegant-se en si mateix com el símbol de l’Uróbor.
Bios

Alexandra Katherine Goodall, M.A., is a multidisciplinary artist and psychotherapist living in British Columbia, Canada. In her studio practice, her passion lies in sculptural textile and installation. In her facilitation work and individual sessions, she combines the disciplines of art, relationship, psychology, and bodily presence. www.alexandragoodall.com | alexandra@alexandragoodall.com

Alba Torres Robinat, M.A., from Spain (Catalonia) Languages: Catalan, Spanish, English, French. Alba is a multimodal artist focused on performance art; her last artwork focused on dreamwork. Alba's work as an artist is the base of her work as an expressive arts therapist. She is an expressive arts therapist working in several Spanish public mental health services and a private psychiatric hospital with adults. She also has her own art workshop where kids and teenagers come to make art. Alba has 15 years of training and practice in expressive arts therapy. She attended Instituto de Arteterapia Transdisciplinaria de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain) and the European Graduate School (Switzerland). Alba is a researcher on Arts and Health Anthropology in West Africa. www.lavidacrea.com | lavidacrea@yahoo.com
Conversation connects us to what is other, lets in the converse, the opposite - we allow the solid walls between things and the events of our lives to melt; we step to the side of positions we habitually hold, we explore, fall silent, hesitate. Conversation loosens and re-forms us in the questions that arise, in incompleteness, differences, beginnings, contradictions, new possibilities—a surrendering of what we know towards what is as yet unknown—sensed perhaps, but as yet unformed. In conversation everything is movement, our boundaries loosen, even break, and some of what we are spreads out and changes. A conversation dies the moment we forget to listen. (Tufnell & Crickmay, 2004, pp. 41-42)

To be aware of the in-between means to be aware of the environment, to sense the tone and rhythm of the changing atmosphere… and to notice and trust what is happening in the ongoing moment-to-moment process of encounter. This awareness includes holding the intention to create an atmosphere of confidence and trust while simultaneously holding an expectation for surprise and change, and paradoxically, at the same time, letting go of expectations. (Eberhardt & Atkins 2014, p. 71)

The following is a conversation that took place over a year and a half between Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall. We are two artists and Expressive Arts Therapists from different parts of the world. Alba is located in Tàrrega, Spain. Alexandra is located in British Columbia, Canada. Life’s synchronous circumstances brought us together, pulling us into the whirlpool of this dialogue.
In this conversation, which sits in the tradition of epistolary writing, we churned the waters of our experience regarding our artistic and therapeutic practices. We danced with concepts that don’t live easily in the superficial, like the informal conversations you have with your most trusted friends at a table in the corner in the late evening. We kissed concepts and experiences that relate to the mystery of living, collective memory, and subjective creativity.

We welcome you to this conversation in which we engage in “a surrendering of what we know towards what is as yet unknown” (Tufnell & Crickmay 2004, p. 42).

AG: Alba, would you prefer to write in your first language, and then we can translate it? It’s up to you but I would also love this :)
ATR: Oh waw, mmmm... But I also feel it is too much work... So let me keep on training to think into another language, english, I also like it :) 
AG: Ok, perfect! Love that :) 
ATR: But related on it, I’d love to add expressions in my own language and translate them in same paragraph :) 
AG: Yes, wonderful! Ok, I’m signing off. I will revisit this later and answer my question. Bye!
ATR: Great, thanks for caring on mother tongues :) Bye :) 

The conversation ahead is a path that meanders. It is a long pilgrimage. Stop sometimes. Drink water. Sit on a stone. Build a fire and rest. Come back to it the next day.

**Let us walk together**

The purpose of our work as therapists and artists is to accompany ourselves and others in an evolving path. A teacher also does this, but in another setting. In this way, there is a common interest between the fields of art, teaching, and therapy. We describe our process in detail in the pages that follow as a way of map-making, so that others might borrow, adapt, and build on the footsteps we have taken.

You are about to wander through our living language; a language that is sometimes spontaneous, sometimes colloquial, sometimes academic, sometimes reflexive, sometimes poetic, sometimes trite. We use emoticons.

*Our language contains earth from the soils we are writing on*

Sometimes our language emerges from the digital pool in front of you in different sizes or boldness. This decision is a conscious one. In our process, we exaggerate and highlight significant words in the text as a way of feeling into the viscera of the work, as a way of illuminating the central spine of our conversation. Through this, we have been uncovering yet another, deeper and non-linear subtext. Because some of this subterranean world doesn’t fit easily into organized thought structures, sentences, and paragraphs, we use these words as visual prompts, creating images from the text. This helps us to reach places that words cannot take us. These images and others, Figures 1-23, flow fluidly as visual texts throughout this document.
Much of our writing is inspired by other conversations with mentors, colleagues, collaborators, friends and clients that took place in oral and experiential environments. We give credit to these conversations and elaborate on them in our footnotes when needed.¹

Sometimes, you may lose the thread of our conversation as if you were “listening to a conversation at a nearby table, you cannot clearly hear what is being said—it is too remote; but no sooner do you begin to understand a small phrase, to tune in on the details of the talking, than the conversation comes within range” (Sudnow, 1978, p. 42).

We invite you to come within range.

The Map or Timeline of Our Process
(...or What You Can Expect to Find Ahead)

Figure 3. Second image in the series of digital photo/text art. Maps and starting points. Chicken scratch writing (not necessarily decipherable) as we continuously find our location in the work and process. Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists.
Between January 19th, 2023, and March 17th, 2023, we, Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall wrote letters to each other in a shared online document from our homes in our respective countries. The intention was simply to share in a conversational and fluid way our artistic and therapeutic practices, and to see where this dialogue took us. As we wrote, we manipulated words in the document (selected intuitively, resized, bold, italics).

At the end of the letter writing period, we took the words we had visually manipulated and created a digital media piece using these words. The impetus of the letters themselves, as a starting point and inspiration, allowed for certain words to shape and drop away.

We then watched the media piece together to generate new words spontaneously as a response to the visual media piece. Alba turned these words into an improvised spoken poem. The artists layered this over the original media piece to complete the final work (entitled, “A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow”).

Finally, during the editing phase of this article, we took stills from the media piece, “A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow”, and reworked them back into the article text using more words, sentences and images derived from the article/letters themselves, thus forming a body of digital photo art that accompanies the reader as a type of visual map throughout the letter conversation.

The letters, January 19th-March 17th, 2023
Thursday January 19th, Barcelona, Spain

Dear Alexandra,

As an artist, I am touring my last performance called, in Catalan (my mother tongue), “Ignota Pell”, meaning “Unknown Skin.”

UNKNOWN SKIN: This is a 40-minute show where I recite and perform my dreams and daytime poetic reports that took place during a three month anthropological Expressive Arts research trip in Burkina Faso, West Africa, into animist funerals and ancient textile art. After the show I open a dialogue with the audience. The aim of my artist soul, besides the joy of performing, is to open a ritual space for valuing dreams and putting them in the center of life, hand in hand with the language of art. My aim is to open a space to understand and integrate the unconscious lives of human beings.

“Ignota Pell” was performed once in my studio, and a second time in a social center with a small audience. Now I am ready to share it with a bigger audience in my hometown. It makes sense to me as an artist to perform for the community in the town where I was born. At this moment, I am awaiting approval from the City Council as to whether the Cultural Council will support the work's performance at the local Art Museum or another public space.

Simultaneously, I am happy to be sharing my work in academia with people interested in research and Expressive Arts therapy. I shared it last year with students in the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies track at The European Graduate School, Switzerland. Sharing my research (both my arts-based research and my research-based art), was a great experience and very grounding. I feel similarly nourished by this opportunity to write for Aritzein.
Going back to my performance: UNKNOWN SKIN focuses on a big issue that is present for all therapists. In accordance with Jungian studies, the principle states that a therapist must become aware of at least the main contents of his or her unconscious, so as not to alter the clarity of his or her judgment (Jung, 2013). The artwork in Figure 7 also refers to this thought. And you, Alexandra, tell me about your practice.

Figure 6. Drawing a dream during the performance. *Unknown Skin* by Alba Torres Robinat (2023) Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 7. Still image from the media piece, *A World: A Map || A Pam A Dirow*, Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists. The image of Alba Torres Robinat was a picture taken at a previous performance called, “Shields, 2019.” Text reads, “I often saw that those who trained in the therapies stopped having a committed artistic practice.” And “I could explore the most essential expression of the creative act, common threads in all my practices. My artwork is also my best medicine.”
Friday, February 3rd, British Columbia, Canada

Dear Alba,

I work as both a visual artist in textile sculpture (as well as other mediums), and a psychotherapist in private practice. I am always looking for the place where creative process in both disciplines meet: **Where is the electric center of creativity in both art and therapy?** I have found that I can work in a way that feeds both expressions of creative process because both therapy, whether it is an arts-based therapeutic modality or not, and artmaking are expressions of creative process in my approach.

This was something I really struggled with in my development towards my vocation. I always wanted to do both **art and therapy**, yet I **often saw that those who trained in the therapies stopped having a committed artist's practice.** As beautiful as the many therapeutic modalities are, I suspect the reason for this bifurcation is because the conceptual and pedagogical substrates of most therapies are not derived from the arts themselves. I was very lucky to have discovered Expressive Arts Therapy. This is a modality that derives its fundamental sense of meaning, framing and definitions from many disciplines, but most importantly, from the arts. Ellen Levine explains,

> We are trying to develop an arts-based perspective which can encompass the psychological dimension without being subsumed under it. The explanatory frameworks of psychology have tended to reduce and contain the creative process…Working in the arts is primary for us, and understanding what we are doing comes afterwards in a reflective turn. Staying with the artistic work and continuing to push the image further yields much more information and opens many more doors than simply demonstrating how our explanatory framework is illustrated by the work of art. (Levine, 2003, p. iv)

Rather than training in a therapy, per se, I felt I was participating in an educational experience in which I **could explore something essential and relational about the creative act.** I needed this experience of studying **creative process and relationship in a very immediate way, through the arts.** It is from this place that I approach both my psychotherapy and artmaking practices (and I am bringing this orientation to our conversation through these letters).

So, this is where I place myself at the beginning of this dialogue with you, Alba. Earlier this year I completed a 4-year multimedia project with a long-term collaborator of mine, a sound-artist and composer. The project hinged on the **intermodal skills and skills in creative ‘processing’** itself that I learned in my Expressive Arts training.

This project involved the development of an installation, but also was an arts-based research project. The making of the artwork unearthed some really challenging material for me around my relationship with collective energies. I am now, in my personal explorations and my therapeutic private practice, inquiring into this material to understand what I experienced in a non-verbal and non-linear way in that process.
Two questions that continue to accompany me are:

*What is the phenomenology of collective relational fields?*
*What is the relationship between these fields and ancestral/intergenerational experience?*

**Saturday, February 4th, Barcelona, Spain**

Dear Alexandra,

I am really happy to hear from you and to be a witness to your process of harvesting these last 4 years. Yes, I agree that art making can be a process of transformation, of going to places we don’t know. If we are focused on evolving, it is research, guided by intuition, conscious and unconscious needs, and vital energies. I mention this because I also see that art making itself is not therapeutic, as forces of destruction, neurosis, psychosis, schizophrenia can sometimes increase through the making of art if it is not done in a safe way. So, it is a delicate field that needs a safe frame. In the safe **frame**, we can welcome all disruptions, emergencies, neurosis, etc. and work with them.

I guess this is a moment for you to clarify your vision, to harvest, open to insight, and to bring up new questions that will coax you forward or deeper, such as the questions you bring up on the collective relational field. I will refer to them later.

Let me share that my artwork is also my best medicine, and my deepest path of evolving. I am also an artist and Expressive Arts therapist. From my point of view, I see my artwork as the base of my Expressive Arts profession. I take both paths as creative processes, as you mention, but in my case, I feel my artwork roots my Expressive Arts work, just as it roots my **soulbody**.

Nowadays my therapeutic work takes place as weekly regular Expressive Arts therapy group work in four mental health services for adults. I work in governmental public services and private ones. Additionally, I facilitate a group of kids and a group of teens in my private atelier.

I take my time to find the common threads in all my practices: my artwork, my research, my life. I strive for all these practices to complement each other and nurture themselves. I also try to work on the same metaphor in all dimensions of my life, if possible, for about three months each. This trimester I am working with the metaphor of “the mask.” The metaphor in my previous trimester was “creation of your own symbols.”

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Figure 8. “Fast masks” at the Community Rehabilitation Center of the Psychiatry, Mental Health and Addictions Service, Hospital St. Maria Lleida, Department of Health, Catalanian Government. Anonymous participant artist. Used with permission.
My research on Arts and Health Anthropology started the moment I attended a workshop in 2013, at the Gestalt Institute of Barcelona (Spain). The workshop was on mourning rituals, led by Sobonfu Somé who is an African spiritual leader of the Dagara ethnic group. Sobonfu shared her vision and spirit technologies in the workshop, which opened me up to a new view on grief. I decided to go and see it alive in her community. I learnt French and collected the money, and two years later, I went there. Finally, I arrived at the house of a traditional healer, whose name is Doow Somé, and shared life with his family for almost one and a half months. I observed and participated a lot in the community, as I focused on understanding their approach to healing and mourning ceremonies. I came back home, and this wisdom, summed up in three affirmations, stayed with me:

**The dead are not dead.**

If a soulbody has an illness, the first hypothesis is there is something pending to be solved from its ancestors.

If a soulbody is ill, the community is sick, but one of them is embodying it.

These are significant elements when we are discussing the question of what is transgenerational trauma collective unconsciousness and the ways these are related. The word transgenerational in this article refers to a realm of experience that exists in the present moment and contains the psychic and collective content from the entire lake of our ancestral experience.

What are your thoughts on this? What have you seen in your work and practice?

Figure 9. Still image from the media piece, A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow, Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists. Text reads, "If we keep the artist disempowered—the place for the starving and low-income, the so-called ‘insane’, the unrealistic, the ‘flakes’—in our society. This is the trauma field of the Artist. Professional shadow field. Absorbed unconsciously from the culture. The midwife. Responsibility and Authority. Body consciousness. Metaphors. Resilience."
Wednesday, February 8th, British Columbia, Canada

Dear Alba,

I love what you are saying here about artwork not being innately therapeutic. Furthermore, I experience creative impulse as powerful and certainly existing beyond any kind of moral structures in its essence.11

I often wonder what my responsibilities are given this power. What qualities do I need to cultivate within myself to negotiate this power when I engage with the arts?12 Doctors and therapists have a professional code of conduct to protect the people they are working with, protect themselves and help them navigate the position of authority and responsibility.

Why do we not talk about the responsibilities of the artist in regard to this? Is it because we are too scared to recognize how powerful art is?13

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Figure 10. Fourth image in the series of digital photo/text art. What we sometimes find in the well...Text reads, “and this creates silence.” And “unassimilated experience. History. Inaccessible.” Other text is obscured and layered, a carpet of textural glyphs. Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists.

I heard a colleague say once that the artwork won’t bring up what can’t be metabolized or what is not ready to be brought up. I am still unsure if I agree with this. It opens many questions: Who’s perspective are we coming from when we ask this? Who is the one that is not ready? The artist? The collective? The Artwork? The facilitator (if there is one)? What if their capacities, drives, and needs are at odds?
In my experience, the work does have a certain regulating function—it is certainly limited by my ability to be present with the energetic intensity of the content. And you can hurt people with art. You can also hurt yourself.\(^\text{14}\)

I experience artmaking as a type of magical practice.\(^\text{15}\) When we work with magic, this comes with responsibilities.

Yes, the ‘delicate field.’ One that requires a very specific type of navigation. The question of safety.\(^\text{16}\) What an exploration!

Friday, February 10th, Tàrrega, Spain

Dear Alexandra,

Waw, we are diving into some very important aspects at the core of artmaking. How great :) Is it us driving this dialogue? Is it this frame that makes it possible? Is it a collective need to be explored? I hope this creative exchange makes us evolve :) Yes, the creative process can be very transformative, especially in dialogue with other(s) :)

Is it the work itself that leads? Is it the frame? Is it me or the group? The words responsibility and authority that you mentioned before are coming back to me.

Sometimes I have seen it happen that a person begins making artwork, and the person cannot hold—somehow cannot look at—what emerges. This person cannot continue the creative process, at least at this moment, in that group or at that time. This person decides to leave (in some groups I work with a social worker who acts as an assistant. This helps me in this kind of critical situation). Some people have come back after one year, as if to say, “I am now ready”; some only need to leave the space for a few moments and then can come back.

I work with both more and less stable groups, in the sense that the same people attend every session. I open the group every three months for new people to enter when possible. With some of my services, the groups are always unstable. In every meeting there are new people. Old ones come randomly. This happens mostly at the Psych. Hospital.

From my 6 years of experience in Expressive Arts therapy practice, but most intensively since Covid 2020, I notice that the most stable groups can get used to my Expressive Arts way of approaching life, illness, bonds, languages of expression, and resonances, and can easily go further or deeper in the work. The artwork appears with more maturity, depth, and freedom. But this doesn’t happen in all groups. Other stable ones remain on the surface most of the time and we navigate there. I attribute this to the collective need or capacity of each group. So, even if the frame is there to go deep safely, the group sometimes doesn’t take the opportunity (at least, this is how I imagine it!).
This brings me to talk about the collective soul in a group, the collective unconscious, and its collective voice. Collective soul is made of diversity. This collective soul has a color, an essence, a perfume, an elasticity, or rigidness. Let's keep talking on these collective aspects as we go :) 

Sometimes, a new person comes into the group either at the beginning of a group process, or at the halfway mark, and I try to facilitate their connection with us and the task at hand “using” the group itself. Sometimes it is difficult. Sometimes many people join us all at once and they do not connect with the group, with me, with the frame, with the task, with…

Earlier, I was talking about Expressive Arts therapy tackling trauma, this delicate “material”, this high vulnerability, this wound, this highly intensive pain that needs the safest space. With warm sensitivity, colours, echoes, prints on clay, paint, trauma can be expressed, symbolized, and become language. These techniques can become a self and collective hug. Trauma can be transformed into a garden where we can connect with the cycles of death and life. It is the place where we can connect with the force of the turning wheel of life.

So, my dear Alexandra, I’ll finish my reflection here today. I am not going to ask you anything new. Let’s just keep weaving :) Big hug, it is getting so interesting :) 

Friday, February 17th, Okanagan, Canada

Dear Alba,

Thank you for sharing about your experiences working with Expressive Arts groups. You said, “This brings me to talk about the collective soul in a group, the collective unconscious and its collective voice. Collective soul is made of diversity. This collective soul has a color, an essence, a perfume, an elasticity, or rigidness.”

This is also my experience. My journey with exploring collectives started many years ago in my 20’s. A mentor at the time advised me to ‘heal my relationship with the collective.’ I had no idea what this meant! Years later, I finally found the tools to begin this encounter through a personal practice of phenomenology and arts-based exploration/experimentation.

In 2018, I conducted a research group. The goal of the group was to gather self-identified artists together to explore embodiment. In my own artwork and personal journey, I was in a long and involved process of ‘coming into’ my body, knowing myself as body, and exploring what this meant to me. I was also curious about the identity of ‘artist’ and whether this could be a resource for this kind of exploration. We gathered as artists to explore what embodiment meant to us, using arts-based exploration and expressive arts structures in a multi week format.

What came out of this fascinated me. By the end of the group, it became palpably obvious that there was not only an individual body that we were each learning—our ‘own’ bodies—but a group body. And this group body had its own phenomenology. It had its own colour, essence, perfume, texture, elasticity, as
you describe above. The group body brought up material through one or more group members to be metabolized in the context of the collective, in this case through the artistic ritual structures we were navigating. This happened spontaneously and unplanned, as a result of our weekly explorations. I came to understand just a little bit more clearly what had been happening in earlier therapeutic groupwork I had attended\(^{19}\) where everyone’s ‘work’ struck a chord in the room with each individual, no matter how personal and specific it seemed to be, and where there seemed to be an invisible hand or ‘inner logic’\(^{20}\) to the group healing process beyond the orchestration of the facilitator or the impulses of the individual therapy clients.

My passion for this grew. I entered into a long-term artistic collaboration, as I mentioned above, to research this group phenomena directly.\(^{21}\)

It is a hard thing for me to translate my experiences making this work into words in the context of this article. My work occupies a little bit of a different world than you are describing above, Alba, as this was a collaborative project, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts and hosted by a public gallery. We hired a group of artists, completing overlapping collaborations (which we navigated as ‘aesthetic responses’).\(^{22}\) So this project was squarely—at least on the surface—in the realm of the public arts, not a therapeutic context (despite the fact that one of our intentions was personal and collective transformation—I love your word, ‘evolving’). It is my hope that these reflections might add to our dialogue.

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Figure 11. Dancers, Gita Harris and Jess Glavina (both in British Columbia, Canada), moving in and around the Migration Parade sculptures built by the artist/author, Alexandra Goodall, and Danielle Savage (March 2022). Exhibited at The Penticton Art Gallery, British Columbia, CA. Photo by Kristen Brown (Montreal, Canada), from her film, The Mirror of Others (2022). Used with permission.
A huge thing for me was accepting my limitations about what I could and couldn’t give in the process. There are places I am not solid enough to go. Rather than pushing myself, I learned to accept I was just not there yet and adjust the work to suit my very human limitations. Learning to adjust the expression of the artwork in reciprocity with my emotional needs and limits was a huge insight for me. I came very close to being overwhelmed by the magnitude of what we encountered.

There was a pivotal point in this work. The energy of the work was gaining momentum coming towards exhibition time. We had several collaborators creating their own pieces within the finished installation that Danielle and I were creating. Three weeks prior to installation, a huge well of fear and anxiety came up in us, manifesting as a conflict in our friend group. The intensity of the energy was overwhelming for both Danielle and I. The work was partially set up in our studio, but not put together in the space. It was only when we were able to start installing the work in the gallery that I was able to sleep again, and the anxiety subsided to a degree, replaced by emotional release of grief and a complexity of emotions. This was so important for me to see.

We asked a consultant in collective trauma to work with us in a supervisory role for these weeks because we were so overwhelmed. She suggested that these collective energies were too much for Danielle and I to hold in our bodies. When the work was finally set up in the gallery space, however, the work did what it was made to do: Hold and channel the energy. From then on, the ritual space of the artwork became the holding space. The sculptures themselves were the container for the energies that were too large to touch, and the dancers danced in amongst them, protected by their resonance and group coherence. I am still digesting many pieces of this experience.
Thursday, February 10, Tàrrega, Spain

Dear Alexandra,

Let me describe to you a situation from my life that feels relevant to our conversation. It just happened this morning.

Today, at the public mental health service, I started our warm-up playing some music and asking participants to move the body freely, stretching, mobilizing, with lively music. In the group of eight, two women have shown dance abilities over the course of our work together. I turned the music to Brazilian samba, tomorrow is Carnival, and all of the group danced, even if it was a few gestures.

One of the two women I mentioned, I am told, complains she cannot walk properly because of foot problems. By only the second session, I saw her showing no foot problem, and today she expressed a great samba choreography appearing as a samba queen :) Waw. It is not the first time that the social worker tells me some people react very differently in my sessions than in group psychotherapy sessions or other activities, as they are focused on less complaining and a more proactive attitude.

After that I suggested we make a “circle of emotions”, each of us would say an emotion or feeling and we would express it through the body. We already practiced this in our last session, so it was not new, and they took less time to warm up to it than in the previous session. We were doing “fluid sculptures” and going back to a neutral and meditative position.

After two rounds in the “circle of emotions,” I invited the group to go and sit around the big table and share whatever came from the exercise. The group talked one by one, in no particular direction. The first feeling put into words was happiness. Second one was the strange feeling one gets when we change our emotional state fast, and I reflected on the fluid nature of emotions. The third, which was linked to this, was the position of being able to observe all the emotional movements: meditation. From this stepping back from the psyche, the next spoken word from another participant was “dissociation, not connecting to emotions,” and the question was:

When I step back, am I scared of my emotional connection to a scene or am I protecting myself?

The same person shared her story around this theme. Then everybody saw and reflected that her act was a protection. She expressed her feelings regarding bravery and weakness, re-evaluating the bravery of taking distance and self-care to protect herself, while at the same time, understanding the other people involved in the situation.

After these comments and reflections, the next person started to talk about suicide and her cowardice to live, and everybody reflected on their point of view regarding suicide. Every person in this group, seven people, has attempted it. At one point, one person in the group stood up and said he was leaving to smoke a cigarette. I was about to say, “No please,” and to ask, “Can you share how you feel?” but to my right there was the social assistant from the service that helps me with the group. She didn’t let me talk and gave him permission to go. I said (feeling shocked but also trusting her), “OK you are the boss now.” And she let me know the man has been near suicide in the last two weeks.
Ok, safe frame, safe containers, and a cigarette.

The group kind of understood; I opened the space for the others to express what they liked, but also suggested we could also close the talk and go to artmaking. A woman stood up and said she wanted to go outside to help him. I said "ok, but please come back soon," and she said, "Yes, only some puffs," and asked me not to take it as disrespect to me and the group.

I started to take out some new materials—tinfoil paper—and laid long pieces on the table. I said they were welcome to keep on talking, but it could be good to find an end to words now. I said I would make some noise preparing. They kept talking until a natural end came.

The couple came back meanwhile.

By then everybody had six layers of tinfoil paper to put on their faces to make a mold. We then created masks.

I got scared at one point. The point of the lure of pain. Of going in circles around talking on suicide. We were in a dark and painful imaginarius. We had descended there. I needed to stop. Artmaking was the next phase. Changing point.

Thursday, February 23rd, Okanagan, Canada

Dear Alba,

I am moved by your writing. Today I am thinking of your words, "Is it us driving this dialogue? Is it this frame that makes it possible? Is it a collective need to be explored?" There is an electric center to every creative ‘spirit’ that visits us. When I start a new work, I submit to a type of blindness. I see with eyes closed—with tendrils that sense the ‘nucleus’ of the work. I feel into the organizing factor, the first pulse that transforms stillness.

I circle around this sensation, in an almost amphibious way. I feel like a blind salamander with electric skin, sensing and moving closer to some form of heat. The subtlest shift in the water molecules.

I sense a path. I follow it. It is born, lives and dies. I keep moving, looking for the new path.

I can never stare directly at the organizing factor of the work because my perceptual apparatuses are not equipped to receive it. Instead, I circle. See it from new angles, but obliquely. Watch as themes break water and rise, then submerge, only to reappear six months later, or two years, or three days. Now a theme is not just a personal one but is playing out in some relational dynamics around me—I suddenly see the connection. I notice another reflected in global news. My body registers another in physical discomfort or release, in the quality of constant expansion and contraction. The themes—the stories —re-emerge as both fresh and new, as if I had never encountered them before, and at the same time as the most
intimate lovers, a knowing so familiar that sometimes even putting them into words feels like artificial distance. *Is this where the lure of pain resides, or is ‘pain’ just one of its masks? The imaginarius? The unspoken central myth of the group? Sometimes we cannot stare at it directly, so we circle.*

*I needed to stop. Artmaking was the next phase. Changing point.*

And then I remember to soften—this has played out so many times and each time I have to remind myself to do this. I open, soften my eyes, and acknowledge all the structures—language, concept, time, culture, discipline, and many more—that have regulated, organized, made digestible that which is too much. Those that have protected me, helped me to achieve things I never would have without them. They refine, mitigate, compassionately match the energy to my insignificance and emotional/sensorial/perceptual abilities.

Over time, I put the puzzle pieces together. I find language and concepts that hint at the experience, sit beside it rather than attempt to encapsulate it. Find supportive structures, acknowledging the ineffable. For reasons I am still specifically unclear about, I remain tentative where language and concepts are concerned. A sort of inborn mistrust of concepts in their ability to coerce, of language in its inaccurate and desperate attempt to pin down, make safe, control.

Figures 13 & 14. Two still images from the media piece entitled, *A World: A Map || A Pam: A Drow,* sewn together to create a whole. I am moved by Deborah Hay’s words, “I remember sitting at the side of my father’s bed as he was dying. His hands were pressed together and tucked under his cheek, forming a pillow for his head. There was a moment when I thought I saw him choose not to hold up the flesh of his face anymore” (Italics from original text, Hay, 1997, p. 3). Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists.
Saturday, February 25th, Tàrrega, Spain

Dear Alexandra,

While reading your letter I remembered some of my artwork from my training in Expressive Arts. It resonates for me on the level of inner dynamics in a group and on many other themes in your last text.

This egg-box is the cover of a booklet in which I reflected on my learnings. I made six of these egg-box-booklets. Each one reflects a learning module from my post-master’s year in Expressive Arts at Instituto de Arteterapia Transdisciplinaria de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain, 2010-2011). I have selected two inner pages to share from the first booklet.

Figure 15. The egg-box. Meanings: The opening up to a group work, an opening up to each individual life, what will we cook together? Cathartic opening. Open & close the box, the group, the content and the container. Alba Torres Robinat (2011). Photograph courtesy of the artist.
It resonated for me when I read your words: “Everyone’s ‘work’ struck a chord in the room with each individual, no matter how personal and specific it seemed to be, and where there seemed to be an invisible hand or ‘inner logic’ to the group healing process beyond the orchestration of the facilitator or the impulses of the individual therapy clients.”

I would like to deepen our discussion around this point. In my experience, my role as a facilitator is to follow a facilitation structure wherein participants can mobilize their own healthy inner logic. This is a sensorial perception too. Inner logic, inner dynamics, inner perception to serve a process of healing. This is also called salutogenesis process. Directing this towards what needs to be attended to, so we create the best response, the best meaning, rich, profound, belonging response.

But besides this, you are pointing to an independent inner logic, as if it has nothing to do with the facilitator or clients. I think this is not possible :) but maybe you are referring to unconscious forces in the unconscious collective, and as unconscious ones we may never know the mystery; we will remain blind to them. But between the most mysterious ones, the not accessible ones… to the most conscious ones, there is a ladder. There are steps of consciousness. The good facilitator or Expressive Arts therapist, I believe, is the one who works at the beach where the water of the unconscious reaches the sand, the consciousness.
I strongly prefer attending to and working on my own individual unconscious as much as possible before the group one. The inner individual work of the therapist should be the basis of our work with any collective. However, how can we be ready for everything?

I remember now my experience with a group of women suffering from domestic violence, in the public social service. The safety of the frame was very important because most of them were suffering current high violence in their house from their husbands or even their sons. Some of them were facing judicial complaints; some of them were there secretly. We started by creating an altar with personal objects I had asked them to bring. The intention was to focus on their identity, self-value, resources, belonging. From this altar, I asked them to share their stories related to the object. There were ten women in this group, some from sub-Saharan Africa, some from North Africa, some from Latin America, some from Spain, some from Eastern Europe. Some only spoke Arab and some were translating. I set the tempo and the dynamic for the spoken word, the frame.

A terrible force of sharing started to develop, filled with suffering. The group started to interact with responses and support. Terrible stories came up. The most terrible ones, one after the other. I was terrified. If it were up to “me,” I would have stopped all that speech.

I wasn't able to listen to all that terror.

I wasn't able to listen to the story of the current sexual abuse in the family of one of the women in the group, to her little daughters. But I was there and this was my task and I was ready to learn and evolve in my role.

Figure 17. Still image from the media piece entitled, A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow. Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists.
We transferred the talk into writing words and playing with colours on the altar, then into bodywork—from massage, to everyday movement choreographies, to dance. I also prepared a thick paper, folded like a small accordion, where they would draw themselves at one end of the paper as they see themselves in that moment. At the other end, I prompted them to draw an image of themselves in a better place, evolving into a better situation. I activated hope through imagination. I invited them to draw their way from one end to the other, also using words and writing if they wished. After the session I asked the social worker to attend to the urgent social aid and legal steps needed by the women, and the lack of economic resources.

Very soon, a very strong sense of support developed in this group, as they shared resources, and felt understood.

As I noticed this strong inner support and salutogenic dynamic developed in the group, I realized I could step back from the group when they entered into these intense terror stories. I learned to take an inner step back, as if I wasn’t listening to everything, kind of blurring my listening, while feeling the group itself. It was a great container and it was doing the healing work by itself at this point. Then my soul could release and have perspective in regard to our work. It was so beneficial for them to have this talking and sharing space. When everything was said, when the most poisonous thing was put into words, we could move towards other languages and other landscapes.

The work lasted four sessions, each had two hours of intensive work. We ended the process with a very rich performance. One by one, those brave women would embody and perform their paper accordion artwork of evolution. It was such a transformative experience. In front of my eyes, I saw those rigid and painful bodies, hidden in veils and trapped in violence, evolving to a greater place of freedom and force. The inner path was there, visible and embodied. The work was a reminder, a light. The group was a big force.

They created a whatsapp support group from their initiative. And they asked me to continue after those four sessions. This was December 2021. Continuation didn’t happen, but I hope they are still in touch through the whatsapp group frame :)

The following is a collective poem from those sessions, published on social networks in Spanish and translated into English:

"Juntas nos enlazamos mas fuerte a la vida. Compartimos nuestro trayecto vital. Nos apoyamos en la reconstrucción de nuestra seguridad y nos permitimos volver a regar el jardín de los propios sueños." Taller art-terapia amb dones que pateixen violència domèstica, a SIAD BALAGUER. 25N 2021. SIAD Servei d’Informació i Atenció a les Dones @siadnoguera
#arteterapia #noviolencia
"Together we bond more strongly to life. We share our vital journey. We support each other in rebuilding our security and we allow ourselves to return to take care of the garden of our own dreams.” Art-therapy workshop with women who suffer domestic violence, in SIAD BALAGUER. 25N 2021 SIAD Service of Information and Assistance to Women @siadnoguera #artherapy #noviolence [Spanish to English translation by Alba Torres Robinat]

Figures 18 & 19. The 5th egg-box : From the monocular point of view of the phenomena to the multi-ocula points of view and its reflections, all in the same container. Alba Torres Robinat (2011). Photograph courtesy of the artist author.

By the way, thanks a lot for your sensitive way of expressing your inner perception of approaching nuclear forces in a group process. You describe it as the “organizing factor, the first pulse that transforms stillness.” Organising factor… could be the title of a whole book? You say you “feel into it” and “you can’t look at it directly.” You also describe it as “The unspoken central myth of the group.” And after connecting to it, it starts to appear in other dimensions, randomly presented: Encounters, news… within oneself.

Mmmmm… This makes me think of something that has happened several times to me: I get sick after getting so close to the trauma of others. Then I work on myself, I go deeper into my trauma related stories, crossing layers, as I integrate and refresh aspects of myself and gain new abilities. Helping myself in this way I get the ability or the key to help the group or person attend. Even though it is a deep move in me, it is usually a fast move. This way of working reminds me of the archetype of “The wounded healer: Chiron.” Sometimes, as a therapist, I am possessed by this archetype. I reflect on collective trauma and on the “healer,” facilitator, Expressive Arts therapist, artist, as all a part of this. I think one of the responsibilities of the “healer” to work on the reflection of the attended “trauma” within oneself. I always evolve by facilitating all groups and individuals.
Again, I thank you for your last text. It awakens a sensing in me, a new perception of my surroundings as an amphibious creature :)

Friday, March 10th, Okanagan, Canada

Dear Alba,

It has taken me a few days to sit with and process what you have written here, as it taps into many tendrils of experience for me.

I love having this glimpse into your artistic journals: how you can peek through the layers of pages and uncover something large and sprawling and technicolour. And what a fascinating way to digest the group experience in your training group. It inspires me to want to try something similar myself!

When I worked with Paolo Knil, one of the founders of Expressive Arts Therapy, as a student at EGS, I fell in love with his prompts and references to self-organisation in groups. It became a major exploration of mine to learn: What are the ingredients that best support our natural self-organisation towards a state of vitality or life, not just in groups, but in an artistic work itself? Perhaps it is one of the central explorations in my artwork up until this point.

Figure 20. Still image from the media piece entitled, A World: A Map || A Pam: A Drow. Iba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall (2023). Courtesy of the artists.
In terms of an “independent inner logic,” I wonder if what you are picking up on here is a habit I have of externalizing phenomena as an artistic approach to creative process. I have a tendency to externalize in my artwork, largely because I love how that creates a situation of dialogue for me in regard to the work. My work is highly devotional, and I find if I use the function of externalizing elements, in my experience, I can then be in devotional relationship to it through my creative process. It is one of the ways I’ve learned to mobilize my natural capacity for awe and reverence in the making of a work, helping me to connect with creative process as a spiritual practice. Yet, I recognize this is more my aesthetic decision than my belief about what is true regarding collective experience (if it is possible to pin down a truth). I would agree that this space we are circling around, describing, and exploring does exist everywhere, in facilitators, clients, the work and everywhere else.

Thank you for commenting on this, as it causes me to remember something intrinsic that I often take for granted about how I work, and it is beautiful to be more conscious of this, to be reminded of what is both important and eccentric, perhaps.

I have also been very impacted by the feeling of others’ trauma, though I don’t think I have become sick yet. Although I do know I am very idiosyncratic about how I practice as a therapist, to keep myself healthy and clear enough to be able to move in and out of those experiences with others. For instance, I am very sensitive to buildings, the feeling of shared spaces and rooms, as well as furniture (the feeling it carries) etc. I have found that working online, in a situation where I control the room and the feeling of the space I am in, resolves this problem of certain buildings with very distracting sensations.

As I write this, I wonder if this is why I enjoy working in textile installation specifically. The way I express this artform revolves around large textile objects in a room, usually a gallery space. I like to feel the hidden sensations, all the interactions that happen in the air around the objects, all the feelings the objects can emit into that negative space in the room. The space in the room is as present and tended as the sculptural elements and the walls themselves. So, I get to really tend that invisible space in my work—no wonder I am very sensitive to it in regular life!

This work with the 10 women you describe; How challenging and transformative it sounds. You describe a “terrible force of sharing.” I have seen this force in groups, and it terrifies me also. I have so much ad-
miration for your courage in that moment to stay with the group as it purged this and metabolized it into something new.

When you say, “I realised I could step back from the group when they entered these intense terror stories. I learned to take an inner step back, as if I wasn’t listening to everything, kind of blurring my listening, while feeling the group itself,” this is such great learning for me. I will try this next time that happens. Thank you.

Saturday, March 17, Spain and Canada

ATR: We are here together online, Alexandra and I, just coming from exchanging through zoom, viewing ourselves on the screen, checking in, and figuring out how to get to the end of this article. So, we are going to finish in a written on-line dialogue.

AKG: We’ve been talking about how relationships can be inexplicably built online. A collective space develops, even over writing in a shared document like this, and even over many miles, in different countries. It is a tangible collective relational space.

ATR: Alexandra… :) Yes, it is tangible because the imaginable space is sensorial, and I feel it.

AKG: Yes! I love how sensorial it is. And I love that you are calling it imaginable. That the relational exists in the realm of the imaginal as well as other realms. That is so beautiful.

ATR: It has been a big pleasure to be in touch with you for these two months in a weekly written dialogue back and forth. From one week to the other, the quality of our thread discussion has been weaving my daily experiences from time to time, connecting things, and making me take perspective.

AKG: I have had a similar experience, Alba. I would even say that there has been a healing in this for me. A few months ago I wrote in a journal that I wanted to re-find the place that my art was a contribution again - I felt that I had lost this. I think, after that last large project, I was having a hard time connecting with *my* reason for being an artist, or engaging in creative process. And through writing with you each week, revisiting what is most important, I have come into myself again, away from the group field that I was inhabiting in that earlier work, into an incubating space here that has reminded me what I value most. But I wasn’t able to do this alone before—I love that it happened through relationship again. It was our dialogue that unlocked this for me.

ATR: Alexandra, you only have ten minutes left, right? :)

AKG: Y es, but maybe I can go until 10 past… so we can have 20 minutes? I will run after that :)

ATR: Great! I didn't understand this sentence that I highlighted above in blue.

AKG: Ah yes, it is not clear. What I mean is, there was a group relational field to that artwork that I engaged in last year made up of all the collaborators and the spirit of the work itself. And I think I merge
in with it and couldn't feel myself and my reasons for being an artist and this writing has helped me to refind myself again after that feeling of being spread out—splattered in a way—in a group momentum. Which is interesting to reflect on. Only coming into words for me now. Does that make sense?

**ATR:** Ah, you mean you lost yourself in the group?

**AKG:** Yes, I think so. It is just coming to me now. I hadn't realized until writing now that I think this is what happened. And I've been trying to get myself out of that group field again since, through trying to understand all the psychic levels that were present. And I feel like I'm finally landing in the present.

**ATR:** Bravo, welcome back! :) We met for the first time and decided to talk at an EGS summer school presentation called DANCING WITH REVENANTS: COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND CREATIVE SUBJECTIVITY. I remember recalling this last part: creative subjectivity, subjectivity as a quality derived from the process of INDIVIDUATION.27 But it is fun because while we both love to explore the collective, we cannot miss individuation. Right?

**AKG:** Yes :) Exactly.

**ATR:** Changing tracks… From our first question, where are we as artists? I can add that finally my performance on dreams called “IGNOTA PELL” meaning “UNKNOWN SKIN” has been accepted to be supported by the Town Council. I got this news last Friday. I am very happy to share my art with the collective of my town in a public art space. And the greatest news… I will be able to perform underground as I dreamed. I've got the acceptance to perform inside the old ice well of the town, is it not exciting?

**AKG:** This is wonderful news! Congratulations!! Is it meaningful to share this work in your town specifically, as opposed to a different area?

**ATR:** Good question. I have a special feeling for the piece of land where I was born, even though I feel so connected to the world at large. Here are my first roots, here is where I work as an Expressive Arts Therapist in several “mental health” services, and here is a big part of my born family. My performance is a sharing of personal dreams: Night dreams while I was doing my last three-month anthropological Expressive Arts research trip in Burkina Faso, West Africa, that I mentioned to you at the beginning of our conversation. I embody the dreams that touch more clearly collective issues. There are several born place scenarios and some African scenarios in the dreams. Performing in my town; It is a feeling of getting out of my egg :)  

**AKG:** You are hatching out, again, in your town… for the second time since your birth?

**ATR:** hahahahah :) I am an egg-box, so I am born many times! hahaha

**AKG:** Me too haha
Hahahaha good ending
Sure!!!! Haha love that

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Figure 22. Interior of the public ice well of my town, Tàrrega, Spain, where I will probably perform. Photo by Alba Torres Robinat (2023). Courtesy of the artist.
A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow was a creative way to reflect on the textures and images that unfolded through our written conversation and to illuminate further themes and subtexts. The work holds intimate experiences and feelings that cannot be expressed in words. All images have been shaped by both artists. The title was created by playing with mirror images and words.

In particular, a theme in this piece is artmaking as a way to shape oneself. In the field of Expressive Arts, we call this process *Auto-pioeisis*. Poiesis is etymologically derived from the ancient Greek term ποιεῖν, which means to make (DECEL dictionary). “Poiesis is the creative act and also the act in which we affirm our identity and humanity” (Levine, 2005, back cover). The concept of Auto-poiesis is the act of responding to one-self, the act of self-creation. This concept was first created by the Chilean biologist and philosopher Humberto Maturana and states that every living being is a closed system that is continually creating itself, so that in turn it is repairing itself, maintaining itself, and modifying itself (Maturana & Varela, 1972).

Figure 23. A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow is a digital media piece created by Alba Torres Robinat and Alexandra Goodall in the summer of 2023. It is an Aesthetic Response to our written dialogue.
In the process of writing back and forth in this article, we bolded and adjusted the sizes of key words and phrases as we were writing. This helped us to see the static language of uniform typeface in a word document as visual art. In visual art we can play with intensity and proportion to research and express the heart of our inquiry. It was our intention in the article to orient to typed words not just as communication tools, but as visual marks.

From here, we gathered these words, phrases, and sentences into a new document. We used this as a beginning point for the digital media piece, *A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow*, which was collaboratively created through the program Canva. Canva allowed us to work fluidly with various media files—images, text, drawings, vectors, photos, and videos - together at the same time, while being across the world. In some scenes, the words remained as part of the final composition. In others, the words became less important to the work’s expression and were removed and replaced by other media.

*A World: A Map || A Pam: A Dlrow* is organized into nine ‘scenes.’ We experience them as a revelation, a type of archetypal journey, an encounter with forces and instincts, and especially with the drives of protection and innocence within us. We hold these forces close as we simultaneously encounter death, rebirth, collective trauma, and loss.

The media is a mix of personal photos and symbols, new drawing/writing/photography/video, documentation of our own prior artistic works, as well as works from the public domain.

Finally, we moved fluidly through the piece brainstorming new words together and installing them in the program in the form of side notes.

Alba then read these notes aloud, improvising on them to create a verbal poem. We overlaid this over the nine scenes of the work to create the completed piece. To close our conversation we share this digital media piece (please click here).

**References**


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Endnotes
1 One of the foundations of our encounter here is a practice of phenomenological inquiry, one that asserts that “the world is first and foremost what is given to me through my senses ...The results of phenomenological inquiry are thus to re-insert the subject into the sensible world and to open up this world as accessible to conscious awareness. Experience, far from being despised as deception, appears now as the foundation for all knowledge” (Levine & Levine, 2005 pp. 22-23).
In a general context, intergenerational trauma (also referred to by scholars as transgenerational, multigenerational, or cross-generational trauma) refers to the effects of serious, untreated trauma that has been experienced by one or more members of a family, group, or community and has passed down from one generation to the next through epigenetic factors … (Hubl, 2020, p. 66)

Whether we understand this communication as an epigenetic phenomenon or from a different paradigm, there is a lived experience of continuity that can be felt with our ancestral line. This is what I am referring to as “intergenerational experience.”

A “safe distance” from and with the audience. This definition has been created by Roser Maestu, a performance artist born in 1951, Spain, and myself (Translation from Spanish to English by Alba Torres Robinat). In November 2022, we came together to discuss the tradition of performance art and our own experiences, and found our definition based on our discussions.

In Catalan, the word soul is translated as anima, so close to the Latin word anima. The etymological meaning of the Latin word anima, comes from the greek word anemos (ἀνεμός) and it is translated as wind that possibly comes from sanskrit word anitis and it is translated as air, by renowned Chilean etymology dictionary DECEL (Anders, 2001). Etymologically psyche is related to the verb psykhein, that in Latin means to blow, to breath. In sum, I will sometimes use the word soulbody to refer to the totality of all psychological processes, both conscious and unconscious, in a living body, in a breathing body.

In a general context, intergenerational trauma—also referred to by scholars as transgenerational, multigenerational, or cross-generational trauma—is the translation of the Spanish word cuerpalma. This is the word and concept used in my Expressive Arts Therapy foundation training, at IATBA, Institute of Art-Therapy Barcelona. Soulbody is referred in the foundational book of IATBA as follows, by one of the two founders of the school, Mónica Sorín: “... as Ana Isabel Crespo affirms, following Spinoza, strictly speaking we should say soulbody. ‘Soul and body are a single thing, which is conceived, either under the attribute of thought, or under that of extension’ (Spinoza, 2000, p. 98), as Baruch Spinoza told us in his Ethics demonstrated according to the geometric order” (Gysin & Sorín, 2011, p. 67). (Translation from Spanish to English by Alba Torres Robinat)

In Catalan, the word spirit is translated as anima, so close to the Latin word anima. The etymological meaning of the Latin word anima, comes from the greek word anemos (ἀνεμός) and it is translated as wind that possibly comes from sanskrit word anitis and it is translated as breath, by renowned Chilean etymology dictionary DECEL (Anders, 2001). Etymologically psyche is related to the verb psykhein, that in Latin means to blow, to breath. In sum, I will sometimes use the word soulbody to refer to the totality of all psychological processes, both conscious and unconscious, in a living body, in a breathing body.
This movement piece, *Migration Parade: Helical Song* (2022), was a particularly formative experience for me many years ago. I would add that I experience it as inherently relational, and co-creative. I also wonder if the particular way this plays out from artist to artist is part of a larger trauma field or ‘collective shadow’ surrounding the profession of the Artist itself. This perspective regarding professional collective fields comes from body psychotherapist and family constellations teacher, Nir Esterman (Israel). He developed a therapeutic modality called Collective Shadow Constellations drawing on the work of Carl Jung and Bert Hellinger. He believes that professions like therapist, healer, doctor, lawyer, sex worker, labourer (my examples) etc. have their own professional shadow field that one enters into when one identifies with that particular profession. This is absorbed unconsciously from the culture, family of origin, and through the training/mentorship process and practice itself—the collective field of the profession. He shared the above in a training I attended in 2022 and gave me permission to mention it here. He also added that he was fairly certain he didn’t invent the idea, but I was welcome to present his framing of it (above).

I also think it discomforting to tolerate the ambiguity of the erotic experience, to accept its mixed motivations, or to observe how the erotic mind has a habit of transforming one idea or emotion into another. And yet, if we fail to come to terms with the fundamentally paradoxical nature of eroticism, we set the stage for its negative aspects to appear more frighteningly destructive. (p. 6)

Arthur Rosengarten describes magic as “the excitement and awe one feels in the living presence of mystery, discovery, change and wisdom” (Rosengarten, 2000, p. 107) I would add that I experience it as inherently relational, and co-creative —both with other humans and with All that Is.

I question if safety in its purest form is ever possible. Orpheus Black, coming from the perspective of kink and BDSM, says that we can never create true safety, only “Safety Theater.” Safety theater gets as close as possible to the ideal of safety, while acknowledging that in life—and many of the activities we choose to undertake as part of it—safety can never be guaranteed. We can only create a consensual situation and structure our interactions to come as close to it as possible (From conversations between 2020 and 2023).

Conversations with Dr. Laura Calderon De La Barca (Mexico City, Mexico). I can't possibly remember the year, but I would venture a guess at 12 years ago.

Beneath the ‘knowing’... is another subtle knowing. Though direct experience of the numinous happens within my body, causing me to perceive life in a completely new way, it is not about me, It is not mine. My body is a conduit for energy destined for the collective body (p. xiii).

I am thinking of the process groups of Robert Augustus Masters Ph.D. (Ashland, USA) here, which I attended as a therapy client many years ago and were particularly formative for me.

A phrase from dance artist and choreographer, Charlie Prince (Montreal, Canada), from a conversation we had regarding his movement piece, *Migration Parade: Helical Song* (2022).

*Migration Parade* (Goodall & Savage, 2022).
In the field of Expressive Arts, *Aesthetic Response* "refers to a distinct response, with a bodily origin, to an occurrence in the imagination, to an artistic act, or to the perception of an artwork" (Knill, Barba & Fuchs 2004, p. 71). It is the act of responding to the experience of an artwork or aesthetic expression with another artwork or aesthetic expression. It is a conversational-response in the language of the arts (Goodall, 2019, p. 14).

Laura Calderon de la Barca (PhD) kindly agreed to work with Danielle and I in the form of zoom sessions.

As described by Donna Martin (Hakomi lineage holder) in a mentorship session in Penticton, British Columbia (2022). Hakomi is a body-centred psychotherapy that offers the orientation of ‘mindfully-assisted self-discovery,’ originally developed by Ron Kurtz.

Concept from *Playback Theatre*, developed in the 1970's by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas in New York.

Salutogenesis focuses on factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease (pathogenesis). A concept explained in my basic ExA training in IATBA Barcelona, from the teacher, expressive arts therapist and designer of the “Affoltern Model” in Affoltern Hospital (Switzerland) Annina Hess-Cabalazar. She and Christian Hess explain it in her book, “Human Medicine.” In the Spanish version of the book they refer to it saying: “Esto daría lugar no sólo a enfoques terapéuticos contra algo, sino también a enfoques que fomentarian los potenciales “sanadores” de la propia persona enferma,” which in English translates to, “This would give place not only to therapeutic approaches against something, but also to approaches that would foster the “healing” potentials of the sick person themselves” (Hess & Hess-Cabalazar, 2008, p. 28). (Translated from Spanish to English by Alba Torres Robinat)

Individuation is defined in Jung Lexicon as “a process of psychological differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality ... Thus individuation involves an increasing awareness of one’s unique psychological reality, including personal strengths and limitations, and at the same time a deeper appreciation of humanity in general” (Sharp, 1991, para. 757).