

Spontaneous Art-Making

Spontaneous art-making is a process borne out of being present with your images as they unfold moment by moment. The art-maker is both a doer and an observer of what s(he) does. This involves taking direct action (engaging with the media) and allowing what comes forward to come forward. Sometimes this allowing requires us to step out of the way.

An important element of spontaneous art-making is choice. The art-maker is given a choice of media including paints and a wide selection of brushes, an assortment of drawing media, clay, and collage materials and is encouraged to go with what feels right. The art-maker can approach the art media with a particular question or issue, ground themselves in the present, and allow themselves to feel drawn towards a particular colour, medium, or way of expression.

When practiced over time, spontaneous art-making becomes a process in which patterns emerge in the art-maker's images which can open up new self-awareness and understanding. Meanings emerge out of the content of the images created, internal responses to the media, the experience of art-making, the feelings of the art-maker, and the interactions between the art-maker and the art therapist. The meanings derived are personal and are determined by the art-maker. Images are always multidimensional and dynamic and can hold multiple "right" meanings which can change over time. The role of the art therapist is as witness, facilitator, guide, and companion on the journey.

Sometimes spontaneous art-making yields disturbing imagery or strong emotions which can feel overwhelming. The art therapist's role is to help the art-maker build safety into the process and to facilitate working with whatever comes forward. With this guidance, the art-maker becomes adept at moving between risk and safety and can experience a growing sense of agency and self-efficacy in this process.

The spontaneity in this approach can also be experienced as playful and fun! Many art-makers comment that they haven't felt this sense of freedom and creativity since childhood. It can be liberating to let go of predetermined standards and "just create".