

Case Study *First Aid with Art Therapy* and its liberating role in Bosnia and Herzegovina Temporary Reception Centers for Migrants and Refugees¹

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Abstract: *First Aid with Art Therapy* is a therapeutic approach carried out in Bosnian migrants and refugee camps from October 2019 to the present. In an extremely challenging context for therapists and beneficiaries, Art Therapy sessions were held according to the methodology of free creative expression, with a high degree of adjustability. A non-directed work prioritizing each participant's needs, spontaneity, and the factor of transitoriness, either of conditions or of emotions, was revealed to be the appropriate approach within a context of humanitarian crisis. In this study, the theoretical foundations of Carl Jung and Nise da Silveira⁴ were used, especially with regard to the concept of Archetype, which is essential for a better understanding of the images produced in these sessions. It could be observed in the migrants and refugees' work that certain repeated patterns appeared, for example: feminine figures and mandalas: which coincide with two strong archetypes that will be highlighted.

Keywords: Art-Therapy; Migrants and Refugees; Carl Jung; Nise da Silveira; Archetypes.

[es] Estudio del Caso Primeros Auxilios con Arteterapia y su rol liberador en Centros de Acogimiento Transitorio para Inmigrantes y Refugiados de Bosnia y Herzegovina

Resumen: *Los Primeros Auxilios con Arte Terapia* es un abordaje terapéutico realizado en campamentos de inmigrantes y refugiados de Bosnia y Herzegovina desde octubre del 2019 hasta el presente. En un contexto extremadamente desafiante para terapeutas y beneficiarios, las sesiones de arteterapia se llevaron a cabo según la metodología de expresión creativa libre, con gran capacidad de ajustabilidad. Un trabajo no dirigido que prioriza las necesidades de cada participante, la espontaneidad y el factor de transitoriedad, ya sea de condiciones o de emociones, revelado como el adecuado en un contexto de crisis humanitaria. En este estudio se utilizaron los fundamentos teóricos de Carl Jung y Nise da Silveira, especialmente en lo que respecta al concepto de Arquetipo, fundamental para una mejor comprensión de las imágenes producidas en estas sesiones. Se pudo observar en las obras de los migrantes y refugiados que aparecieron ciertos patrones repetidos, por ejemplo: figuras femeninas y mandalas; que coincide con dos arquetipos fuertes que serán destacados.

Palabras clave: Art-Terapia; Inmigrantes y Refugiados; Carl Jung; Nise da Silveira; Arquetipos.

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⁴ Nise da Silveira (1905-1999), Brazilian psychiatrist, pioneer of Art Therapy.

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1. Introduction

The United Nations claimed that around 8,000 refugees and migrants are currently present in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Union is offering emergency assistance and is playing an important role by encouraging the local authorities to take a stand in order to provide suitable accommodation facilities and to ensure that fundamental human rights are respected. Accordingly, the European Union, the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations, such as *Medecins du Monde Belgique*, are joining forces, to support and guarantee the needs of refugees and migrants. This humanitarian aid is focused on emergency humanitarian assistance: “covering the most urgent needs, such as primary and secondary healthcare services, limiting the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, mental health, and psychological support” (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2021, w.p.). It is in this setting that First Aid artistic therapeutic experience takes place, being carried out within the project “Ensured access to health services and protection response for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in BiH” funded by ECHO (*Medecins du Monde Belgique — Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina*), which aims to provide mental health services for male migrants and refugees in this country.



Figure 1. Image source https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en

Due to the intrinsically distressing situation that refugees experience and the lack of leisure activities in the refugee camp, Art Therapy is an important tool for self-knowledge, stress release, relaxation, potential healing, and can thus occupy an important place in the refugees’ support. The images that spontaneously emerge

reveal symbols that can be seen as a bridge between the subconscious and the conscious. When words and thoughts run out, as it could be noticed in the case of refugees exposed to many traumatic and stressful situations, artistic creation can be very liberating.

In this study, the analytical psychology of Carl Jung and Nise da Silveira, especially with regard to concepts of the Collective Unconscious and Archetypes, were essential theoretical foundations for a better understanding of the images produced in Art Therapy. It was observed in refugees' work that certain repeated patterns appear, for instance: mandalas and feminine figures: which coincide with two strong archetypes that both Jung and Nise da Silveira highlight.

Through this case study, it is intended to reflect on the results gathered from the ongoing project "First Aid with Art Therapy" which has undergone numerous adjustments due to the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, regarding its success and impact on the well-being of refugees.

2. Characterization of the Case Study "First Aid with Art Therapy"

The Art Therapy sessions were conducted in the migrants and refugee temporary reception centers of Bira, Lipa, Miral and Sedra in the city of Bihac and Velika Kladuša, in the Una Sana Canton, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from October 2019 to the present.



Figure 2. Image source https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en

Regarding the typology of the therapeutic work, it was decided to implement sessions based on the needs that could be observed in the participants. These needs were constantly changing due to external factors that can occur in the camp experience and can directly affect the work with refugees, such as: anxiety, frustration, feelings of distrust, worries, uncertainty about the future, desire to continue their trajectory and not being able to, boredom, the corona virus pandemic, political and religious conflicts between themselves, etc. All this meant that the context was always an emergency immersed within a humanitarian crisis. Also taken into consideration were the challenges that arise when working with this population, such as: the fact

that the participants are always in transit because they are trying to reach the country that will be their final destination. Refugees are constantly dealing with a feeling of “being on the road” and with the feeling of uprootedness.

Given the above and the fact that the primary needs of these people are not resolved, it is impossible to conduct Art Therapy sessions with long-term objectives. Therefore, it was decided that the main goal would be to develop and strengthen resilience for dealing with reality and the problems they have to confront on a daily basis, all this together with stress relief and management. Taking as pillars of our work, Flexibility and Conscious Listening, what emerges would be “First Aid with Art Therapy within Humanitarian Work”, developed and implemented in group sessions.

The refugee, by the peculiar nature of their circumstances, is experiencing an extreme situation. The fact that they are confined to a transitory camp, with a lack of stimuli from the outside, means that they suffer from the particular difficulties of those who are extremely limited in their possibilities of movement and expression. The practice of Art Therapy in a confinement environment makes it possible to overcome tension, stress and internal conflicts. As the users participate, each one, in their own time, manifests improvements in their well-being and some internal alleviation, each particular case being unique in its evolution.

3. Profile of the Group and Typology of the Sessions

The Art Therapy sessions were held a maximum of three times per week in each camp, with duration of two hours. The number of participants in the group sessions varied between 8 and 15 participants. During the quarantine period due to the COVID-19 Corona Virus pandemic, the group sessions were suspended. At the end of the pandemic, as part of the prevention measures, the number of participants was reduced to 8. The refugee population possesses very special characteristics requiring additional sensitivity on the part of professionals. Their situation is one of enormous vulnerability: refugees are people in transit, victims of forced displacement and persecution, separated from their families, originating from conflict zones.

(...) Since 2018, close to 70,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina via the Western Balkans migration route. (...) Since the beginning of the influx of refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU has been working closely with UN agencies, other humanitarian organizations, and the Bosnian authorities to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and migrants (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021, w.p.).

This therapeutic experience was directed to men over the age of 18. Their nationalities varied, but they were predominantly from: Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, India, Bangladesh, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic. With the aim of reducing stress and anxiety, and facilitating self expression and self awareness, participants will do some warm-up and relaxation exercises, which will be described briefly. The first step is *focusing*. Participants stand with their legs slightly

apart, then stand on their tiptoes and inhale through the nose bringing their arms up, imagining that they are trying to touch the sky or the ceiling of the space where the session is being held, then they exhale pushing the air through the mouth, flexing the arms and bringing the hands together, then bring them down to return to the starting position. The second step is a *breathing exercise* in which participants stand up with their legs slightly apart and inhale slowly from the base of the feet to the top of the head, and exhale from the top of the head to the base of the feet. It was recommended to repeat both sequences three times.

The materials available to participants in the Art Therapy sessions are: drawing paper, brushes, palettes, watercolors, acrylic or oil paints, colored paper, drawing pencils, erasers, sharpeners, glue, scissors, canvas of different sizes, and also Recyclable Material, such as: magazines, toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls, empty boxes, rope, etc. The guidelines for this activity are: try to be silent during the creative process, freedom to paint whatever they want and in whatever way they want. At the sessions, each participant chooses the place and the paper where they will proceed to paint. Participants place the paper on the walls, while the rest of the material is displayed on the table in the center of the room. Relaxation music is selected, preferably instrumental, at a low volume. At the end, the group sits in a circle and starts to share the experience. The facilitators ask questions to initiate the dialogue. Participants will be asked to share the experience they had during the artistic process. If anybody prefers not to, there will be no pressure to do so.



Figure 3. Free Artistic Expression in Art Therapy Sessions. Photograph by the authors.

At this stage, it is important that no member of the group judges any work with qualifiers such as beautiful, funny, etc. The aim is to focus on the personal creative process. Listening consciously is very important in this step. The facilitator's approach must be of empathy; the therapeutic potential of working with creative expression is not understood as a diagnostic tool, but as an instrument of expression and transformation of the subject.

4. Challenges Encountered

Biases regarding the meaning of mental health are the first that could be encountered: most of the beneficiaries come from countries where mental health is not given the necessary importance, and where there is a belief that “real males” do not need it. In addition, the whole health crisis and the basic problems linked to survival put mental health on the back burner.

The activities in the camps rely on permanent adaptation and elasticity because refugees are constantly traveling, seeking to cross the border in order to reach their final destination. The goals are drawn according to a main structure but are always adjusted and adapted to the reality that exists in the camps and to the daily life of the beneficiaries.

Another challenge encountered is that of literacy: in some cases, there were people who did not know how to read or write well in their own language, so the activities also had to be adapted within this context.

Cultural and linguistic diversity have raised challenges of great complexity. A previous awareness process needed to be carried out in order to gather and reach all the groups and to achieve total inclusion during the activities. Encountering different groups with different languages can be an obstacle due to the time required for adequate and efficient translation, so it is important to establish a structure within the methodology based on this multilingualism. Activities were always carried out with a translator, usually they are Cultural Mediators, that is, they possess knowledge of the culture, the idiosyncrasies of the participants' countries of origin. Communication with them is highly important, as they are the people who provide valuable information for the approach to be planned; they are also the first bridge of direct communication with participants, so it was also important to establish certain guidelines for working together.

When working with multilingual groups it is sometimes insufficient to have only one translator, so in the beginning, an attempt was made to have sessions with two translators, but the result was not as expected because a lot of time was wasted in the translation and this became a limitation for developing the sessions. Because of this, it was decided to organize a schedule for each group of speakers of the same language. Although this poses a risk, because others could feel left out or discriminated against. But room was always left for flexibility, especially if the participant had knowledge of English, since this is the official language of communication between the translator and the facilitator during the sessions. This structure was accepted by all participants and became a natural way of working.

Another important point to take into account is the physical condition of the participants. Often, they return from failed attempts to cross the border exhausted and weakened. To counteract this situation, the Art Therapy sessions were sometimes replaced by short 30-minute chair yoga sessions with basic postures adapted, in conjunction with self-massage and simple breathing sequences for beginners. These sessions also helped to reduce the anxiety and uncertainty generated by the pandemic situation.

There were always three problems participants told us they had, sleep disorders, lack of concentration and lack of memory. To pass days without any activity produced an over-stimulation of thoughts. Through the performance of these short and

simple yoga routines, stress levels could be reduced, allowing them to improve their ability to concentrate and sleep better.

Often, when refugees were forced to spend prolonged periods of time in the camps due to the lack of success in their journeys, it was observed that they fell into a deep sadness and apathy, losing their motivation. In this situation, something that really managed to restore that connection with themselves and their environment, was through music therapy or the technique of sound therapy or conscious listening⁵. Multiculturalism in the camps leads us to a careful selection of the repertoire, due to the desire to avoid any kind of sensitivities. For this reason, it was decided to work using classical music as a starting point. Another important point was the selection of pieces within classical music, choosing those that could contribute to rekindling motivation, joy and hope.

5. First Aid with Migrants and Refugees: Methodology of Free Expression and Image Emergence

Unlike art education, art therapy is not concerned with imparting artistic abilities. The goal of art therapy is to make use of the creative process to lead people to explore self-expression. As a result, one can be able to find new ways to gain personal insight and develop new skills for dealing with, for instance, severe stress and traumatic events.

According to Francisquetti (2016, p. 14), health and art are two universes intrinsically linked, and this meeting favors a new look at rehabilitation treatment, as it enables patients to experience new ways, and allows them to discover new skills, promoting the ability to self-express their inner world, releasing fears, anxieties, frustrations, and traumas.

In the context explained above, it was agreed that the model to follow when it comes to “First Aid with Art Therapy” would have to be a non-directed model, inspired by the spontaneous model developed by Nise da Silveira: free artistic expression (Melo, 2010, p. 867). Also, Jung used the psychotherapeutic technique of free and spontaneous drawing or painting as a way to facilitate interaction with the patient. He totally believed in the human capacity to organize their inner chaos through artistic expressions (Tropéia, 2017, w.p.). This kind of therapeutic approach has to be very humble and flexible, because our main aim was to give some sense of inner peace and relief from the constant stress and anxiety that these refugees and migrants were and are constantly experiencing.

The refugee, who by their nature already seeks freedom — they are running away from limits, from the coercion of suffering — can find a greater sense of dignity and humanization in this sort of Therapeutic model.

For Nise da Silveira, who was imprisoned for more than a year by the dictatorial political police of Getúlio Vargas’ Estado Novo in Brazil, the confinement environment has always been a highly sensitive subject, leading her to ponder on the alienation and stigmatization one can feel when living institutionalized or confined. Nise warns above all about the danger of alienation of the subject. It is precisely for this reason that at the end of her career, she stopped designating her

⁵ For a better understanding of the concept, see: <http://www.musicosophia.com/?lang=en>

patients in this way: “Not patients! People” (Silveira in Mello, 2009, p. 116). In the same way the work with Art Therapy in refugee camps aims to support the person whose humanity in a context of fight or survival is so often compromised, despite being naturally inherent to it.

It could be observed that there is a percentage of refugees who experience an individual and intimate spontaneous creative process. It could also be seen that in most cases people have not had previous contact with art, yet they are receptive to this type of therapeutic approach and it flows intuitively and spontaneously. Proof of this is that even outside of group activities, they often ask for the materials to paint. Sometimes they work in the room in silence. Other times they take the materials to do it in their rooms. There were cases in which the participant could be said to experience something one can call an “artistic catharsis”, where they are immersed in a daily production for a period of time until that process ends in the same way it began, ceasing to visit our space in the camp. As is claimed by Kalmanowitz and Raibow in a similar experience with refugees, “expression and catharsis in art therapy are often facilitated through the conscious choice of materials and the art making-process itself and can lead to both relief and awareness” (2016, p. 62).

There is also another group of participants attending the group sessions who find the creative process difficult at the beginning, due to different factors, such as bias or lack of talent for art, or of a cultural nature. For this reason, it was important to have a period of time beforehand to work on trust, respect and security within the group, as well as the relationship with the facilitators. It can also be seen that there is a different response when participants are asked to paint or draw according to a theme, to when they are given ample freedom to do whatever they want. When instructions are given, generally there are people in the group who do not want to paint and prefer to observe the work of others or choose to withdraw from the activities. This happens in spite of the previous warm-up exercises that are done to enter into the creative process.

According to the Brazilian psychiatrist Nise da Silveira, the creative drive can only manifest itself in a space of freedom. In this case, the monitors work as support points, facilitating the catalysis of the contents that were once blocked. This phenomenon fulfills an explicit therapeutic function, triggering relief and ordering of the psyche. This type of session has the primacy of experience and presence. Similar to what in anthropological contexts is called fieldwork. In Gullar’s words: “Nise did not lock herself in her office drawing conclusions and making theories. She participated in the work, she was always present in the ateliers, in the conviviality with the patients” (Gullar, 1996, p. 15).

As Stollz and Holland (2015, p. 51) state, Nise da Silveira sees painting as a tool for the patient’s expression to reorganize his or her internal world and relationship with the outside world. Art, as a symbolic entity, emerges spontaneously as a bridge for a reconciling dialogue between the subconscious and the conscious, and is extremely useful when words and thoughts collapse.

Nise da Silveira analyzed the relationship between the rational and the imaginary in her patients’ work: “I understand that the order of the imaginary and the high order of rational thought are different. And also, that the imaginary would not be reducible to rational terms. Therein lies the nerve of the matter” (Silveira, 1999, p. 93)

Generally, the person in their first paintings does not fully know why or for what reason some images arise, but with time and through their own lived experience they will be able to interpret its meaning, because they can recognize the relief that this brings with it. The difference between a spontaneous and natural process from the one that is directed, is the possibility of the emergence of a symbolic art. The construction of a symbol is processed as a “restorative reconstruction” or better, as a “restoration of the internal world” (Segal, 1993, p.104).

When direction or instructions are given about what to do in the work with painting, it loses its symbolic character. Because it is a work with short-term objectives, the focus is on the development of resilience, stress management and stress relief in the context of humanitarian crisis; the path that was most efficient for us, according to our experience, was the spontaneous one. This process can emerge in a group session, if the therapist is willing and open to consciously listen to those who form this group, if they recognize in this process its healing properties, and they create the necessary conditions for it to emerge in a safe space.

As some of the people who usually do this intuitive painting have not had any relationship with art before, they are surprised by the first images that emerge. It can also be seen that when beneficiaries are finally able to reach their final destination, this relationship with art changes. In some cases, it is diluted and in others it continues. This seems to be nothing more than confirmation of the healing character of art, as a symbolic entity that has a life cycle, but this does not mean that it will never appear again.

In Segal’s words: through art, a world of fantasy is created in which unconscious desires can be satisfied” (1993, p. 87). Thus, the activity of spontaneous, undirected painting can be essential for promoting psychic equilibrium by containing the frustration of drives, obtaining through artistic creation a sense of reparation, restoration and internal re-signification.

The work developed in “First Aid with Art Therapy” was intended to be “(...) a free territory, where there are no pressures that generate anguish, nor demands above the possibilities of responses from its users” (Silveira, 1986, p. 11).

6. Approach to Archetypes through Images

Jung considered artistic manifestation to be a natural and structuring psychological function, and its healing capacity was to give shape to, and to transform unconscious content into symbolic images. Based on Jungian thought, it can be asserted that the function of images in art manifestation is to mediate the production of unconscious symbols. “Jung conceives, besides the personal unconscious, the existence of the collective unconscious, formed by instincts and archetypes” (Tropéia, 2017, w.p.). Archetypes have an impersonal character and are configured from the innate dispositions of the deepest structures of the human psyche. These images are called archetypal. They are collective and primordial, arising from the heredity of the human imagination (Santos, Custódio, 2017, p.10) The archetypes are countless, but to highlight a few, for example, the great mother, the father, the anima and animus, the hero, the wise old man, or the mandala.

Some specifics related to what happens during the creative process with the participants were shown above. At this point, it is necessary to make an approximation

of the images that emerge during this process. It's important to note that the intention is not to focus on the analysis or projections of these paintings, but rather to describe and mention what is observed in these images.

In *Experiência de Arte Espontânea* (Silveira, 1957, p. 41), Nise discusses the therapeutic benefits of creative activity, also based on a case study — she explains that it is through creative expression that images are constructed, in which the unconscious is presented in the form of symbols and myths. The theoretical foundations of Carl Jung's analytical psychology will be used. For instance, the concepts of Collective Unconscious and Archetypes are essential for a better understanding of the images. Through analytical psychology, archetypes, although dynamic, are primordial images of the human psyche, innate dispositions that can be accessed at any time, in any place, by any individual, people or nation. Jung (2009, § 832) states that archetype is always collective, that is, it is at least common to all peoples and all times. That is why the main mythological motifs are probably also common to all races and epochs. Jung:

(...) called this collective unconscious substratum, a heritage that transcends all differences in culture and conscious attitudes, that is, the collective unconscious presents latent dispositions for identical reactions. It is nothing more than the psychic expression of the identity of the brain structure, regardless of any racial differences. Its origins are unknown and are lost in time (Calegari, Gemignani, 2006 p. 30).

Jung in 'Man and His Symbols', relates the importance of certain symbols present in the Visual Arts to the manifestation of the unconscious: "each of these symbols has had a psychological significance that has remained constant, from the most primitive expressions of consciousness to the most sophisticated art forms of the 20th century" (2008, p. 232).

In the work resulting from the experience "First Aid with Art Therapy" one can observe certain patterns that repeat in the paintings. Some images may vary, but in essence they are the same. Among these, a tendency was found, for example, to draw female figures, circular forms located centrally on the paper, and various landscapes. It was also noticed that when the images begin to emerge they could be crude or primitive; representations containing no lifelike element, or with more abstract tendencies. This can be understood as part of the creative process. The images emerge gradually. There is a natural and sequential rhythm in this process, this cannot be revealed in a rushed manner, otherwise it could create an internal chaos resulting in significant confusion.

This natural, sequential rhythm must be respected not only in individual processes, but also in group sessions. While working with "First Aid with Art Therapy" with refugees, the focus should be on the calmness that the process affords while avoiding verbal discussions of what these images might represent for the individual, as this opens up situations that would be impossible for us to provide the continuing therapeutic cycle necessary for full emotional and mental recovery. In the vein of Nise da Silveira's concept of Art Therapy, the execution of activities that develop creativity, and the pleasure of creating, which are characteristics of expressive activities (Silveira, 1986, p. 82), should not be used to categorize the beneficiary, nor to try to

explain them, but instead should be used as a tool to help develop ways to deal with difficulties and contribute to maintaining the psychic balance.

7. About the Anima

In the sessions carried out with “First Aid with Art Therapy”, images emerged that one could not fail to associate with the studies by Jung and Nise da Silveira. By working with the model of free artistic expression, it was frequently found that images by the participants relate to the feminine image, that is to say, there is a predominance of paintings with drawings of women with different types of faces, sometimes with their backs turned, sometimes facing forward, etc.

Anima and Animus are two functional complexes of the archetypal world in the psyche. Their forms of manifestation, the way they act in the unconscious, and awareness of them, are part of the inevitable quest in the individuation process. Emma Jung⁶ states that “it is known that the anima represents the feminine component of the personality of man, but at the same time, it is in general the image of the feminine that it brings in itself, in other words, it is the archetype of the feminine” (2011, p. 71). The anima is determined predominantly by Eros, that is, by the connecting principle of relationship; while the animus in general is more dependent on the principle of Logos, which differentiates, orders, and rationalizes (Jung, 2011, p. 28).

Curiously, some aspects of the anima can be found in the drawings produced during the sessions of this case study: many of the participants started their journey, their escape, very early, so that on many occasions they suffer from the absence of the feminine figure. In some cases of the mother, in others of their wives or girlfriends. The journey that the participants make is very complicated, physically and emotionally hard, therefore there is a need to disconnect and to raise defenses, to control everything that concerns the emotions: the intuitive, loving, creative side, etc. It can be seen that there is an imbalance concerning the feminine archetype.

One case worth mentioning involves a participant who drew a very refined woman facing away holding a glass of wine, after finishing his work he said that this woman represented what he wanted to be doing at that moment, enjoying life without any worries. Another case to highlight is that of a participant who did not attend many group sessions, but for a period of time he would come to ask for the materials to paint in the privacy of his room, and generally all the paintings he did were depictions of female figures.

These images of feminine figures also represent the longing for a stable family life, the mother generally gives us this stability, especially in our childhood. And she is also the one who comforts us when something happens to us, the one who tells us that everything is going to be all right and that it will pass. In some cases, these images are revealed to make contact with the inner world of the participant, there is no need for words as everything has been expressed in the painting. This representation, being a repetitive pattern, becomes collective, without ceasing to fulfill its symbolic, unique and individual function corresponding to each person. This image of the fem-

⁶ Emma Jung (1882-1955) psychologist, Swiss writer and wife of Carl Jung. She held two conferences, “A contribution to the problem of Animus” and “Anima as a Natural Being”, that would become her famous book “Animus and Anima”.

inine emerges as a regulating function, and like all symbols it appears spontaneously, and this occurs due to the freedom of the process. Therefore, it can also be observed that as a general rule, when directed, this pattern does not emerge in the same way, causing some barriers to the connection between the person and the art. Curiously, however, it can be found that in the case of men who are in family camps, this pattern does not become so repetitive. In these cases, it was observed that there is a more diverse influx of images. Landscapes appear more. The situation is different as most of them are fathers and life in a family camp, one could say, has certain differences. These participants are with their wives and children, and although the place is not properly that of a home, there is a family nucleus and a community life among all the families living there.



Figure 4. Work carried out during First Aid with Art Therapy sessions. Photograph by the authors.

It can be said that these images of the feminine emerge as a regulating medium for refugees' blocked emotions as this creative process emerges from a deep level of the unconscious. Information that may appear through these images is delicate, and it must be received by the therapist with empathy and availability.



Figure 5. Work carried out during First Aid with Art Therapy sessions.
Photograph by the authors.

8. Mandalas and Self-healing

Jung used the Hindu word *Mandala* to designate what can be understood as a symbolic representation of the nuclear atom of the human psyche (Jung, 2002, 66). Nise da Silveira articulates that expression of the totality is the mandala, whose central nucleus is a source of energy that “manifests itself as an almost irresistible compulsion to lead the individual to become what he is, in the same way that every organism is driven to assume the characteristic form of its nature, whatever the circumstances” (Jung cited by Silveira, 2011, p. 89).

It can be observed that many beneficiaries experience difficulties when it comes to creating patterns with mandalas. Everything indicates that, due to the challenges of concentration, short memory spans and sleeping problems of the refugees inside the camp, development of imagination is compromised. It was noticed that there is a period of time that the person needs for the mandalas to emerge. Most commonly, it is abstract drawing and painting that arrives first, moving on to diverse paintings with figurative elements, and then the mandalas can arrive as organized structures. It is very unusual in the camps to see someone creating a mandala in their first contact with painting. Thus, it can be observed that the creation of mandalas occurs as an evolutionary, progressive process that seems to accompany a process of internal improvement over the course of the sessions. It can be confirmed that mandalas help to relieve stress, especially when we talk about refugees. One of the reasons is because this process is done in silence,

directionless. This improves the power of decision and a feeling of freedom. In both forms, whether they are created or simply colored in, the beneficiaries concentrate on the smallest details with a high degree of patience and commitment.



Figure 6. Work carried out during First Aid with Art Therapy sessions.
Photograph by the authors.

In the work Nise da Silveira developed with her patients, the manifestations of circles and mandalas were very dominant. Nise dedicated herself to study the rich symbolism of mandalas, understanding that mandala is the symbol of the Centre, of the Self. The ordering and healing functions of these images became the focus of her studies (Souza, 2018, p. 53). In agreement with Jung, she interpreted Mandalas as a natural intuitive effort to pacify the emotional tumults. “They appeared precisely in moments of psychic disorder, as self-defense of the disordered psyche” (Mello, 2009, p.54). Nise da Silveira perceived that the images produced by her patients were configured in the form of mandalas, characterizing a search for psychic reorganization, for balance, for self-healing (Mello, 2009, p. 55).

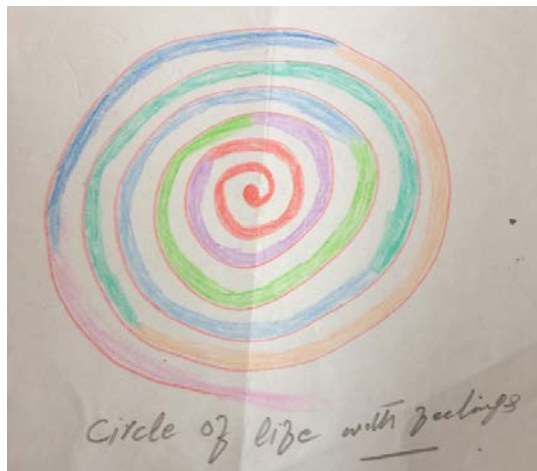


Figure 7. Work carried out during First Aid with Art Therapy sessions. Title written by the refugee themselves: “Circle of Life with Feelings”. Photograph by the authors.

At the end of these sessions, they usually show their finished work, and some ask for them to be placed on the walls of the room in which the activities take place. One case worth mentioning is about a participant who generally did not like to be in places with a lot of people, he was always observed alone, although not without friends in the camp, he was known by everyone; he always used to come and spontaneously paint mandalas. What is more interesting is that he painted the mandalas in fragments, that is, he would come, sit and draw with absolute abstraction, sometimes even stopping just to look at the paper, then he would say that he had to leave and to please keep his mandala safe. After one or two hours he would come back to continue, repeating this process until he finished the work, often taking him two days to complete. Only when he finished his work could a smile be seen on his face. After a few days he would come back to draw and paint another mandala and repeat the whole process again.

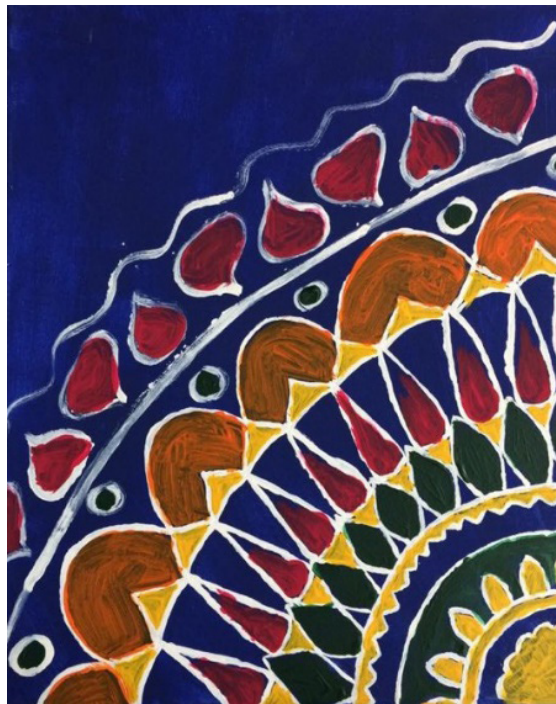


Figure 8. Work carried out during First Aid with Art Therapy sessions.
Photograph by the authors.

9. Conclusion

The Jungian approach is based on the premise that the human being is guided by symbols, and art therapy can facilitate the understanding and resolution of conflicting affective states. “Through artistic creation it is possible to get in touch with symbols that need to be understood and transformed” (Santos, Custódio, 2017, p.10). Art Therapy can promote the liberation of the subject, because it provides a place for speech, expression, and shelter.

As pointed out by Kalmanowitz and Raibow in a paper related to a similar experience, “there is much written on Art Therapy and trauma with a small minority of articles focusing on art therapy with refugees” (2016, p. 58). Interestingly, these authors report an experience of Art Therapy with refugees in Hong Kong with a very similar approach. “Art materials were made available and introduced to the participants but no theme was given, and mindfulness was introduced through teaching of a variety of formal and informal mindfulness exercises” (2016, p. 59).

Arriving at this point it is possible to conclude that an Art Therapy practice in such a susceptible context, even more so with the increased stress brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, could only achieve its objective, namely to restore well-being and inner peace in an emergence context and from the first aid perspective, if it was based on a methodology of free artistic expression combined with relaxation practices facilitated by simple movements and breathing practices of yoga, as well as music therapy and sound therapy.



Figure 9: Work carried out during First Aid with Art Therapy sessions, where the refugee added their own title: “Imagination have no Border”. Photograph by the authors.

As it has been seen, Art Therapy in an emergency approach can be a valuable tool for promoting balance and well-being. It is a shifting mechanism that should be explored and disseminated more in general in all refugee camps in order to promote humanization, socialization, and quality of life. So, it can be said with Nise da Silveira, the inspiration for this project: “What heals, fundamentally, is the stimulation of creativity” (Silveira cited in Mello, 2009, p. 115). As can be read on the United Nations Refugee Agency website:

Art also offers refugees a way to communicate the unthinkable, the unbearable to others. It allows them to convert their drama and loss into words, colors or move-

ment — so that their distress does not overwhelm them and destroy what is still alive in them (UNHCR/ Suisse, 2021, w.p.).

When working with refugees, within a humanitarian crisis, this creative process can give back a sense of freedom to the person and restore their ability to make decisions. It can help to recover self-confidence, facilitate access to the inner world and can help in observing what causes pain at a safe distance. Finally, the unconscious and the conscious can enter into dialogue without conflict.

Often, it was observed that at the end of the process the person simply leaves their drawings and paintings behind and goes away calmly and without uttering a word. Most refugees, who participated in this therapeutic approach progress through the sessions, enjoy the experience and leave in silence. Generally, there are not many words and when there are, they are of gratitude.

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