

ART THERAPY AND SUSTAINABILITY: AFFECTIVE MEMORIES IN A HOMEOPATHY OUTPATIENT CLINIC FOR DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES IN AN URBAN CONTEXT IN RJ/BRAZIL



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ABSTRACT

This article explores the application of Art Therapy in the context of the Homeopathy Outpatient Clinic of Santa Casa de Misericórdia do Rio de Janeiro, focusing on populations of different ethnicities in situations of urban vulnerability. It was investigated how the activation of affective memories, mediated by sensory stimuli (olfactory, gustatory, tactile and visual) and artistic dynamics, can promote the strengthening of cultural identity, self-esteem and social integration of the participants. Using a qualitative approach, based on case studies and Jungian psychology, six monthly workshops were held, addressing topics such as ancestry, belonging and personal renewal. The activities provided a space for welcome and symbolic expression, enabling participants to access internal content and share their cultural experiences in a collaborative environment. The results indicate that Art Therapy is effective as an integrative and transformative practice, favoring the psychic and emotional reorganization of the participants. In addition, the rescue of identity elements and the expansion of the worldview were observed, reinforcing the potential of Art Therapy to strengthen mental health and social inclusion, especially in multicultural contexts. This work highlights the importance of Art Therapy as a sustainable biopsychosocial practice and a tool for promoting emotional and cultural well-being.

Keywords: Art therapy. Affective Memories. Cultural identity. Autonomy and Social Integration.

INTRODUCTION

"What improves the service is the affective contact of one person with another. What cures is joy, what cures is the lack of prejudice."
NISE DA SILVEIRA (1990).

This article investigates how Art Therapy, through the activation of affective memories, can contribute to the promotion of mental health and social inclusion in a homeopathy outpatient clinic that serves various ethnic groups in urban situations in Rio de Janeiro. These vulnerable populations, far from their cultural territories of origin, face significant challenges of adaptation and integration, compromising their emotional and psychological well-being (Alves, 2017).

Affective memory is a fundamental concept to understand the impact of art therapy practices on traditional communities, ethnic minorities and native peoples. Defined as the set of emotional records associated with lived experiences, affective memory acts as a link between the past and the present, connecting individuals to their cultural identities and their collective experiences. In the words of Walter Benjamin, "the true image of the past sparkles like lightning in the moment of danger" (Benjamin, 1987, p. 229), highlighting the importance of memory for the construction of an identity in situations of vulnerability. This relationship is particularly relevant when applied to Art Therapy, which uses symbolic expression to rescue memories and promote psychic and emotional well-being.

This article aims to report the application of Art Therapy, taking as its object the experience in the Homeopathy (and Phytotherapy) outpatient clinic at the 7th Infirmary of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia Hospital in Rio de Janeiro. The work used art therapy practices as a means of promoting mental health in a therapeutic environment, a space of transformation, where symbolic production allowed participants to reorganize their internal narratives and find new meanings for their life experiences as previously discussed by Varricchio & Lage (2020) and Varricchio et al. (2022).

Art Therapy absorbs knowledge from the various areas of knowledge, constituting itself as a transdisciplinary practice. It is recognized as an effective therapeutic practice that promotes health through various expressive modalities, such as painting, drawing, dance and modeling, resulting in symbolic productions that facilitate self-knowledge and emotional expression (Philippini, 2013). By allowing mediation between the conscious and the unconscious, these artistic practices activate creativity, regulate the flow of psychic energy, and favor mental health.

As the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) notes, the well-being of the individual depends on the interaction of biopsychosocial factors, encompassing physical health, social support, and living conditions, emphasizing that mental health is not limited to the psychological aspect, but the result of a combination of environmental and emotional influences.

Art therapy offers a safe space for affective memories to emerge and be resignified. According to art therapist Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes (CONAPICS, 2022), "symbolic expression through art allows us to access and reorganize deep emotional experiences, especially in contexts of vulnerability". In ethnic communities, this approach is essential to address the impacts of urbanization and the loss of traditional territories, which often result in cultural disconnection and the weakening of collective identity.

Since 1993, the outpatient school has sought to address issues of patient identity through the homeopathic approach, respecting the singularity of individual dynamic energy, a work recorded in a course completion work under the guidance of psychoanalyst Raulito Gomez, a professor at IPUB/UFRJ (Varricchio, 1993). Between 1997 and 2011, it was consolidated at the Hahnemannian Institute of Brazil (IHB) promoting a collaborative and multidimensional view of health with the approval of the Research Ethics Committee (In Varricchio; Lage, 2020).

In 2000, Art Therapy was included in the service, with patients with acquired immunodeficiency and malignant neoplasms, culminating in the exhibition "La Concepción", which included artistic and cultural expressions, highlighting art as a promoter of well-being. Later, it evolved into the "Tzara do Beija-Flor Project", focused on health education through creative processes, with the collaboration of a representative of the original people and a professor of Fine Arts at UFRJ (Nunes/Guarani Mbyá-Tekoy, Palma et al., 2010 In Varricchio 2020).

Over time, this initiative was absorbed by the Environmental Health, Parasitology, Bioethics Project by the Laboratory of Immunoparasitology and Toxicological Analysis of the Faculty of Pharmacy of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), in 2016, expanding its reach to primary and secondary care, health promotion, and also promoting environmental awareness and ethnodevelopment (Oliveira et al., 2019; Simões et al., 2021). The focus on cultural sustainability and the promotion of diversity reinforced the importance of the project for social inclusion and quality of life in urban areas.

In 2018, a new chapter began with the invitation to create the phytotherapy and homeopathy outpatient clinic in the 7th Ward of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia Hospital in Rio de Janeiro, based on principles of intercultural ethics, professional ethics, and clinical bioethics (Beauchamp; Childress, 2002; Alves, 2017).

This trajectory showed the need for initiatives that promoted inclusion, cultural rescue, and the strengthening of the emotional well-being of urban ethnic members. To this end, in March 2019, Art Therapists with a Jungian approach were integrated into the team, offering monthly workshops for ethnic groups, native peoples and vulnerable populations (migrants and refugees, among them) respecting current legislation, bioethics and cultural diversity of the participants aiming at strengthening identity, inclusion, reciprocal respect and appreciation of cultures, contributing to the emotional well-being and strengthening of the identity of these groups in urban contexts.

Therefore, it is essential for the SUS to recognize integrative practices. Art Therapy (as well as other therapeutic practices classified as complementary) suffers from discredit and intense discrimination, by segments that are based on a fragmented view of existence, disfavoring the possible sums of therapeutic values, as well as the openings and rescue of a transdisciplinary approach in the SUS (Silva, 2017). The relevance of this study is in line with the guidelines of the Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (PICS) of the Unified Health System (SUS), which recognize Art Therapy as an effective tool for health promotion and disease prevention (BRASIL, 2016).

The activation of affective memories allows unconscious contents to be expressed symbolically, favoring processes of self-knowledge and personal transformation (Jung, 2013). According to Philippini (2015), art enables the individual to externalize emotions and reorganize their experiences, promoting a greater connection between the conscious and the unconscious, which is fundamental for psychic balance.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To describe how Art Therapy, through the activation of affective memory and the use of sensory stimuli, can promote the strengthening of cultural identity, self-esteem and social inclusion of populations of different ethnicities in situations of urban vulnerability in Rio de Janeiro.

Specific objectives:

- Explore how sensory stimuli (olfactory, gustatory, tactile and visual) can activate affective memories linked to cultural roots and life experiences of the participants;
- To evaluate the role of Art Therapy in strengthening the self-esteem and autonomy of the individuals served;
- To identify the contributions of art therapy dynamics to the construction of an environment of welcome and social integration.

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGICAL RATIONALE

1. This is a case study, with a qualitative approach, with the object of promoting equity in health for the population belonging to diverse ethnic and cultural groups, and native peoples, including indigenous peoples, African migrants, Venezuelans and gypsies. The Case Study as a research modality consists of the systematic and detailed analysis of an individual or collective case, to investigate the object of interest with important phenomenological investigative potential (Ventura, 2008).
2. The research took place in the modality of analysis of the structure of the phenomenon based on Martins and Bicudo (1989), where the essences do not represent the final point of the analysis, but serve as instruments to reveal all the relationships that are sought to be understood, giving shape to the intentions of the research subject.
3. According to the IBGE's 2020 Synthesis of Social Indicators, indigenous populations and other ethnic groups living in the urban context face challenges related to integration and access to basic rights. Although cities offer opportunities, these populations often deal with structural inequalities, such as lack of access to quality education, precarious housing conditions, and discrimination in the labor market. These factors hinder the full inclusion and preservation of the cultural identities of these groups in urban environments.

The report also suggests that the promotion of spaces of welcome and belonging — such as the creation of community and cultural initiatives — is essential to support these populations in urban contexts. In this sense, the art therapy approach described in this article is aligned with the need to create spaces that enable the expression of identity and the exchange of ancestral knowledge, promoting the psychic and social well-being of these

individuals. These initiatives are fundamental to address inequalities and build more effective and sustainable inclusion in urban environments (IBGE, 2020).

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

Participants were selected based on two main criteria:

1. Social and Cultural Vulnerability Criterion: Individuals from diverse ethnic groups, such as indigenous people, African migrants, Venezuelans, and gypsies, who face challenges of adaptation and exclusion because they exist far from their cultural territories, were included.
2. Criteria of Interest and Availability: Specific people who were available for the monthly meetings at the outpatient clinic participated. In addition to ethnic populations, health students, such as pharmacy and medicine, were also included to enrich the interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge.

The first contacts were made with the leaders of the communities involved, such as the leader of the gypsy community, Barô Kaku Mio Vacite (2016), and the chief Carlos Machado/Doethyró-Tukano of the Vertical Village and the State Council for Indigenous Rights of Rio de Janeiro (CEDIND-RJ). These initial meetings aimed to understand the expectations of the groups and establish an environment of trust and mutual respect, ensuring that all practices were aligned with the cultural traditions and values of the participants. All participants signed the authorization for the use of image, voice and content by the SAPB-LIPAT Project. (Varricchio, 2023).

ART DYNAMICS

The methodology applied in this study used six art therapy dynamics to stimulate affective memories and promote symbolic expression through sensory and artistic activities. The activities were planned to meet the cultural and emotional specificities of the participants, using materials and stimuli linked to their traditions.

Description of Art Therapy Dynamics

1. Seed Mandala:

Objective: To stimulate memories linked to the agricultural and culinary traditions of each culture represented.

Justification: The choice of seeds (beans, corn, rice, sunflower, among others) refers to the cultural processes of planting and harvesting, creating a space for reflection on ancestry and belonging. During the activity, participants shared stories about their traditions and discussed the importance of the land in their cultures.

2. Painting with Corn as a generating stimulus:

Objective: Activate taste and olfactory memories through food.

Justification: The use of corn as a sensory stimulus allowed participants to access affective memories related to their history and culture. After tasting the corn, the participants expressed their emotions by painting with gouache, using corn husks and fingertips, reinforcing the connection between body and mind.

3. Sunflower and the Legend of the Goddess Ianaã:

Objective: To work on symbolisms of renewal and personal growth.

Justification: The legend of the sunflower was chosen as a narrative stimulus, connecting participants to themes of affection and transformation. After listening to the story, the participants made three-dimensional flowers, exploring the idea of growth and openness to the new.

4. Dynamics of White and Red Roses:

Objective: To evoke synesthetic memories and explore the symbolism of flowers in the expression of desires and emotions.

Justification: With papers cut out in the shape of flowers and aromas of white and red rose, the participants wrote wishes and produced texts, allowing feelings and memories to be externalized in a poetic way.

5. Painting with Annatto:

Objective: To rescue memories linked to the traditional use of natural pigments.

Rationale: Painting with annatto allowed for a complete sensory immersion, evoking deep cultural memories. Participants from different backgrounds shared their experiences with the use of pigment, reinforcing links with their traditions.

6. Participation during the inauguration of the Garden of All Places:

Objective: To stimulate the sense of belonging and collaboration through collective planting.

Rationale: During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was proposed that participants plant seeds in custom pots and contribute to the creation of a community garden. The activity symbolized integration and rebirth, promoting a sense of hope and belonging.

Data collection was carried out through participant observation and written records of interactions and artistic productions. The data analysis, with a phenomenological approach, investigated how the art therapy dynamics impacted the experiences and transformations of the participants, considering their productions as symbolic manifestations of memories and emotions.

This methodology allowed us to comprehensively explore the interactions between memory, symbolism and cultural identity, demonstrating how Art Therapy can be an effective tool to promote mental health and social inclusion in a multicultural urban context.

Chart 1 summarizes the methodology to facilitate understanding:

Table 1: Summary of the Methodology

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	GOAL
Participant Selection Criteria	Participation of ethnic groups in urban situations (indigenous, migrants, gypsies) and health students. Selection by social vulnerability and interest in participating.	Ensure diversity and cultural relevance in the sample.
Meetings with Leaders	Meetings with leaders of the communities involved to create an environment of trust and align expectations.	Establish trust and mutual respect.
Dynamics Carried Out	Six dynamics with sensory stimuli (seeds, flowers, annatto) and artistic stimuli, aiming at the activation of affective memories and symbolic expression.	Promote symbolic expression and strengthening of identity.
Data Collection	Participant observation and written records during the dynamics. Collection of spontaneous reports from participants about their experiences.	Capture participants' experiences and emotions.
Reasoned Data Analysis	Phenomenological empirical approach to interpret artistic productions and reports, seeking to understand the transformations experienced.	Identify changes in identity and mental health.

Source: *The authors*

RESULTS

The impacts of the art therapy dynamics were seen from an empirical evaluation that sought to understand the subjective, social and emotional transformations of the participants throughout the process. The observed data showed that artistic productions facilitated symbolic expression and the emergence of internal contents, allowing the externalization of emotions and memories that were difficult to verbalize. In line with Jung's

theory (2013), the use of symbols in artistic activities enabled psychic reorganization and access to the deep layers of the unconscious. Participants were able to use materialities as a way to manifest their personal experiences, emotions, questions and reflections, often feeling the need to speak and tell their stories so that their culture and people would remain alive, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Meeting of therapeutic Mandala with seeds



Source: The authors

In this sense, it was essential to cultivate the ability to "listen" in the group. "Listening" to the client, being attentive to what he wants to say, to what this person can allow himself to know at that moment, to what he asks us and allows us to access up to that moment of his process, welcoming him in an atmosphere of "non-haste" and trust" (Silva, 2017, p.40).

The art therapy activities revealed a group integration. Although this project was carried out with an audience varying between six and eight people in attendance frequency, the perception of belonging and social bonds were verified through interaction and cooperation during the dynamics of each meeting. Spontaneous relationships and active participation in activities indicated greater emotional and social involvement, corroborating the importance of the group as a space of mutual support, as reflected by Philipinni (2015).

The rescue of affective memories and cultural identity was another impact observed. An example of this was when an elderly indigenous participant of the TUKANO ethnic group felt the need to go to the classroom to explain about the stages of seed germination. This was a way of maintaining the ancestral knowledge of his people in the exchange of knowledge with the group.

Figure 2 – Doethyró-TUKANO indigenous elder explaining about the phases of seed germination



Source: The authors

In view of the above, it can be seen that the art therapy activities promoted memories related to cultural traditions, promoting the strengthening of the sense of belonging and appreciation of the identity roots of the participants. The exchange of stories and collective construction provided a significant space for the continuity of self-esteem and cultural memory.

Changes in self-image and autonomy were also recorded. Participants demonstrated greater confidence in the expression of their ideas and ability to project new perspectives on life. In one of the meetings, a Roma participant (gypsy - calin) made a presentation of body expression to the group and her attitude was perceived by the group as a cultural statement. The participant asked to leave her belly exposed so that she could express herself. The request was welcomed and valued by the group. This impact is in line with the concepts of empowerment of artistic making, as discussed by Gerolis (2017), evidencing the role of Art Therapy in strengthening self-esteem.

Group work contributed to the empowerment of the participants, as it also allowed them to perceive the impact of their contributions in the construction of something greater and to verbalize it (Varricchio, 2023) - as in the collective dynamics of the "Garden of All Places" (Gaspar et al., 2024). In this interaction, not only personal development coexists, but also the creation of a space of belonging, where diversity is recognized and valued. Thus, the art therapy process proved to be a powerful approach to social inclusion and the strengthening of mental health, providing a space in which participants could reinvent themselves and develop new ways of being in the world.

Figure 3: Garden of all places (Video 1):



Source: Project SAPB-LIPAT/FF/UFRJ - Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl5DY5oL9fY>

Finally, the impact on thinking about life was observed. Reports from the participants, at the end of each dynamic, highlighted the emotional and social relevance of each activity, evidencing Art Therapy as an integrative and transformative practice, especially in contexts of social vulnerability.

Through the workshops held, it was empirically possible to observe how the activation of affective memories, combined with sensory and symbolic stimuli, promoted the expression of emotions and personal stories. Sensory activities played a central role in art therapy practices aimed at traditional communities. For example, the use of seeds in the making of mandalas referred to the processes of planting and harvesting, symbolizing the relationship of the individual with the land and with his ancestry. This practice resonates with the idea of Gagnebin (1994), who states that "the past is always transformed into the present, creating new possibilities of meaning" (p. 19). Thus, art is not only a tool of expression, but also a means of building a future based on collective memory.

The artistic productions worked as a means of reconnecting with cultural traditions and individual histories, strengthening the sense of belonging and self-esteem of the participants, especially in an urban context marked by social and cultural exclusion.

Despite its positive impact, the application of art therapy with traditional communities faces challenges such as lack of resources, resistance to cultural integration, and the need for specialized training. However, the transformative potential of this practice is undeniable. As Benjamin (1987) observes, "true memory requires a time saturated with meanings, capable of resisting the oblivion imposed by modernity" (p. 111). Art therapy, by valuing the past as a symbolic and emotional resource, contributes to the construction of a more inclusive and sustainable future.

DISCUSSION

Brazil has several Traditional Communities, this is also the case of the original indigenous peoples, gypsy ethnic groups, the people of black knowledge and the populations of official immigrants (from different countries) who, since colonization, have given our country a pluriethnic state and that coexist with cultural plurality under conditions of vulnerability and risk (Borsato et al., 2021).

The historical context of violence against indigenous and ethnic communities is told, but its developments today are still very little discussed (Yxapyry, 2017 apud Varricchio, 2023). As a result, health professionals and others may be neglecting the opportunity to learn and access fundamental knowledge about these communities even with their close coexistence. This neglect to recognize the histories and experiences of traditional, indigenous and minority communities reinforces the need for practices that value and preserve their cultural identities (Cler; Varricchio, 2023).

In this sense, Art Therapy combined with integrative practices is an instrument to preserve this identity and cultural memory that is important for the maintenance of these peoples. From a psychological perspective, affective memory is understood as a tool to access repressed or forgotten emotions. Jung (2013) points out that symbols evoke unconscious contents that can be resignified, promoting psychic reorganization. Thus, affective memory plays a therapeutic role by enabling individuals to process emotions associated with past experiences, especially in contexts of trauma or social exclusion.

Affective memory, by integrating sensory and emotional experiences, plays an essential role in the preservation of cultural identity. Pierre Nora (1993) describes "places of memory" as spaces where the past is activated to ensure its continuity in the present. In art therapy practices with traditional communities and native peoples, this activation occurs through dynamics that evoke cultural memories, such as the use of seeds to create mandalas, painting with annatto and the reproduction of traditional songs and dances. These practices allow participants to reconnect with their roots and strengthen their self-esteem in a context where they often face social exclusion and prejudice.

This affective memory worked on in the art therapy meetings articulates the process of flow of affections and the notion of affective sustainability. This article does not intend to delve into the concepts, but to see the symbolic relations between the artistic production of the participants of the art therapy meetings with such concepts.

The concept of affective sustainability emerges as an innovative approach that seeks to integrate the emotional and relational dimension with environmental and social issues. It proposes a reflection on the interactions between humans and the natural world, highlighting the need to cultivate more empathetic, resilient, and sustainable relationships in different areas of life. According to Mansano and Carvalho (2016), affective sustainability is based on the articulation between the concepts of affection and sustainability, seeking to promote a broader understanding of human relationships with nature and with themselves.

Sustainability is traditionally associated with the preservation of natural resources for future generations, which is correct, but finds new possibilities when articulated with the concept of affection. Affect as a power of affectation that emerges in the encounters, directly influencing the individuals' ability to act. From this perspective, affective sustainability suggests that care for the environment is intrinsically linked to affective and social relationships, as these determine the way individuals perceive and interact with the world around them (Mansano; Carvalho, 2016).

For Deleuze and Guattari (1992), the production of subjectivities is an essential component to rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment. They point out that, in a context of environmental and social crisis, the reorientation of ways of living must include a reflection on the affective dynamics that shape human relationships. In this way, the concept of affective sustainability invites the creation of practices that not only aim at ecological preservation, but also at strengthening emotional and social connections.

Affective sustainability also has an eminently political character. Guattari (1992) proposes ecosophy as an approach that integrates three ecologies: environmental, social and subjective. This articulation is essential to face contemporary crises, which cannot be solved only through technological or economic solutions. As Mansano and Carvalho (2016) point out, "any strategy aimed at sustainability must consider the subjective and affective dimensions of individuals" (p. 708). In this context, affective sustainability is also a call to resistance against the impoverishment of human relationships.

In this sense, affective memory, affective sustainability and Art Therapy converge by recognizing the essential role of human relationships and emotions in promoting a more balanced and resilient environment. Affective memory, by rescuing significant emotional experiences from the past, acts as a bridge between personal and collective identity, strengthening cultural and social bonds. While affective sustainability highlights the

importance of integrating subjective and social dimensions to face contemporary challenges, Art Therapy translates these principles into concrete practices. Through artistic expression in a group, it is possible to access affective memories, promote the exchange of experiences and rescue the sense of community and belonging, contributing to the regeneration of human relationships and to a more integrated and collective approach.

Group work creates a welcoming environment, where collective artistic expressions allow the exchange of experiences and the construction of social bonds. According to Philippinni (2015), group Art Therapy offers a safe space for the sharing of subjectivities, which reduces the feeling of isolation and promotes a deeper integration among participants.

This process promotes the development of socio-emotional skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and active listening. During the art therapy dynamics, participants were invited to express themselves and connect with others through art, which facilitates mutual understanding and respect for different cultural experiences. As Jung (2013) suggests, the act of creating and sharing symbols in the context of the group promotes a psychic reorganization, helping the individual to better situate himself in the world and to face emotional challenges.

The analytical psychotherapeutic approach, the basis of Art Therapy, recognizes that the unconscious exerts a great influence and importance on the lives of individuals, because, in addition to containing repressed desires, memories and instincts, the unconscious is also grouping symbols and images and, thus, reproducing fantasies and dreams without ceasing; For this recognition we need to be attentive to the messages that the unconscious transmits. Such a function is called transcendent because it "makes it organically possible to pass from one attitude to another, without loss of the unconscious." (Jung, 2013, p.74). It makes sure that our psyche is, at all times, seeking to establish the energetic balance between the conscious and the unconscious.

The activities evoke the symbolic dimensions of the images, as Jung (2013) emphasizes, when he highlights that the symbols connect the conscious and the unconscious, promoting the transformation of psychic energy. In this context, each image produced, each body movement, each interaction was seen as a living metaphor for this transformation.

Previously, artist Paul Klee (2021) stated that art does not seek to reproduce the visible, but to make the invisible visible, and this premise guided the dynamics by

transforming the internal intentions of the participants into tangible expressions of life and growth. Gerolis (2017) complements by stating that symbols unite visible and invisible realities, creating a universal language that transcends cultural differences.

These experiences allow individuals to rescue aspects of their identities and project new personal narratives, while building interpersonal and social bonds. Thus, art therapy dynamics transcend artistic expression, functioning as a means of psychic transformation and emotional reorganization, aligning with a comprehensive therapeutic approach focused on mental health and social inclusion

Art Therapy demonstrates its potential to strengthen identity and mental health, promoting inclusion and well-being through symbolic expression and the rescue of affective memories. As Jung (2013) pointed out, the psyche is in constant activity, creating symbols that enable the transformation of psychic energy. This creative process, combined with the social and cultural dimension of Art Therapy, provides an essential integrative approach to promoting mental health and quality of life.

In situations with traditional communities, ethnic groups and native peoples in an urban context, where cultural and territorial ruptures have occurred, group work works as an occurrence to strengthen identity and a sense of belonging. Coexistence and collaboration create opportunities for affective memories to be rescued and personal and collective narratives to be reconstructed. This process stimulates the recognition of individuals within the collective, essential for populations that often present themselves as archives of the urban context. After all, their traditions represent the essence that sustains their ethnic identity and serve as a vital link with their group of origin, often distant from the elements that guarantee their historical and psychic continuity (Varricchio; Lage, 2020; Varricchio, 2023).

Collective work and the integration of different cultures in art therapy dynamics reveal the importance of diversity as a source of learning and connection. As Jung (2021) proposes, the collective unconscious is the expression of common identity, transcendent to racial and cultural differences. Therefore, this interaction also promoted ethnodevelopment and the strengthening of the participants' autonomy, aligning with the principles of sustainability and social and citizen integration (Winter, 2020; Cler et al., 2025).

The activities in Art Therapy unfolded into several cultural and experiential products that are being presented in Table 1, below:

Table 1 - Cultural and experiential products developed.

Authors	Title	Product Type	Year, Location	Available at
Fábio Tavares da Silva	RTA and Domestic Violence	Video lesson	SAPB-LIPAT UFRJ 2018	https://sites.google.com/view/lipat/sapb-eventos_sapb#h.2ah0u2x4mmee
Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes and Fábio Tavares da Silva	Jungian Art Therapy and Resignification	Video lesson	Semiology Course 7th Infirmary of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia Hospital of Rio de Janeiro 2019	https://youtu.be/P5jXBni_Esc
Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes and Fabio Tavares da Silva	Art therapy and Geopharmacobotany at the Outpatient Clinic of the Intercultural and Interethnic Clinic of the 7th infirmary HGSMCMRJ- Historical account of the Sunflower Project	Oral Poster Presentation	Semiology Course 7th Infirmary of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia Hospital of Rio de Janeiro 2020	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VfsMyHQCKpLG8B7_7718xqPVRTdSwlYh/view?usp=share_link
GEROLIS DE MORAES , Cristiane.	The collective pain that crosses us.	Disclosure Article	SAPB-LIPAT Project, 2021.	https://sites.google.com/view/lipat/sapb#h.jwo74o26tljw
Mendes, MG; Wasim, N; Ximenes Lins, R; Gomes, NB De N; Gerolis de Moraes, C; Da Silva, FT; Musmanno, PG; Hansel - Martins, C; Gaspar, SA; Bentes Lopes, J; Varricchio, MCBN; Bolognani, F Of A	HGSCMRJ Homeopathy Ward: Historical Report.	Audio Presentation Maryana G. Mendes.	Disclosure. 2021.	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HSeKZO3CmGTS6unuj3m_Kac9qZx5Bwjs/view?usp=sharing
Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes and Fábio Tavares da Silva	Garden of All Places	Video - Interview	7th Infirmary of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia Hospital of Rio de Janeiro 2021	https://sites.google.com/view/lipat/sapb-nossos_videos#h.22hm08eoqim8

Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes	The awakening of consciousness	White Paper	SEIVA – Magazine to support the SAPB-LIPAT/UFRJ 2021 Project	https://drive.google.com/file/d/19IGf5BnOdqvJlcoHV-Fjh3IQNiE0uSsj/view?usp=sharing
Geilson Simões et al	Active methodology in teaching indigenous people in an urban context in Rio de Janeiro: a local experience	White Paper	Environmental Health, Parasitology and Bioethics SEIVA Magazine 2021	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L4ZBrGvtKW2Jweenagmq0vsHYqZHwYu/view?usp=sharing
Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes and Fabio Tavares da Silva	Evaluation and Prospection of Assistance to Traditional Urban Ethnic Groups	Event of the 7th HSCM-RJ Infirmary	Lab PROVE-MEPPSO-IPUB/UFRJ & Project SAPB-LIPAT-FF/UFRJ held at the 7th Ward of Hospital Santa Casa da Misericórdia do Rio de Janeiro 2022	https://sites.google.com/view/lipat/sapb-eventos_sapb#h.gxs9jxrecvmi
Musmanno, P. G. et al.	Evaluation and prospection of care for traditional urban ethnic groups: challenges and possibilities of homeopathy in the 7th ward of the HGSCMRJ	XIII Event SAPB-LIPAT Project.	Green November: Homeopathy Month. Nov 2022.	https://sites.google.com/view/lipat/sapb-eventos_sapb
Geilson Simões	History of Sexuality	HSCM-RJ Event: Challenges and Possibilities of Psychosocial Care and Homeopathy in LGBTQIA+ Nursing Care	Environmental Health, Parasitology and Bioethics SAPB & Associated Institutes EVENTS August 2022.	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mfYenJLarZArYd2FI7ZtweGyGzxPTOO/view?usp=sharing
Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes	Cross-Cultural Creative Practices and Mental Health	Conference Round Table	Conapics Congress /2022 online	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VfsMyHQCKpLG8B7_77I8xqPVRTdSwlYh/view
Fábio Tavares	Contribution to climate accident relief	Meditation	UNIFASE online event, 2022	https://drive.google.com/file/d/10rJ2ShunY0gJyJcE7FNwQvqsYmkk7bPy/view?usp=sharing

Cristiane Gerolis de Moraes and Fábio Tavares	Garden revitalization of the homeopathy service at HGSCM	Historical record	SEIVA – Magazine to support the SAPB-LIPAT/UFRJ Project, 2023	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_DIWIR2WSg6FCgV0rXDRIu6lOxYTU4Nm/view?usp=share_link
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Source: Environmental Health, Parasitology, Bioethics Project - <https://sites.google.com/view/lipat/sapb-artigos#h.hbckfrub12od>

To conclude, the theme of this study was the creation of inclusive therapeutic spaces that consider the cultural and subjective diversity of the people served. In large cities, ethnic groups in urban situations – such as indigenous peoples, African migrants, and refugees – often experience processes of exclusion and rupture with their cultural roots, which aggravates their social and emotional vulnerability (Borsato et al., 2021).

Art Therapy, when integrated with medical specialties, such as Homeopathy and Phytotherapy, can promote comprehensive care that includes the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, favoring the biopsychosocial balance of the participants (Varricchio & Lage, 2020; Varricchio, 2023).

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations that should be considered in the interpretation of the results and in the replication of the proposed practices. First, this is an empirical analysis and the sample of participants was limited to individuals who attended the outpatient clinic during a specific period, which cannot reflect the totality of the experiences of other ethnic groups and vulnerable communities in different urban contexts.

In addition, as it is a qualitative approach, the data found are subject to the subjectivity of both the participants and the facilitators, which can influence the interpretation of the experiences and therapeutic results.

In addition, the involvement of a multidisciplinary team, although enriching, brought challenges in the articulation between different knowledge and practices, requiring a constant effort of integration and methodological alignment.

The availability of specific materials and resources, such as natural pigments and vessels used in the dynamics, can also vary in other contexts, making it difficult to replicate activities in different environments exactly.

The culturally diverse nature of the participants was an asset to the study, but it also represented a challenge, as each group brought its own expectations and dynamics, which could not always be fully met within the available time and structure.

Finally, although the article described the dynamics and impacts perceived by the participants, a longitudinal follow-up was not performed to assess the continuity of therapeutic effects in the medium and long term. Thus, in perspective, future studies may benefit from a more extensive methodology and larger sampling, exploring the impact of Art Therapy in different periods and cultural contexts, in addition to incorporating quantitative measures that complement the qualitative approach presented here.

CONTRIBUTION

The present work broadens the discussions on integrative practices in public health, showing how Art Therapy can be a powerful tool to promote inclusion, welcoming, and autonomy among vulnerable populations. In addition, the potential of Art Therapy to strengthen social and emotional bonds was evidenced, providing a more sustainable therapeutic approach and aligned with both the complexity of mental health and contemporary demands.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study reinforces the importance of Art Therapy as a potent integrative practice to promote mental health and social inclusion in multicultural urban contexts. The dynamics planned for the activation of affective memories and symbolic expression through art made it possible to observe, even if empirically, the perceptions and attitudes of the participants, with regard to the strengthening of cultural identity, self-esteem and sense of belonging to their origins.

By integrating sensory stimuli and promoting cooperation between different ethnicities, Art Therapy not only helped to reorganize individual experiences, but also created a space for welcoming and valuing cultural diversity and the exchange of ancestral knowledge.

In addition, this work highlights that the use of Art Therapy, combined with integrative and complementary practices, offers a sustainable biopsychosocial approach to health care. The approach in collaborative processes illustrates how collective work can promote affective bonds and design new ways of living in society. Through these interactions,

participants not only revisited their stories and traditions, but also connected more deeply with their surroundings and the group.

It is important to emphasize that the central goal of the Art Therapy project carried out at Santa Casa, based on the analytical approach, was to promote the autonomy of the participants, encouraging them to establish a deep dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious.

The art therapy methodology used allowed the participants to reconstruct their experiences in a creative and symbolic way, recovering self-esteem and strengthening cultural identity. Thus, art proved to be not only a means of expression, but also a tool for healing, reinforcing the connection between body, mind and spirit, and expanding the sense of wholeness.

The correlation between affective memory and art therapy reveals a powerful synergy capable of promoting emotional healing, strengthening cultural identity, and social inclusion. Through practices that rescue memories and build spaces of belonging, art therapy establishes itself as an essential tool for populations in vulnerable situations, reaffirming the importance of art as an element of resistance and transformation.

Finally, the experience documented in this article shows that Art Therapy is an effective tool to deal with the challenges of contemporaneity, especially in situations of social and cultural vulnerability.

This study leaves as a legacy that the work with affective memories in Art Therapy creates a communication channel between the conscious and the unconscious, enabling emotions and internal contents, often inaccessible by verbal language, to emerge and be integrated. The mediation of the art therapist was essential in this process, as it helped in the activation of healthy psychic nuclei, promoting an internal reorganization and facilitating the transformation of the conflicts experienced by the participants.

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