

**ARTISTIC INQUIRY
IN
DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**ARTISTIC INQUIRY
IN
DANCE/MOVEMENT
THERAPY**
Creative Research Alternatives

By

LENORE WADSWORTH HERVEY

With a Foreword by Shaun McNiff



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This work is dedicated to:

my father for his focused devotion to his work,

my family for their patience with me,

and my students for being such outstanding teachers.

FOREWORD

The creative arts therapies have a unique and even enviable potential to transform the pursuit of knowledge. We are a richly interdisciplinary field combining the resources of the arts, science, healing, and service to others. The creative arts therapies have also demonstrated an adventurous pragmatism in creating partnerships with mental health, education, medicine and various human service professions. As a professional community united by a belief in the healing powers of the arts, we have been open to collaborations with diverse institutions ranging from traditional therapeutic settings to the corporate world.

The greatest obstacle to fully realizing this potential is the adjunctive identity that has characterized the profession since its inception. Although many pioneers and practitioners have made successful efforts to affirm the primary therapeutic features of the different creative arts therapies, there has been a particularly strong tendency to rely on behavioral science paradigms whenever discussing the subject of research. These attitudes and practices have kept us on the periphery in relation to research focused on the creation of new knowledge.

A lack of appreciation by the outside world and other professional groups can be approached as a concrete and very fixable problem. When others do not understand what we do and how it can be of use to the world, we are given a clear platform to present what we can offer. I have discovered that academic and professional communities as well as the general public, are fascinated by the integration of the arts, therapy, healing, and psychological understanding. There are great opportunities yet to be realized by the creative arts therapies and perhaps the most challenging obstacle our profession faces its own

self-image.

In accepting the argument that we need to justify what we do through “accepted” behavioral and social science research methods, we have placed ourselves under the dominion of concepts and methods that do not resonate with what we are, what we do, and what we need to know in order to improve ourselves and more effectively communicate with the world. We have lost valuable time and resources in attempting to adapt to the research paradigms of other disciplines, that now openly acknowledge how the restrictions of their “conceptual blueprints in comparison with the complexities of empirical phenomena” make it difficult to open to the unexpected (Portes, 2000, p. 4).

In *Art-Based Research* (1998) I describe how artistic inquiry might even have something to offer the larger scientific community in understanding experience. Many of the world’s great scientists have been intrigued by connections with the arts, realizing that the creative imagination integrates analytic and aesthetic ways of knowing. The pragmatic and open-minded researcher realizes that it is the unpredictable discoveries, often stimulated by factors outside the lines of conventional inquiry, that move science forward in significant ways. The creative imagination functions best when it is free to make new connections amongst the most varied mix of ingredients.

Doctoral study by creative arts therapists within settings like The Union Institute and the emerging European Graduate School in Switzerland is a great frontier for our profession. Although there are many benefits to researching the creative arts therapies within social and behavioral science doctoral programs there are unavoidable issues of having to accommodate to the research methods of other disciplines which become the dominant partner. We need to create communities of scholars committed to supporting and inspiring one another in the creation a new research tradition based upon artistic inquiry.

The older and more accepted methods of research used by other disciplines can teach us a great deal about disciplined inquiry, the criticism of knowledge, and the creation of new knowledge. My own doctoral research in the psychology of art used relatively standard behavioral science methods to investigate the subject of artistic motivation. My faculty advisor saw that although I was mastering certain psychological research methods, my art was not involved. He encouraged me to expand the inquiry by making and exhibiting my own paintings.

At that time in the mid-1970s my psychological and artistic investi-

gations happened on parallel tracks. Although there was certainly an integration of some kind taking place in my work, the two modes of inquiry stayed within the lines of their respective spheres. It never occurred to me that my art-making could be used as a valid method of inquiry.

Later work as a supervisor of graduate students in creative arts therapy resulted in my paradigm shift. I realized how the therapeutic methods that students loved and wanted to master, were not being used as modes of inquiry in their thesis research. The needs of students to use their own creative expression as a way of understanding the healing powers of art was my impetus in exploring new ways of approaching research (McNiff, 1998).

It is time to establish a more universal research tradition that respects the inherent intelligence of the arts. "Art is a way of knowing" as Pat Allen (1995) writes and perhaps our most ancient mode of pondering and coming to terms with the problems, contradictions, and powers of human experience. But as Stephen Levine notes, not all art-making is research (2000, p. 3). What are the differences? What type of artistic inquiry will contribute to the creation of a useful and intelligent research tradition? What should we avoid? How do we connect artistic inquiry with discursive and analytic language (Levine, p. 3)? These issues and challenges emerging from the creation of a new art-based research tradition are fascinating, not only in terms of the field of creative arts therapy, but within the broader domain of epistemology and disciplined inquiry into human experience.

The most formidable problem faced by creative arts therapy in exploring these opportunities is the belief commonly held by our educational programs, professional associations, and professional certification authorities that we have to justify ourselves through conceptual frameworks and research methods that do not emerge directly from our practice. This is a strange and unique dilemma that some feel betrays an attitude of inferiority. My sense is that these identity issues have evolved from the early advantages creative arts therapists experienced by attaching themselves to what were then the more mainstream and acceptable methods of the behavioral and social sciences. Although we have now outgrown this need to empower ourselves by relying on others, the adjustment to autonomy is not easy. There is a need for strong, intelligent, confident, and clear voices to guide the formation of a new tradition.

It is within this larger context of opportunities that Lenore Wadsworth Hervey's book, *Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy*, is being published. This is a clear and engaging text that provides an overview of how artistic inquiry relates to the larger world of research. With great respect for other traditions, Wadsworth Hervey articulates the unique and unrealized potential of the arts as ways of exploring the world while also providing a structure and introduction to ideas and methods that will guide researchers. I especially appreciate how the author makes useful and intelligent links to philosophy and the history of ideas, something that is profoundly absent in psychology. The breadth of this analysis will make this book illuminating to researchers in any field.

Attitudes toward research in the creative arts therapies have generally viewed the arts as data that are examined through behavioral science research methods. I appreciate the way Wadsworth Hervey clearly distinguishes this analysis of art materials from art making as a method of inquiry. She supports my long-standing belief that art-based research does not necessarily fit inside the parameters of the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy of behavioral science. Artistic inquiry is not yet another of the many types to be listed under qualitative research methods. Although I respect what qualitative behavioral science researchers do, art can be something quite different. Art-based research might often relate to behavioral science but we are not contained by it. The phenomena of the arts must be allowed to speak for themselves within their unique environments.

This expansion of possibilities recognizes that behavioral science research methods may be the best vehicles for examining certain types of issues in the creative arts therapies. Lenore Wadsworth Hervey and I simply encourage the "addition" of artistic inquiry to the range of options. We are not making a one-sided insistence that a particular way of doing research is the best way to approach every situation.

In addition to making important contributions to furthering inquiry in all artistic media, Wadsworth Hervey focuses on particular dynamics of research within dance and movement. I have a special interest in kinesis and flow as a basic condition of human experience. Everything I do within life and the arts is grounded on a sensitivity to the process and mystery of movements constantly emerging from another. As we know from the ancient Greece of Heraclitus, the foundational principles of Buddhism, and contemporary physics, nature

and consciousness are in a state of constant flux. Movement is the basic principle of existence and we know so little about it. We have yet to seriously reflect upon Ahab's question in *Moby Dick*, "Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?"

Where creative arts therapies have adapted themselves to the very linear scientific paradigms of behavioral science, I have argued that we should look more closely at links to physics. The physicist David Bohm describes how "thought itself is in an actual process of movement" that is connected to the larger "flow in the movement of matter in general" (1980, p. ix). Bohm used his bodily experience as a way of understanding problems in advanced physics. Like Einstein, he trusted his intuitive physical sensations as a way of grasping the complex movements of phenomena. This laboratory of personal experience enabled Bohm to penetrate depths that were not accessible by logical and mathematical analysis.

So rather than thinking about movement from the window of cognition, we can invert the relationship and know more about thought by approaching it via movement. Can you imagine a research center operating in a dance studio where investigators move freely and reflect upon the flow of their gestures; the feelings they have before, during, and after the sessions; the effects of the environment on their movements; the ways in which other people in the room influence them; moving in silence vs. moving with a drum; the way in which movements emerge naturally from one another during an improvisation; the use of movements to understand and re-frame our psychological problems and conflicts, and even the use of bodily sensations and movement interactions with others to re-vision how we relate to one another in the workplace?

Rather than utilizing psychology to "explain" movement, imagine moving to gain a better understanding of psychological well-being. If the most advanced physicists of the past century respected these methods of inquiry, why can't the creative arts therapies?

Faced with these exciting opportunities that are affirmed by advances in science, dance/movement therapy together with the other creative arts therapies continue to operate almost exclusively with the boxes of the most conventional behavioral science research methods. Wadsworth Hervey documents how researchers in dance/movement therapy have given no attention to artistic inquiry and she reports the absence of any dialogue about art-based research in her profession's

publications. She presents the work of Bill T. Jones in creating the multimedia performance *Still/Here* as an example of an extended work of artistic inquiry that can stimulate researchers in her discipline to dance in a more open and creative space.

Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy will augment the practice of research in dance/movement therapy where there is sometimes a tendency to overcompensate for the body-oriented nature of the work with a belief that the discipline is not conceptual enough. As dance/movement therapy re-discovers the intelligence of the body and nature's movements, it will achieve a more complete integration with the mind. In addition to serving her discipline of dance/movement therapy, Lenore Wadsworth Hervey crosses over to the larger context of creative research and reminds us all to stay rooted in the immediate physical experiences that inform everything. Movement is our common source and let's use its wisdom and creativity to gain a more complete understanding of ourselves and the world.

Shaun McNiff

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PREFACE

This book offers a compelling research alternative for dance/movement (and other creative arts) therapists who recognize how valuable artistic ways of knowing are to the theory and practice of their profession. It encourages participation in a mode of inquiry that invites fully authentic engagement, inspires excitement about discovery, and builds confidence in abilities to contribute to the professional body of research literature. Artistic inquiry requires the combination of creative, artistic, and aesthetic skills used in service of the embodied therapeutic relationship that qualifies dance/movement therapists as unique researchers.

Artistic inquiry is defined as research that: (1) uses artistic methods of gathering, analyzing, and/or presenting data; (2) engages in and acknowledges a creative process, and (3) is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s). These three defining characteristics are theoretically and practically examined in depth and accompanied by examples of artistic inquiry relevant to dance/movement therapy. Interdisciplinary support for the validity of artistic inquiry is drawn from a rich field of resources, including philosophy, social sciences, education, and the arts. *Still/Here*, a multimedia dance work by Bill T. Jones, is presented as a work of art that can be viewed as artistic inquiry. Jones' use of dance as the primary expressive medium, drawing from the verbal and non-verbal narratives of people living with terminal illnesses, exemplifies the potential that artistic inquiry has for dance/movement therapy.

The book concludes with recommendations for the promotion and evaluation of artistic inquiry projects. Throughout, it upholds a vision of research as a vital, satisfying, and essential part of a dance/movement therapist's career.

L.W.H.

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