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# **Using Nature and Found Objects for Creative Expression**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates and explores the ability and benefits of found-objects that enhance art within a therapeutic approach to cope with emotional issues. It allows the therapeutic process of found-object art therapy to be understood, experienced, and analyzed—found-object art therapy aids in improving mental and physical well-being. The flexibility of materials and technique and the mind-body engagements during the art-making process, help one to understand, connect with, and recover from the psychological issue. These are shown through first-hand experience of creating found-object artworks as therapy and supported by appropriate review-related literature and artwork with proper creative studio art research.

**Keywords:** Found-Object Art; Therapy Approach; Nature.

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Humans have long used creative and artistic expression to express themselves. It is also called communication because it requires one person to generate information and another to receive, observe, and respond. Such terms and communication date back to the Paleolithic. Like modern art and the strength of digital consideration (Legino et al., 2021), or the early example in primitive cave paintings expressed one's observation, reaction, and experience of a specific event. Expressing inner thoughts through creative and artistic practice can be healing and therapeutic. Modern humans use art therapy to cope. Art therapy has been a form of rehabilitation since the 1940s (Malchiodi, 2003). Various methods, strategies, and studies have been tried. Art therapy uses creative styles like realism, minimalism, and abstraction, similar to famous artists' work. There are traditional, experimental, and new media. These methods are tailored to the patient's needs while achieving the same goal: expression, communication, and treatment. Despite this, a particular strategy is underappreciated. It is all about found-object art therapy. Found-object art uses found, bought, or given objects as art media. It has the same benefits and potential as traditional art therapy, and some studies claim it is even better. Found-object art therapy requires more recognition and research to develop fully. This study investigates the therapeutic benefits of found-object art therapy by creating artwork.

### **2.0 Literature Review**

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Humans naturally communicate. Communication allows us to express what we see, think, and feel verbal. Human experience, however natural and functional, cannot be described (Edwards, 2004). A more artistic and creative approach may be appropriate now. Using creative methods to treat mental issues is meditative. The sensory systems of our bodies are triggered by image-making (Malchiodi, 2003). The three basic senses are sight, touch, and smell (smell). Various sensory inputs can be used simultaneously to create an expression modality. Malchiodi (2003) stated that healing art could help you discover that art therapy helps kids unwind. They enjoyed art and used it to cope with negative emotions (instead of responding through destructive behaviour). Art activities reduce anxiety, improve memory retrieval, and help understand the mind (Gross & Haynes, 1998). Meditation can improve a patient's physical health. Adult patients with chronic pain were helped by creative therapy and CBT; Camic said (1999) that patients who have suffered psychological trauma due to physical issues require this. Art therapy stimulates brain connections. According to Frith & Law, patients' brains were scanned with PET scanners while drawing. The creative process causes brain interactions. This study found that art therapy can boost brain activity, which benefits patients' perspectives and thinking.

The art therapy sessions employ various techniques, which ensures specialized patient care. Painting and sculpture are popular methods. Some art therapists use poetry, music, dance, and theatre in their expressive art therapy (Malchiodi, 1998; 2003). Despite this, it is underutilized. Found-object art uses natural or manufactured objects or fragments (Found object, n.d.). Found-object materials can be purchased from vintage stores or markets or received as gifts. Using found objects to address psychological issues dates back to the dawn of found-object art. A lot of natural objects are used in dadaist art. It began in Zurich, Switzerland, during World War I. The situation "challenged established art concepts" in Europe (Waldman, 1992; Bat Or & Megides, 2016). These dadaism artists' works promote peace. As a result, Dadaism grew out of traumatic events (Bat Or & Megides, 2016). Natural objects can be used as art materials with personal value. Artsy people choose and gather objects, transforming their context and giving them a new intrinsic and unique value. Graham (2005) proposes that we can gain a new perspective on them by moving these objects. Transitional items are everyday objects given personal value and function as comfort tools (Winnicott, 1953). A child's comfort items include stuffed animals, pillows, and blankets. Found objects promote self-relationships and self-empowerment (Henley, 1992). It is a soothing and communicative medium for those who lack creativity. Everyone can benefit from art therapy (Edwards, 2004). Creating recognizable images (a personal portrait, a landscape, or an object) may also "raise the risk of an embarrassing or harmful experience" for some patients (Edwards, 2004). It may "evoke self-criticism and judgement," say Bat Or & Megides (2016). Found-object art may be an option where the traditional found-object approaches are limited. Patients can use any natural or manufactured material to create images or forms. This allows them to express themselves freely. In therapy, self and relational limits are a "strong private protest" (Bat Or & Megides, 2016). Curiosity is sparked by the media slowly, and media exploration can alter a patient's ability to explore and understand (Rothenberg, 2001). Found-object art's freedom of choice and participation may elicit laughter (Tomkins, 2013; Bat Or & Megides, 2016).

Found-object art therapy is a contemplative practice. Understanding and using knowledge, experience, relationships, and self are all aspects of meaning-making in psychology (Ignelzi, 2000). This is called the artistic process in the art world. According to Bat Or and Megides (2016), found-object art has meditative benefits. It discusses using found objects and readymade art to heal trauma and loss. Bat Or and Megides studied patients in a group. The study discovered three distinct processes for making meaning from found objects—collection and reconstruction of artefacts, labelling, and explanation of artefacts. Patients can find found-object art materials everywhere. Patients must scan and observe items before choosing and collecting their favourites. The therapy activates the patients' sensory, kinesthetic, and perceptual systems. This improves patients' decision-making skills. Patients can use any material to make found-object art. Making choices is an art therapy technique that can help reduce anxiety. Also, patients can choose materials that represent their emotions and values, which is important in psychiatric treatment. Patients must integrate and assemble a large item (an artwork). Patients use focused cognitive skills to connect the elements and shape the artwork. This tests problem-solving skills. Using natural materials may help patients who struggle with painting and canvas. The brain recognizes the process as aiding in self-restoration and reconnection. This method can produce fun in found-object art, which is good for mental health. The active and enthusiastic activity of recreating the materials also stimulates the patients. Encoding the finished work is also relaxing. Even for artists, explaining their work can be difficult. Now we use another method. Patients carefully examined the finished work from all angles when both were present. Considering extrinsic and intrinsic value, examining and re-examining the artwork may help patients see themselves from different perspectives. The naming and explanation of the artwork help the patients express themselves. It can help patients relieve stress and mental load. Found-object art therapy helps people cope and heal. Patient autonomy in meaning-making boosts patients' self-esteem and sense of survival.

### 3.0 Methodology

The method used to conduct studio art research begins with the identification of a related review of literature and artwork. The artworks chosen to strengthen the validity and analysis of the review are works by well-known and mainstream artists. The significance of the found-object materials used in the works of art was chosen as well as the therapeutic process of meaning-making. Both art critics and the general public recognise these features in the artwork. The information gathered during the evaluation and analysis process is used to improve the research objectives. Later, the studio process will engage directly in how the artists experiment with specific formulations of ideas that direct new style contributions. Within the context of this project, the appropriate material, medium, and technique were explored and improved, as will be discussed in the following segment.

### 4.0 Analysis Findings

In this project, three different artworks by three painters were chosen for artistic review. The therapeutic and contemplative elements, found-object medium, or assemblage approach contribute to the artwork's quality. "Number 3" by Jackson Pollock, "Watts Riot" by Noah Purifoy, and "A Circle in Antarctica" by Richard Long are reviewed and analysed. First, "Number 3" is a Jackson Pollock painting. It is a 157.5 x 94.6 cm mixed media painting from 1949. Slow-motion paint dripping and lively strokes are alive. The painting is dominated by orange, red, and black, where the colour matters with the warm reds, oranges, and yellows. A plus Layered lines and values make the texture. Lines, dark and light values, and smooth and coarse textures create space. The balance is good. Line thickness changes create contrast, which is why the colours are highlighted in black. Paint drips have a beat—element and principle unity. In addition, it denotes movement. Their emotion suggests the artist. Visual absence reaffirms their career "throughout his career" (Müller, 2010). Pollock used action paintings to deal with his mental issues, or "mental health." His biography bears witness "This is a therapy painting." Pollock dripped paint onto blank canvases, not images (Muller, 2018). Painting the stretched canvas was relaxing. The painting helped Pollock unwind. He worked on all four sides (Bezane, 2015). The mind and body movement and watch. Together, they can heal (Hochberger, 2020). Abbreviated visuals are Also known as the Janusian process (Rothenberg, 2001). Pollock states, "Dripping and movement are psychological Janus processes." Introspection reflected and obscured Pollock's inner self.

The second is a painting by Noah Purifoy, an African American sculptor, entitled "Watts Riot", which measures 122 x 91 cm. Like the first example, this work only shows fragmented items. Purifoy put these together at work; Purifoy probably found them broken, washed, and charred as fragments of larger structures. Sadness, grief, or despair are evoked. The dark, mars-like backdrop echoes the objects' grief. Art forms. The asymmetrical shapes of the broken pieces and the olive greenwash on the bottom add a touch of coolness to the upper-middle and black background. The use of soft and dark colours adds value. The natural objects give form to the artwork. Each object has a texture. The artwork is balanced and cohesive, thanks to fragmented shapes and dark colours. The dark background contrasts with the light objects. The piece's largest and lightest object stands out against the other smaller objects. The broken and burned objects evoke loss, grief, and despair. So does Watts Riot. To create the title, two black men met in Watts, LA. After a drunk driving arrest, police brutality and racist covenants escalated (Knight, 2015). In 1965, it resulted in 4000 arrests, 1000 injuries, 34 deaths, and \$300 million in damage—true to form, even the title, its shards, "Purifoy scavenged." Purifoy and his artist friends gathered to salvage what they could (Noah Purifoy, n.d.). Their works use materials. Purifoy, a dadaist, acquired these relics for his paintings (Noah Purifoy, Watts Uprising Remains, n.d.). "In which an artist selects objects and reinterprets and values them." Dada's "Watts Riot" influences his work. Items reimagined by Purifoy include "reflection" and "revival" (Knight, 2015). Repurposing items as art represents healing, resurgence, and revival.

Third, Sir Richard Long's "A Circle in Antarctica" is a digital print on paper mounted on aluminium. It is a shot of Long's 2012 Antarctica Land Sculpture. It resembled snow—the circle. A rocky, non-snowy area was chosen. The art's location shows the beautiful snow-covered mountains—the calm of a blue sky, white snow, and rocky surface. Scattered art and design elements can be seen despite their site-specificity. It is a "This is land-art", where the surrounding environment and landscape are part of the artwork. A shade. Brown rock, white snow, and blue sky." Bluish unveils a form. It is a circle now (or oval) (Fox, 2009). The dark brown, snowy blue sky and dark, rocky ground were priceless. The most exciting snow textures are the big, rocky, and fine ones. There are three parts. This picture shows a big sky and an extensive area of rocks. So, the shape of the voids brings peace and harmony. It is an attractive circle with blocks that are the same size and laid out similarly. Each area has its colour scheme, which is essential to remember. The colours and values show the light blue and white snow blocks. Now they are at odds. The round blocks stand out against the uneven terrain. So the focus was on them. The circle puts the picture in the middle. The loop is made by a circular block structure, which is reshuffled after the loop is made. They chose the pace. Long built the circle and platform out of snow blocks. They make people feel grateful and close. Cole says that the land art pieces "meet with the topography and characteristics" of the area and his emotional and spiritual reaction to being there now. The art of nature (snow blocks, wide-open spaces) (circle, photo) place makes you feel grateful. Art can help bring people together. It is where he lives. It was important to him because it was near the extended Antarctic Circle.

## 5.0 Findings

This project was adapted from the three artistic references above to analyze and guide the creation of artworks in this study. Plott "On the making-process of the artwork as an emotional expression, and the resultant abstract image as an obscuration, a therapeutic Janusian process was referred. The researcher intends to use the artwork-making process as a healing form of emotional expression, and the resulting image is obscuration. Purify "the use of found objects, assemblage, and reinterpretation of The assemblage technique was used to fix the remnant objects on the work's surface. Purifoy's reinterpretation of everyday objects as symbols of self-reflection and renewal is also significant. Dada's rebellious side is also referred to. The researcher intends to use found objects from a specific location (his home surroundings) to create artworks that "reinterpret the found objects as symbols of self-reflection (mind) and revival (healing from the emotional issue). Dada's rebelliousness is seen as a form of emotional resistance. In Long's case, his work is referenced by his appreciation and connection to a place, its objects, and the setting. He appreciates and utilizes a location's assets and feels connected. To appreciate the objects found in his current location (home in a village area), the researcher plans to use them in his artworks. A sentimental, spiritual, and physical connection is created by scanning and collecting objects within the location. To create the artworks, I drew inspiration from three different artistic references. The final artwork and presentation show as stated below:



Figure 4. The first artwork, *The Assimilation*, 30 x 22 cm, Tree Bark Pieces on Plywood, 2021.



Figure 5. The second artwork, *The Ego*, 45 x 45 cm, Tree Bark Pieces on Plywood, 2021.



Figure 6. Third artwork, *The Repressed*, Tree Bark Pieces on Plywood, 2021.

This project produced three final artworks; see Figures 4–5. The artwork of “The Repressed, The Ego, and The Assimilation” shared how the artworks of the tree bark pieces are assembled. The details are small and perfectly arranged. A couple of different tree species appear. They are primarily olive green with some white. It is probably moss on tree bark. Their shapes change—one for each piece's irregular shapes and arrangements that contrast with the works' geometry. They all use colour as an artistic element. Olive green, brown, white, and black paintings. The paintings are mostly olive green and black, with some brown and white. The artworks have a random and irregular shape due to the tree bark pieces. The gaps between the pieces form waves—olive green and brown tones contrast with the lighter white pieces. The works' three-dimensional tree bark pieces have form, even if they do not depict any particular image. Luminosity and shadows highlight the shapes. Natural objects were used to create the texture. These are rough pieces with smoothed-out gaps and black backgrounds. Artistic elements yield design principles. The contrasting character makes the work interesting, like the darker black and brown pieces.

The contrast features with the geometric forms, such as white tree bark pieces, contrast with the dark geometric background. Placement creates rhythm. The wavy horizontal lines between the parts create motion. The pattern is created by repeating the small tree bark pieces. Repetition and proper composition achieve balance and unity. The dark background balances the pieces' colours and values. These artworks are an intrinsic expression of the artist due to their lack of images and repetitive patterns. This piece was created in a meditative manner. Jackson Pollock's therapeutic making of Number 3 is cited. Action paintings like No. 3 shared their processes. While obscuring his intended images, Pollock uses movement, action, and dripping liquid paint. The image stayed with him.

## 6.0 Conclusion

To sum up, found-object art is a powerful tool for coping. It provides a flexible and subjective alternative to art therapy and verbal psychotherapy. An experience of healing and meditative healing occurs when the brain and body work together to make meaning. This experience affects both mental and physical health. The completion of three artworks using this method demonstrates its effectiveness. Healing and meditative engagements occurred during many meaning-making processes, assisting the researcher in coping with and easing emotional issues. The scientist "This study's findings may be helpful to those seeking to learn more about found-object art therapy and may contribute to future found-object art therapy research. Several issues must be addressed. More materials should be used in found-object art therapy. The researcher should experiment more with natural items found in his backyard. Next, professional art therapists should recognize and practice found-object art therapy, and patients should be introduced to it. Artists, like artists, should occasionally experiment with new media. Found-object art is a flexible practice that opens ideas, processes, and artwork-making.

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