


Editorial

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Introduction by Kim Berman

The purpose of *SAJAT*, as stated in its mission, is to provide a scholarly forum to advance understanding of how art therapy, alongside other arts therapy modalities, contributes to the treatment, education, development, and enrichment of people who engage with it. *SAJAT* aims to be representative of a variety of arts therapy modalities, cognisant of the value of a dynamic interface between the visual arts, dance, movement, music, and drama, as well as interdisciplinary fields that provide a platform for under-represented African arts therapists on the global stage.

The first volume presented the research of the first ten pioneering South African art therapists from the Department of Visual Art (DOVA) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). In my editorial, I qualified that as the professor in charge of postgraduate studies in our department, as well as a passionate advocate for enhancing arts education for social impact, I found myself holding and facilitating the first visual art therapy training qualification in South Africa, along with a team of founding and qualified arts therapists. I also established and assumed the role of Editor-in-Chief, with an engaged Editorial Board serving as advocates, reviewers, and guest editors. These are individuals who are all pioneers in their fields, eminent and cited authors and scholars from the arts therapies, with a focus on the Global South.



This is the fifth volume of *SAJAT* since its inception in 2023. We have upheld our commitment to two issues a year and have achieved **Department of Higher Education** accreditation with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). This issue marks another celebration in my handing over the baton of Editor-in-Chief to the new leader of the Art Therapy programme at the University of Johannesburg, Dr Sinethemba Makanya, who is already forging a bold new direction with an African-centred vision for art therapy in South Africa and globally. It has been an honour and a privilege to be the surrogate mother to this journal, and to hand it over to a guardian who has both the grounding and vision to take it to new heights.

I would not have been able to hold this space without the dedicated passion of the two production editors, Kate Shand for Issues 2 and 3, and Saxon Kinnear for Issues 4 and 5. Among the cohort of the first qualified South African art therapists, both have worked tirelessly, along with copy editor Tanya Pretorius, to ensure the issues meet the standards of peer review and excellence. The success of this journal would not have been possible without the support and patience of UJ Press manager Wikus van Zyl, who has advocated for the journal's accreditation and ensured its consistent quality and beautiful layout.

Introduction to Emerging Voices II

This is the third year since *SAJAT* was established in July 2023, and the second issue on Emerging Voices from the Global South. We are delighted to have ten new voices representing the modalities of art, drama and music in this latest issue, including an international perspective from the Caribbean. We are walking the path outlined in the journal's mission statement to be a platform for underrepresented African arts therapists on the global stage.

Janet du Preez explores how art therapy serves as an alternative and effective form of communication and emotional regulation for adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and intellectual disability (ID), particularly in the South African context, where under-resourced and marginalised mental health services persist. Du Preez highlights the role of art materials and non-verbal expression as a 'voice' for minimally verbal individuals. Her work foregrounds the importance of inclusive research participation. This study not only generates meaningful insight, but it also affirms the need to adapt

our therapeutic environments to meet individuals with ASD and ID where they are, ensuring they are seen, heard, and included.

Sarah Harrison presents a literature review to explore the role of music listening in cancer care. She argues that listening to music is a safe, feasible, cost-effective, and non-invasive adjunct to oncology care. The outcomes and potential impact of her study are clustered into five themes: (1) symptom reduction (pain, anxiety, depression, nausea), (2) benefits of music listening as a non-pharmacological intervention, (3) coping and enhancement of quality of life, (4) cognitive benefits (memory, distraction from intrusive thoughts, and (5) connectedness (intrapersonal, interpersonal, transpersonal). While her findings are limited by small sample sizes and heterogeneity in the study design, the article presents a strong case for larger, more rigorous trials to evaluate the long-term effects of digital/streaming music interventions.

Monique Hill introduces the emergent field of Text-Based Drama Therapy (TbDT), with specific reference to its applicability in the Global South. She argues that TbDT is uniquely situated to address the needs of South African clients, where there is inequality in terms of access to mental health support. Hill suggests that TbDT can bridge language and cultural differences by creating a third language of connection. This article offers a glimpse of what accessible, adaptable, technologically informed drama therapy can look like without sacrificing the therapeutic relationship, creativity, or connection to our bodies and each other.

Madri Jansen van Rensburg explores how arts therapists can maximise their position within South Africa's healthcare system through a systems-thinking approach. Jansen van Rensburg argues that the primary contribution of the art therapist lies in the ability to work in a client-focused way and employ a creative approach to meet the client's changing needs. By visually mapping the system and considering factors such as the stage of care and client needs, she proposes a strategic positioning that emphasises advocacy for art therapy within systems, enabling art therapy to be applied more meaningfully.

Gugulethu Manana uses an approach that bridges psychosocial support with advocacy, emphasising culturally responsive and culturally sensitive practices. By synthesising South African and international perspectives on Ubuntu as an ethic of interdependence and shared humanity, her article offers new insights into how Ubuntu can inform decolonised, socially

responsive art therapy practice while enhancing the collaborative ethos of multidisciplinary care.

Nobantu Shabangu reflects on her journey as a novice narrative enquirer, gathering the perspectives of Black drama therapists to understand what it means to enter the profession in a post-apartheid South Africa. She necessarily reframes ethics and reflexivity through the lens of 'lived wisdom', positioning African women's experiences as legitimate sites of knowledge and intellectual labour. Drawing on her own experience as a Black woman and on the lived wisdom of her matrilineage and Zulu cosmology, Shabangu introduces the notion of *umkhaphi*, which she suggests provides grounded ethical guidance, critical distance, and a relational form of reflexivity. Shabangu demonstrates that approaching her research through lived wisdom opened space for Black woman drama therapists to share their narratives and reflect critically on their positioning in the field. Her findings reveal that while professional visibility for Black women drama therapists is growing, it remains frequently undermined, and their trustworthiness is often questioned. By recognising them as *abakhaphi*, she affirms both their journeys and her own becoming as a drama therapist – guided by the enduring message: you may be fractured along the way, but you will arrive whole.

Kim Valldejuli introduces 'polyphonic bricolage', a concept proposed by Schmidt in 2006, that embraces the dynamic blending of diverse cultural influences, as a tool for addressing the psychosocial needs of Afro-Caribbean clients in art therapy. Grounded in both decolonial and relational paradigms, she advocates for Indigenous methodologies that prioritise relational accountability, community participation, and the centring of local knowledges. Valldejuli argues that Eurocentric art therapy models often fail to account for the cultural complexities of Afro-Caribbean communities, resulting in marginalisation and inequitable practices. She proposes that combining polyphonic bricolage with cultural humility creates culturally affirming art therapy practices that go beyond mere accommodation of diversity. This approach transforms the field by expanding its epistemological foundations and embracing healing traditions long silenced by colonial legacies.

Nicole van Wyk addresses the variety of responses that art materials can elicit in individuals. Her case study explores the responses of four University of Johannesburg art therapy honours students who participated

in a four-week online art therapy group. Van Wyk used the one-canvas method to engage with materials drawn from the Expressive Therapies Continuum. Drawing on social constructivism and the Expressive Therapies Continuum, van Wyk elucidates the interplay between materiality, internal experience, and socio-cultural positioning. Her contribution illustrates how art materials can assist in self-regulation, elicit dysregulation, or evoke more ambiguous responses. Van Wyk thus underscores the ethical responsibility of art therapists to consider the emotional and sensory impact of materials, fostering self-regulation and emotional processing in clients.

Nonkululeko Vilakazi investigates the potential of drama therapy as a psychosocial intervention for children affected by paternal absence. Her research seeks to bridge a gap in the limited research exploring the developmental effects of absent fathers on children in South Africa. Vilakazi draws on Western developmental psychoanalytic theory, attachment frameworks, relational perspectives and the clinical applications of drama therapy. Her contribution positions drama therapy as both a psychosocial and culturally grounded intervention, capable of addressing emotional wounds within the structural realities of South African families. Vilakazi highlights drama therapy's capacity to support the identity formation, emotional regulation, and social development of children in single-mother households.

Tavia Viglietti explores how art therapy can serve as a weight-neutral practice for South African women experiencing body-image distress. Viglietti argues that a weight-neutral therapeutic stance actively resists the widespread anti-fat bias found in society. She draws on Australian art therapist Ashlee Bennett's work, which combines narrative approaches with practical art therapy strategies to help people reframe their relationships with their bodies. Her article presents three therapeutic processes: the externalisation of internalised shame, the re-authoring of body narratives, and the emergence of self-compassion. By bringing Bennett's framework into dialogue with the experiences of South African women, this article extends weight-neutral art therapy scholarship into a new cultural and therapeutic context. Viglietti suggests that art therapy grounded in a weight-neutral stance offers an inclusive, ethically responsive alternative to weight-centric models of care.

Afterword by Sinethemba Makanya

Stepping into the role of Editor-in-Chief of the *South African Journal of Art Therapy* marks a profound personal and historic moment for the arts therapies in South Africa. Black women have long been marginalised, under-represented, and largely invisible within the leadership of arts therapy scholarship. My recent appointment as leader of the Art Therapy programme signals an important shift, one that advances the University of Johannesburg's transformation imperatives while strengthening the visibility, authority, and leadership pathways available to Black South African women in this field.

This return to the arts therapies is not a simple homecoming, but a transformed re-entry. More than a decade ago, I stepped away from the field as a somewhat disillusioned young drama therapist negotiating the tensions between Euro-American psychotherapeutic frameworks and African knowledge systems. I return now shaped by multiple initiations, both intellectual and ancestral. My work in African Indigenous health frameworks and my leadership in the medical humanities have clarified my voice, deepened my authority, and grounded my re-entry into this field with renewed purpose.

Arts therapies continue to emerge on the continent. Nevertheless, scholarly production has remained dominated by the Global North, resulting in the under-representation of African theorisation, limited visibility for African practitioners, and the ongoing marginalisation of Indigenous healing epistemologies. *SAJAT* was founded precisely to address these inequities: to advance African scholarship, affirm local knowledge systems, and cultivate decolonial critiques of psychotherapy.

As I assume this role, I wish to acknowledge Professor Kim Berman, whose vision and dedication established *SAJAT* as a credible and transformative platform for the field. Her stewardship has laid a foundation from which we can continue to grow the journal's intellectual reach and deepen its relevance on the continent.

Vision for the Future

SAJAT will continue to advance decolonial and critical scholarship by expanding the field's epistemic foundations to fully include African

cosmologies, Indigenous knowledge systems, and local therapeutic traditions. We aim to foster a field where multiple knowledge systems – African and global – are in meaningful dialogue.

The journal will cultivate pathways for emerging African scholars, practitioners, and postgraduate students to publish, collaborate, and shape the discourse of arts therapies on the continent. We will create space for experimental, practice-led, community-engaged, and transdisciplinary work that reflects the realities of African contexts, including hybrid healing practices, performance-based inquiry, and activist scholarship.

With these commitments, *SAJAT* will continue to grow as an African-centred intellectual home. One that honours our histories, insists on epistemic justice, and nurtures a future in which African creative arts therapists can write, theorise, and lead from positions of authority within a diverse scholarly community.