An inquiry into the relationship between the visual arts and psychotherapy in post revolutionary Cuba

Abstract
This thesis focuses on the relationship between the visual arts and psychotherapy in post Revolutionary Cuba. The material on which it is based was collected over a fourteen month period and three visits to Cuba between April 1999 and August 2001. The study opens with the presentation of two brief histories, that of Cuban Art and Art Education and that of Cuban Mental Health Care. In this context the Revolution is taken as a useful reference point in terms of thinking about change and historical developments in both fields. Naturalistic Inquiry and Grounded Theory respectively were used to collect and analyse the data presented. These approaches allowed the researcher the degree of flexibility necessary to undertake research in a potentially delicate situation full of unknowns and to be able to modify and develop the course of inquiry as new evidence emerged. The main descriptive themes emerging from an analysis of the data pertain to the relationship between artists and mental health care professionals. These are (1) therapeutic work undertaken by artists, (2) artists working collaboratively with mental health professionals and (3) psychologists working with art as a therapy. The story which emerges pertains to a series of largely unrecorded histories spanning a forty year period. It begins with the work of Antonia Eiriz, who emerges as a key figure in the early development of art as a therapy and concludes with the work of the psychologist, Aurora García Morey, who takes centre stage in its continued development. This snapshot of Cuban art therapy is specific and unique and demonstrates the development of a very particular Cuban practice. However an analysis of the analytic themes which emerge from the data suggests that certain concepts such as responsiveness and pragmatism resound within a wider picture. These themes are discussed in chapters 7 and 8 with reference to the wider international context and specifically to the development of the profession in the United Kingdom. In my conclusions I suggest that these themes may be applicable to other areas of research and practice outwith and beyond Cuba and that while the concept of art therapy cannot be narrowly defined when it is applied to understanding practices in other, social, economic and cultural contexts, there are common factors which can be identified.

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