

FORMA

AN INTRODUCTION TO
ART AS THERAPY



MENTIS

CONTENTS

The Gabriel Caruana Foundation is a registered voluntary organisation (VO1236) and has been registered with the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations since April 2016. It is also supported by Arts Council Malta through the Investment in Cultural Organisations Fund 2020-2022. The Foundation also has an ongoing collaboration agreement with Fondazzjoni Kreattività.

This project has been funded by the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS). This project/publication reflects the views only of the author, and the MCVS cannot be held responsible for the content or any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This publication does not replace actual therapy. If you would like to seek psychological help for your mental health wellbeing, please seek a professional or call the Richmond Foundation Helpline.

Gabriel Caruana Foundation:
outreach@gabrielcarunafoundation.org

Richmond Foundation Helpline:
1770

Designed by Karl Tonna
for the Gabriel Caruana Foundation.

<u>04</u>	<u>foreword</u>
<u>06</u>	<u>introduction</u>
<u>08</u>	<u>exploring self-awareness</u>
<u>12</u>	<u>discovering self-support</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>getting unstuck</u>
<u>27</u>	<u>bios</u>

WELCOME TO THIS BOOKLET FILLED WITH EXERCISES AND IDEAS THAT BRING TOGETHER THE WORLDS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND CREATIVE ART.



FOREWORD

Forma Mentis, a Gabriel Caruana Foundation project, started life quite differently from the contents of this booklet. It was designed as a series of peaceful and intimate workshops with the residents of the Richmond Foundation, at Villa Chelsea. These workshops were to be led by three talented visual artists, whose voices you will hear throughout these pages. The workshops were then meant to be followed by an exhibition at The Mill with the works created during the workshops and curated by Umberto Buttigieg, who has voluntarily adapted his involvement in this project by contributing an essay about art and its relevance to our daily lives.

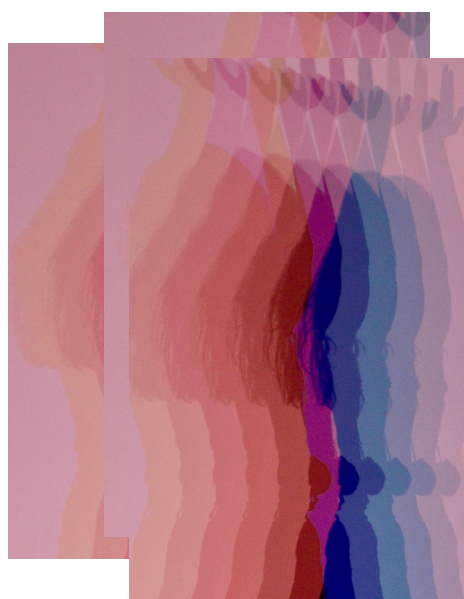
Gabriel Buttigieg is a Fine Artist based in Malta and a recent graduate in Psychology from the University of Malta. Pietru Farrugia is a multidisciplinary artist working as a trainee Gestalt Psychotherapist, and researcher in the Faculty for Social Wellbeing (University of Malta). Denise Scicluna lives and works in London and is an established artist and professional Art Therapist.

However, 2020 had other plans in store for our planet - unexpected, heartbreaking and anxiety inducing plans. Collectively, we had to deal with separation, loss, precarity and other equally stressful situations that have taken a mental, emotional and physical toll on our wellbeing. Richmond Foundation's residential homes went into lockdown to protect the most vulnerable of their clients while, at the same time, mental health organisations experienced an alarming increase in calls for support. Forma Mentis had to change, to remain relevant in this challenging situation

Instinctively, as new regulations for social distancing took effect, many of us turned to art, crafts, or a DIY project. The urge to create and keep ourselves occupied caught like wildfire. We hope that through this booklet and its associated media, Forma Mentis will accompany you on your own creative journeys.

Raffaella Zammit
Executive Director
Gabriel Caruana Foundation

FOR A PAINTER, A
SCULPTOR, AN ARTIST,
THE ACT OF CREATION IS
THE ACT OF REVEALING.
IT IS THE ART OF BEING IN
DIALOGUE WITH THE
ENVIRONMENT BY
BRAVELY DISCLOSING A
PART OF OURSELVES.



INTRODUCTION

As health complications and old age dramatically shaped the last decade of Gabriel Caruana's life, his art and its interplay of colours and forms remained a close and constant friend, and continued to offer a space for magic and for the reaffirmation of life's poignant beauty. Since its inception, the Gabriel Caruana Foundation has developed and facilitated projects, workshops and exhibitions that have championed creativity and art as a vehicle for participation, community building and social engagement. Projects like Kreaturi, Nimxu Mixja, ħożż il-ħsejjes and Carnival! encouraged children, young people and adults to think critically on themes such as community identity, environmental justice and wellbeing, while also proposing ways in which art and creativity can become a form of activism. This social engagement remains at the heart of our project Forma Mentis.

The process of image creation is filled with potential, and new possibilities to usher in a sense of serenity, healing, and beneficial change. Interest in art as a specifically therapeutic modality finds its roots in the early 1900s. The term "art therapy" was coined in 1942 by British artist Adrian Hill, who explored the healthful benefits of painting and drawing while recovering from tuberculosis. Since the mid-20th century, art therapy rose as an independent profession within psychology and its benefits are widely recognised in mental healthcare. Psychotherapist Thomas Moore has stated that every therapist should have some knowledge about the history of art, and the tools to engage with the imagery presented by a client.

Art in a therapeutic setting can help provide an environment which is safe and accepting. Art can give a sense of accomplishment which boosts self-esteem, while also stimulating various parts of the brain, increasing psychological and emotional functioning. It is also an important vehicle to express preverbal traumas or feelings and emotions we might find particularly hard to put into words.

It is important to point out that art in a therapeutic context is not only addressed to people with some sort of experience or predisposition towards the arts, nor is it aimed towards creating a high-quality expression of creativity or a fully finished and coherent artwork. The focus is rather put on the experience and process of creating and expressing what needs to emerge. This can be done even through simple marks and splashes of colour. Thus, we encourage you to embark on this creative journey and to be open to experience its beauty. Ultimately, both art and psychotherapy support the human drive towards discovering, transforming and forming new and meaningful ways to understand and experience life in all its fullness.

Umberto Buttigieg
Artist and Curator
Founding Member
Gabriel Caruana Foundation

GABRIEL BUTTIGIEG

EXPLORING SELF- AWARENESS

These exercises will focus on how art as a medium can help in the processing and the development of the self, which is an integral part of well-being and mental health. Art can help the individual come to terms with the self and/or parts of the self which have been consciously or unconsciously suppressed or denied. Often, starting from early childhood, human beings create mechanics of defence which help to protect the ego from the real or perceived threats of the outside world. While defence mechanisms are natural and normal psychological strategies which help ward off unpleasant feelings, pathology may set in when these are used to excess, when they are out of proportion to the situations faced.

Art is one of the most important media wherein these mechanisms of the self are clearly projected and may be worked through. As a result of working through these primitive modes of being, the ego becomes less convoluted and more genuine, and the shadow becomes more assimilated into the personality, with a healthier balance achieved between different aspects of the personality. In fact, shadow work is often termed as the launch pad of creativity, the dark source wherein archetypal individual and collective energy lies. The acceptance of one's own self, in its entirety, with both strengths and weaknesses, is one of the most important vehicles which enhances mental health. Being at peace with one's interior world may help to alleviate anxiety and disturbances of mood, as well as creating a harmonious manner of interacting with the outside world.

My inspiration comes from various sources, including past and contemporary artists, my own interior world, current national and world affairs, as well as daily events which impact on my well-being. Mediterranean and tribal themes also inspire me, as does my background in psychology, more specifically the psychoanalytic school. My favourite medium is painting, and my technique is basi-

cally an introject of all the artwork I have ever witnessed. I always work in series, pondering on themes before I actually start working on them. My work varies like a chameleon, a projection of my own personhood. I work both on large-scale and smaller paintings, as well as sketches.

The CoVid reality has given me the space to engage in a more solitary existence. While it has significantly reduced the social contacts which energise me, it has given me the permission to retreat into my own self and become more introspective, which in itself is the vehicle which propels me to paint freely. When I am in touch with my inner self, the unconscious is allowed to run loose on the canvas.

Recently I have been engaged in a number of projects. The series entitled 'Lands' lauds the fecundity and the physical fluid reality of the feminine body. In 'Darkness at Noon', a collective exhibition, I have explored primordial themes, linking the human with the animal, encouraging reflection on who, or what, is actually bestial. In {v}, also a collective exhibition, I have focused on intertwining classical elements of the divine with primitive raw elements. I am also currently involved in an online exhibition dialogs2020, which will eventually be exhibited in La Spezia, Italy. Forthcoming international projects will take place in Italy, France, and the Netherlands.

Art is a vehicle for self-expression. It can help in mediating so many negative things which life throws at us. By creating new forms, by engaging in expressing one's inner being, by projecting onto the canvas all the emotions that assail us on a daily basis, the human being may find a safe space for a cathartic process, which is so much more significant than the images displayed on the canvas.

EXERCISES

The exercises will take the figurative form, using paint. They will primarily centre on self-awareness; self-perceptions which will focus on the exploration of the real and the ideal self; and the self in relation to others.

There is no good, bad, perfect or imperfect. No artistic skills are required. What is important is to find a moment to yourself, in a place you feel comfortable. Once you feel a sense of completion with an exercise, look at your finished work and reflect upon what you have developed.

01 - REALISTIC SELF- IMAGE.

In this first exercise you will work on a realistic self-portrait using a paper, pencil or pen, some paint, a mirror and possibly a photograph of yourself. Let's start:

Close your eyes, focus and think of yourself and imagine your face by using your memory.
Using a pencil, make an outline of your face.
Next start touching your face, feel each curve, the softness or the ruggedness of your cheeks, are your lips thin?
Continue your portrait, you can use pen/pencil and paint at this point.
Now look into the mirror and start examining yourself.
Put in some more detail in your portrait.
If you have a photograph of yourself have a look at it, does it capture what you have remembered, felt and saw?
Look at your drawing and continue adding detail.
Now think of how others see you.
Continue drawing until you feel the work is completed.
Look at your finished self-portrait, how do you feel about it?
Does it capture your essence and how you feel about yourself?

02 - IDEAL SELF- IMAGE.

In this exercise you will develop an image of how you view your ideal self:

Imagine yourself and how you wish to be viewed, maybe you have received feedback from a significant other or you try to project yourself in five -years time.
How do you wish to be seen?
Are there any colours which you associate certain feelings with? You may wish to include them.
Look at your ideal self-image: does it capture your wishes or projections? How does it make you feel?

03 - SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS.

This exercise focuses on yourself and your relationship with the other. It is important to paint a picture of yourself whilst bearing in mind aspects such as distance, size, etc. You will need at least three different colours, a pencil or a pen and a paper. Then:

Think of the important people, objects, or places in your life. Start drawing them down either as symbols or as realistically as you want. The aim is to create a map of these people, objects or places in relation to the self.
Next paint 3 bands of different colours, with each colour representing the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the self. Focus on how these aspects link you to others.
Depict the various roles (e.g. wife; nurse; friend) you have and how this creates links with the community.
Think back over how interactions with immediate others over the past week gave rise to happiness or sadness and draw the underlying emotions.
Look at the final painting of yourself in relation to others. How do you feel about it? Do you think it can help your relationships?

Self-portraiture can be used a method to tap into the unconscious.

PIETRU FARRUGIA



DISCOVERING SELF- SUPPORT

Do you remember your first experience of floating? If we went all the way back, it would begin somewhere inside the womb. There would be early memories of bathing and splashing, jumping into the sea. The body remembers being buoyed up by the supportive current that surrounds us. The body remembers the ocean's support, a reassuring pressure lifting and holding us. Just so, the body remembers the varied forms of support we experience throughout our lives.

What is a therapeutic reading of the word 'support' and why is it so valuable? I encourage you to consider this question, and the ways that art-making helps us to find answers. Regardless of our age or aptitude, making images is a basic part of being human. These thoughts are guided by the principles of Gestalt psychotherapy, particularly Laura Perls and the influence she had on the pioneering art therapy of Janie Rhyne. All therapists stand to be immensely enriched by Rhyne's artistic focus on co-creative experimentation, and I am grateful for her guidance.

Imagine Support

Support is something we discover within ourselves. Often, we imagine that support means finding the 'right' person or 'best' environment. Truth is, we are constantly immersed in a field of support. It circulates through our social networks, it lives in our past experiences, and it is built into our aspirations for the future.

Support is always present, neither positive nor negative. However, its movements result in different experiences. For example, support that is oriented towards our wellbeing is a source of personal strength, connection, and stability. In the same way, our anxieties and oppressions may be so seamlessly supported that we spend much of our time lost inside them. Bringing awareness to such differences makes it easier for us to distinguish what support we appreciate, and what holds us back.



Do you remember your first experience of floating?

There can be no doubt that our primary self-support is the body. Unfortunately, we often separate from this fundamental reality. We train ourselves to ignore gut feelings, shut off pain, and miss the subtle shifts in our physical moods. By controlling our breathing we try to control our experience of time. By disconnecting from our body, we disrupt our reality.

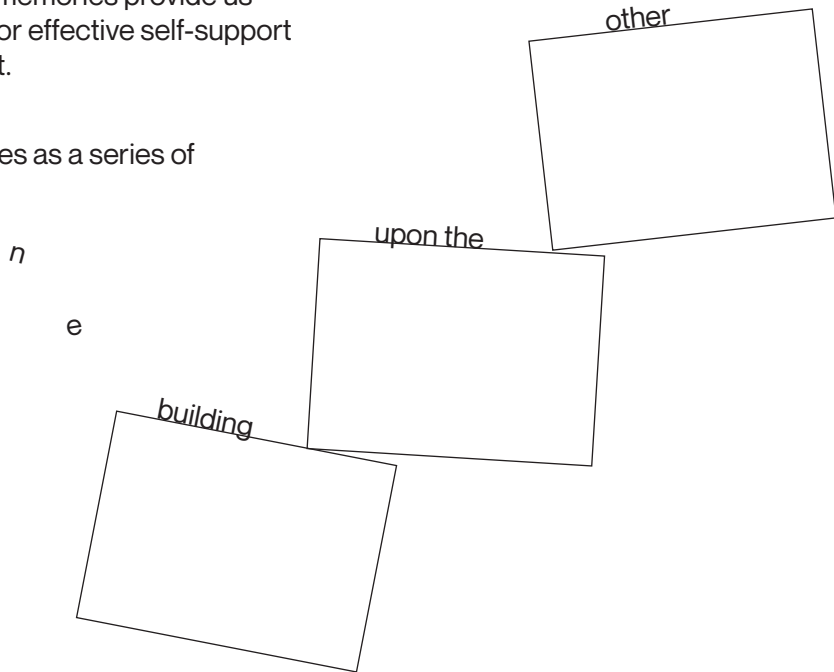
Returning to the body can be a long process, particularly if we associate pain with our embodied experiences. Traumatic injuries disrupt support when it is most needed. Trusting ourselves to experience support in new ways is a journey of rediscovery, to build self-support while also receiving support from others.

Imaginative Exercises

Just like a scientist, an artist interacts with the world to gain valuable insight about a particular experience or concept.

We will be exploring memories of support, and how these embodied memories provide us with a strong ground for effective self-support in the present moment.

Imagine these exercises as a series of experiments, each o



01 - THE SUPPORT TREE

Prepare a blank A3 sheet of paper, with a crayon or marker in front of you. Draw a large tree in the middle of your page. It can be quite simple - just remember to include roots at the bottom, a trunk in the centre, and branches up top.

Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Exhale fully and then slowly inhale, repeating this process several times.

Identify and relax any tightness in the body, especially in the areas around the jaw, the neck and shoulders, the spine, fingers and toes, which all tend to hold more tension.

Immerse yourself in the body's sensations. Put any thoughts to one side as they arise, and become totally absorbed by the present moment. Observe the sounds and sensations all around you. Now, turn your attention to your drawing of a tree.

Staying in and with the stillness, give yourself permission to remember the various times, places, and people who have manifested support during your life. It may help to re-read the "Imagine Support" section before you do so.

Consider: Who has made me feel accepted and understood? When have I been helped by others, especially as a child and teen? How have I supported others by putting in the effort to understand them and their situations? What small acts of kindness have I experienced lately? When have I shared support, coming from a place of genuine caring?

The roots of your tree are the support you feel from others. The branches of your tree represent the support you share with others in your life. Consider how each memory fits into the roots or the branches of your Support Tree.

Stay with the moment and let your recollections flow. Each time one occurs, write it down, either as a root or a branch. You may simply jot down a name, a location, or a short description of a situation. Write them all down.

When you feel a sense of completion, slowly put the marker or crayon to one side and take your time to return awareness to your breathing. Review the work you have created, and the rich information it contains about your history of support as it moves from strong roots into fruitful branches.

02- THE SUPPORT CIRCLE

Prepare a blank A3 piece of cardboard, with colourful markers and paints, magazines, photographs, and any other resources you may require.

Again, focus on your breathing while also relaxing and releasing any tightness in the body.

Draw a large circle that fills your board from top to bottom.

Draw a line through the middle of your circle.

Reflecting on the information gained in the first experiment (The Support Tree), think about the roots you have identified. Re-read them slowly and check in with yourself to discover the colours, shapes, forms and symbols that come to your mind.

Fill one half of your circle with these colours and forms. Feel free to use any materials that you have available, including photos, coloured paper, and magazine clippings.

Stay with your process as you transform these roots into images, to fill one half of the Circle of Support. Notice certain themes or colours as they reappear and come into focus. Consider the placement of your photos and clippings, the kind of paints, markers, and materials that you will use to represent your roots. For example, my grandfather was a stable source of support in my childhood and when I think of him, I remember his big woolly cardigans. In my Circle, I stick down swirls of grey wool to express these memories of warmth.

When you feel a sense of completion with one half of the Circle of Support, turn to your branches and repeat the process. This time, consider the colours and shapes that emerge when you reflect on how you have been a source of support for others. Use your materials to collage and express these visualisations. Allow both halves of your circle to meet up in the middle.

When the Circle of Support feels complete, return awareness to your breathing. Review the work that you have created, the two halves of your circle. Notice the way that your imagery expresses a two-way movement of support from others and support for others.

03 - BODY MAP OF SUPPORT

Prepare a blank A3 piece of paper. You will need a pencil and a marker or pen, the bolder and brighter the better.

Once more, focus on your breathing while also releasing any spots of tension in the body.

Draw a human figure using your pencil. It can be an outline or a sketch, a stick figure or something more complex. This is the map of your body that we will be exploring.

Reflect on your Circle of Support by focusing your attention on the entire image. Give yourself permission to let all other thoughts and concerns fall away, as you focus your attention on the colours, forms, and shapes that you have created.

Continue to focus on your breathing as you consider the Circle. Notice how your body feels, standing or seated. Feel the weight of your body on the chair or on the floor.

Scan your awareness from the tips of your toes, moving up your legs and into the stomach. Feel the movement of your chest as you take deep breaths, and the weight of your arms at your sides. Scan upwards to include your shoulders, neck, and head.

Repeat this wave of awareness moving up and down your body. If you notice that your hands are tense or tight, try to soften them. Let your neck and jaw relax. Be present within your body as you reflect on your Circle of Support.

Consider: Where in my body do I feel these colours, shapes, and forms? As I scan my awareness, up and down, what feelings awaken in my body? If I had to give these sensations a name, what words would I use to describe them? What sensations can I feel in my belly, my chest, my throat?

When you are ready, take your marker and mark the figure on your page wherever you feel strong sensations. Like a map, these marks reveal where support is circulating within the body. Write down the names of these sensations too. For example, when I think of my grandfather's hugs there is a holding sensation across my shoulders, which I name "Warmth"

When your Body Map feels complete, return awareness to your breathing. You are now aware of where support lives in your own body, the particular names associated with these sensations, and how it feels to embody them. Whenever you feel the need for support, especially when life becomes overwhelming or difficult, remember your Body Map of Support and rediscover the support within you.

DENISE SCICLUNA

GETTING UNSTUCK

Since the start of my painting practice, years before I discovered art psychotherapy as an actual profession, my focus has been on the process rather than the end result.

My own creative process is centered around self exploration and personal growth rather than developing a skill or mastering a medium. The outcome is never sketched or planned and therefore with each painting that comes to life comes surprise; something unknown.

The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) describes art therapy as a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication. Within this context, art is not used as a diagnostic tool but as a medium to address emotional issues which may be confusing and distressing.

My training in MA Art Psychotherapy applied a Jungian framework which I also incorporate in my work. Carl Jung has greatly contributed towards the development of the art therapy profession. The general Jungian framework is that the client constructs meaning unconsciously and through symbolic processes and play and through this the client faces the shadow of the self and therefore progresses towards healing and growth.

As an art psychotherapist, I run one-to-one art therapy sessions with clients who struggle with self esteem, managing emotions, anxiety and who have experienced various levels of trauma. I provide a safe therapeutic space for them to explore their artwork, explore issues which emerge through the creative process and help them get unstuck, and move forward in life.

Art as therapy

What I am bringing to this project is very much inspired from my Jungian based art therapy practice as well as my personal painting practice.

THE ACTIVITIES ARE INSPIRED BY MY BELIEF THAT EVERY ONE OF US IS CREATIVE, WHETHER WE RECOGNIZE THIS OR NOT.

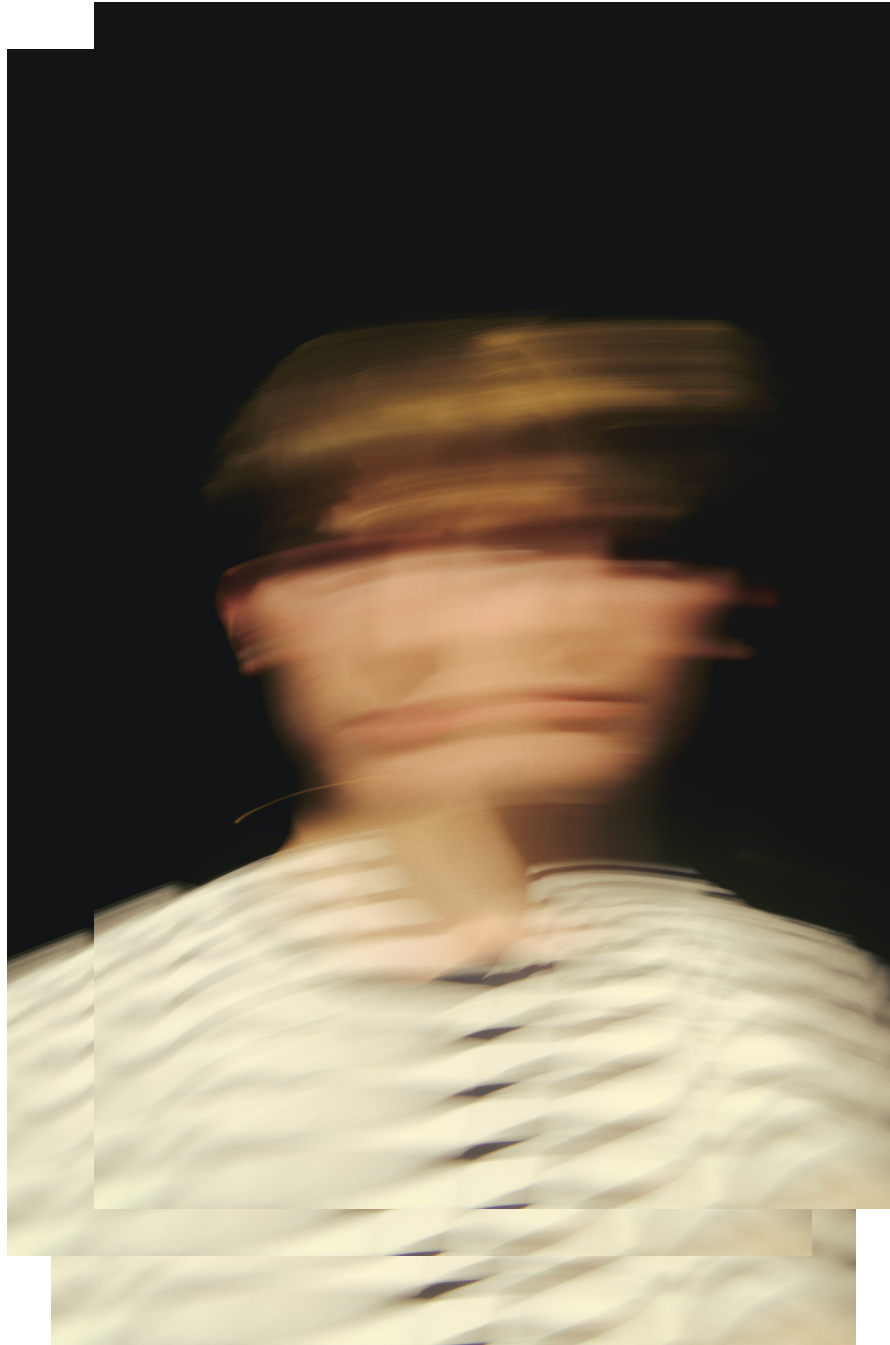
Under the art psychotherapy umbrella, the activities presented here are often referred to as 'art as therapy' rather than art therapy as they can be carried out at home without the presence of a therapist.

Creating art may help you to relax, reduce stress, and redirect negative thoughts. One can learn a lot about oneself when making art as it brings to life the relationship one has with oneself. For this reason, as you engage in these activities, observe yourself but don't judge what you are doing. The process is what is important, not the end product. Make use of reflective writing after making art, to help you gain more understanding and awareness, especially if you are feeling stuck.

Lastly, I would like to highlight that these activities do not in any way replace actual therapy. Although art can be really fun, making art can also get us in touch with different kinds of feelings and ideas.

Look after yourself and if things are getting difficult, speak to someone you trust - a friend, family member or professional. Sometimes one needs to deepen his or her understanding through work with a therapist.

01 - SELF- EXPRES- SION: THIS IS ME



At times we might feel stuck and we are not able to identify why we feel the way we do. We might think that our life is going fairly well and little do we know what could be triggering what we are feeling. This may leave us feeling like we cannot move forward. Creativity can help us gain clarity, it can help us unblock a flow of movement, bringing feelings and realisations to the surface - to the centre of our consciousness. This activity includes a mixture of writing, painting and collaging.

What you need: Blank journal or A4 paper, paint, brushes, magazines, water, pen, scissors, glue

Without much thought, pick your pen and start writing on your journal or paper. Try not to pause, if you go blank just state that you do not know what to write. Just keep going until you fill in your two pages.

Take a moment to read through what you wrote (in a non judgemental way) and use your pen to circle the words or phrases which stand out for you.

Use paint to cover the rest of the words. Blend colours together and do not worry about being messy.

Now that your chosen words stand out, go to your pile of magazines and cut out pictures or words which resonate to you at this very moment. Take your time browsing through your pages

Once you have your pile of cuttings, glue them onto your paper. Feel free to write over your collage.

Reflections:

What themes stand out for you?
How do these themes relate to feeling stuck?
What do you feel that you need right now?
Is there something which is difficult to accept? If so, what can you do about this?
What have you learnt from this exercise?
What was challenging for you?

02 - FEELINGS: DECK OF SYMBOLS

Each human being expresses feelings in a different way and we each have a personal visual language for expressing our emotional selves. Some might prefer using lines or shapes, while others find colour more useful. There is no right or wrong way to express emotions through art. In this activity you get to connect with your feelings and help your feelings move through you. This will be done by creating symbols for each feeling you choose. Try to avoid using stick figures or faces - instead reflect on what colour you associate to these feelings and what symbols do you feel represent them. Examples of feelings you might want to use: resentment, envy, sadness, love, self love, anger, sadness. The size of the cards will be of your choice. They could be small sized ones or post card sized cards.

What you need: ready cut cards, scissors, pen, paint, magazines, glue

Sit somewhere quietly or put on some calming music.

Reflect on what feelings you would like to focus on today. Maybe you are finding it hard to process something which happened recently. Reflect on what might be making you feel stuck. What feelings come to you during your reflection - use your journal if needed.

Once you have chosen your feelings, take your time to reflect deeply on each feeling. Let's say you are starting with anger - what colour do you associate it with? What symbols come to mind? Remember there is no right or wrong.

Do the same for the rest of the feelings you have selected. Use paint, pens or collage to represent each feeling. Label each card with your pen.

Optional: at the back of each card, write a message to yourself and your feelings. You might want to write something about fear: Dear Fear, I know you are there to protect me and I will try to get to know you better from now on.

Reflections:

What have you observed during this activity?
Which card did you spend the most time on?
How do your symbols relate to each other?
What was challenging?
Do certain colours have specific meanings for you?
How did this activity change the way you deal with your feelings?
Write down ways you plan to deal with your most challenging feeling. Do you need to change your relationship with this feeling?

03 - ANXIETY: RELEASE AND TRANS- FORM

Anxiety, overthinking, worrying - all of these mental states can make use feel like we cannot see and think clearly and the need for easing anxiety emerges. Art making is a great channel to allow these worries and anxieties to be released. Once anxiety is released, it can be transformed into something new. This activity will guide you through simple steps of expressing anxiety onto paper. Using paint to create an expressive artwork might feel overwhelming at the start but remind yourself that there is no judgement in this art making process. Give permission to move with your creative flow.

What you need: 2 large papers, paint (water colour or acrylics), brushes, water, glue, scissors

Sit down in a quiet space, put on some calming music.

Observe what is on your mind at the moment, the thoughts and worries that keep visiting you. Grab your brushes, and translate these into an expressive art work using any paint that you feel drawn to. You might want to incorporate writing too.

You can close your eyes while you paint, or make use of your non-dominant hand using no judgement. Keep painting until you feel that you are done.

Once your painting is dry, take your scissors and cut various shapes and forms.

Using the second large paper, play around with your cuttings to create another artwork. Once you are pleased with the placing of your cuttings, glue them to the large paper.

Reflections:

Write a few sentences reflecting on the painting process
What was challenging for you?
What flowed easily?
How did it feel to transform a second piece using your painting?
Is there a story in your creation?
What have you learned about yourself?
How can you deal with anxiety and worry?



Gabriel Caruana Foundation, founded in 2016, is the natural progression of a lifetime that Gabriel Caruana (1929 - 2018) dedicated to modern and contemporary art. We are a non-profit making organisation that manages the artistic programme of The Mill - Art, Culture and Crafts Centre, Birkirkara. We are firm believers in collaborations, seeing these as mutual opportunities to support, grow and experiment. We collaborate with both emerging and established modern and contemporary artists; individuals, other NGOs, and entities with the aim of bringing modern and contemporary art and practices closer to our everyday lives.

Richmond Foundation, set up in 1993, has become the pioneer in providing mental health services in Malta, establishing itself as a leading NGO in the provision of community mental healthcare. At Richmond Foundation, we strive to break the stigma which surrounds mental health by educating and openly communicating the realities underlying mainstream thinking. Our main goals are to support individuals struggling with mental health issues, so that they may experience a good quality of life in the community. Our services range from residential, community-based programs, to hostels as well as supportive opportunities for independent living.

Gabriel Buttigieg (b. 1993) is a prolific visual artist based in Malta, whose creative range spans from drawing and printmaking, to large-scale paintings. His artwork reflects primordial themes, often conceptualised within a Mediterranean or tribal context. Over the years, a gradual development has become evident in his art, which has moved from raw and provocative images of the body, apparent in his exhibitions such as 'Paintings' (MT), 'Nudes' (MT) and 'The Droplet' series (MT) to the existential depictions displayed in 'Saudade' (MT) and 'The Beach' (PL/MT). In his forthcoming exhibitions and projects, Buttigieg will explore the depths of decadence associated with totems and taboos, and the ecstasy linked with mythic creatures. Gabriel Buttigieg has successfully read for a Bachelors in Psychology at the University of Malta. His dissertation explored the notion of death and its consequent anxiety, themes which are ever present in his visual art. He has also studied at the Faculty of Education, and is currently reading for a Masters in Fine Arts by Research at the University of Malta.

Pietru Farrugia (b. 1986) is a multidisciplinary artist currently completing his training as a Gestalt psychotherapist in Malta. He is a researcher in the Faculty for Social Wellbeing (University of Malta) and a visiting lecturer in the Department of Youth and Community. His work focuses on human relationships, spiritualities, and modalities of healing. These topics inform the workshops and therapeutic sessions Pietru facilitates with diverse participants and clients. His journey towards integrating spirituality and therapeutic practice began at the University of Cambridge, where Pietru graduated with a degree in Divinity, and continued during his studies with the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution (George Mason University). Exploring creative expression as a catalyst for peace and healing is central to Pietru's practice. These themes were recently explored in a series of layered works on paper and canvas, shown in a collective exhibition at ArtHall in Gozo (2019), and a collaborative series of constructed works entitled "Garden Party" at the Mdina Biennale (2020).

Denise Scicluna (b. 1987), is an art psychotherapist, clinical supervisor and abstract painter based in London. She qualified as an art psychotherapist after reading her MA in Art Psychotherapy at the University of Roehampton in London. Working regularly on her artwork and exploring art making on a personal level is pivotal in Denise's profession. Her work is based on the understanding that an artwork embodies the current state of being, imprinting a story on paper or canvas. Through her paintings, Denise shares stories, visions and playfulness with the viewer. Similarly in her profession as an art therapist, she allows her clients to access art materials, inviting them to express their own world creatively and playfully, within a safe therapeutic setting. Denise has facilitated art workshops and therapy groups with adults and children in London, Chiang Mai, Zambia and Morocco. Denise is an author of two arts and crafts books called Rock Art (2015) and Pebble Pets (2018). She founded Malta's first contemporary crafts market Patches Market.

