

Arts, Special Issue: Psychology and Mental Health in Contemporary Art

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Dear Colleagues,

In 1968, Rudolf Arnheim was hired by Harvard University as a Professor of the Psychology of Art, the only position of its kind in American universities. While he was the only person to acquire the official title of "Art psychologist", his hiring represented the institutionalization of a trend in mid-century art pedagogy—one that included E.H. Gombrich, Siegfried Gideon, Anton Ehrenzweig, and Morse Peckham—conflating the teaching of art with the teaching of perception, resulting in a form of aesthetic theory confirmable by experimental psychology. Gestalt psychology and American behaviorism thus joined psychoanalysis as both art historical methods and generative theories of artistic production. They had the power to explain art's organization as well as to stand in for its content.

More recently, artists have taken psychology not as a theory for art but as a readymade cultural form that is subject to artistic cooptation. In 2011, the artist Pedro Reyes created *Sanatorium*, a participatory artwork that adopted the conventions of various group therapeutic practices. These were, however, executed by non-professionals on an art audience as part of a DIY medical center. Reyes described *Sanatorium* as "a democratization of therapy, a "psychological first aid... It taps into the excess capacity that we have to help others." Reyes's anti-professionalism, and his repeated warnings to the viewer that this was not a licensed form of therapy, did not stop audience members from experiencing therapeutic effects. *Sanatorium* thus applied participatory trends within the scientific community—citizen science or civilian emergency response training, for example—to mental health, the maintenance of which was presented as a collective social responsibility.

With this Special Issue, *Arts* creates a space for art to speak back to psychology. We seek examples of artists and art works that collaborate with, challenge, or appropriate the tactics of psychology for their own ends. How, for example, does contemporary art make demands of science? How does art critique psychology's methods of diagnosis and treatment, its terminology, and its categorizations? How do the disciplines of art and psychology affect the ways we conceptualize perception, subjectivity, representation, identity, and aesthetic experience? How does art respond to the recent turn toward "wellness"? How have artists anticipated psycho-social needs that mental health professionals cannot yet see and therefore cannot yet address?

Dr. Melissa Ragain

Guest Editor

Manuscript Submission Information

Manuscripts should be submitted online at www.mdpi.com by registering and logging in to this website. Once you are registered, click here to go to the submission form. Manuscripts can be submitted until the deadline. All papers will be peer-reviewed. Accepted papers will be published continuously in the journal (as soon as accepted) and will be listed together on the special issue website. Research articles, review articles as well as short communications are invited. For planned papers, a title and short abstract (about 100 words) can be sent to the Editorial Office for announcement on this website.

Submitted manuscripts should not have been published previously, nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere (except conference proceedings papers). All manuscripts are thoroughly refereed through a single-blind peer-review process. A guide for authors and other relevant information for submission of manuscripts is available on the Instructions for Authors page. Arts is an international peer-reviewed open access quarterly journal published by MDPI.

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