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Postcards from the Asylum

Creating Art in Response to Research Data

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Postcards from the Asylum: Creating Art in Response to Research Data

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Abstract: The Up Top exhibition in 2016 provided the communities of the Murray-Goulburn region in Victoria, Australia, an opportunity to view some creative responses to the history, social impacts, and personal stories of the former lunatic asylum, Mayday Hills, located in the rural town of Beechworth. These artifacts and artworks were collected and created from a research project about living with a mental asylum in the town. The aim of this article is to view and discuss the artworks that were responses to the research data and included in the exhibition created by one of the researchers. The research group is being guided by the principles of crystallization as a methodological framework or process, which involves multi-genre presentations. The artworks facilitated community discussion around the goals of unraveling accepted truths, constructing personal truth, and exploring the specific and generating art.

Keywords: Creative Arts Research, Crystallization, Arts-based Research, Exhibitions, Social History

Introduction

Stories are the essence of the human experience; therefore, the more versatile and innovative qualitative research becomes in capturing the experiences of those we seek to understand, the stronger our position to facilitate dialogue and interventions that further a more just, inclusive, and responsive society. (Gerstenblatt 2013, 306)

In 2016 an exhibition was held at the Albury LibraryMuseum in regional Australia, entitled *UpTop: A Sense of Place for Mayday Hills Hospital*. Mayday Hills was the name of a disestablished mental hospital built in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the rural township of Beechworth in the state of Victoria. The hospital helped provide an economic heartbeat for the town and its closure in 1994 was hurtful to the community for several reasons, including the ill-thought-out process of moving longstanding patients of a large institution into smaller community facilities in the area (Mental Health Council of Australia 2005). The exhibition gave voice to some of the stories a group of researchers were hearing as they listened to the varied experiences of those who had been employees or family members of former patients at Mayday Hills, and as inferred in the Gerstenblatt quote above, provided an opportunity for members of the community to remember all the good and bad that goes along with uncovering the past practices in mental health.

The disciplines of the researchers at the time of the exhibition were History and Creative Arts, and each had published about the initiation of the research project in ways expected of their field. Many of the artifacts and artworks presented in the exhibition were discussed in a previous journal article. The topic of the present article is the process and outcomes of the Creative Arts researcher whose inclusions in *Up Top* were her own responses to the research data collected over a three-year period and one work that had initiated the whole project.

Arts-Based research (ABR) is an expanding field that is being used in various disciplines because artworks can communicate in different ways than words. Wang et al. clarified the three main families of Arts-Based Research as “research about art, art as research, and art in research” (2013, 29). In the Mayday Hills project, the Arts-based research is in Wang et al. third category of Arts-based research; that of Art “in” research since the forms of data collection is qualitative and includes interviews, photographs, archives, and artifacts. The resulting artistic outcomes support the

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qualitative inquiry. The artist-researcher creates works from an insider perspective in response to the data collected, “actively involved in designing and/or using artistic methods” (2013, 15).

As ABR becomes more accepted in the field of qualitative research there is a need to ensure that researchers explain and describe the interpretive process for readers and link the artworks to the research findings to make connections and provide transparency (Lappum et al. 2014). Even though Wang et al. have categorized the types of ABR into a framework, the intention is not to simplify or reduce the content of the outcomes of the research but rather to broaden the scope of methodologies and lead to new ideas and deeper questions (Rapport and Hartill 2012). This also becomes a limitation, since broadening may not always align with deepening; however the intention is to create more dialogue.

Generally, the most common outcome of research is report writing and journal article publication. However, some researchers, particularly those with practical arts skills, are driven to communicate what they are learning, finding, or thinking through different media. This is the case in this article, exemplified by the following quote from an ethnographer:

In this moment it occurs to me how similar research and painting are. If you look at one little aspect, you don't see the bigger picture. Looking at the bigger picture, it is easy to miss the smaller details. Back and forth I move in the creation of the painting, as back and forth I had moved in focus and thought during the creation of knowledge in the field (Scott-Hoy and Ellis 2012, 133).

Indeed, the act of making the artworks in the Mayday Hills project was in direct response to what the researcher was hearing from participants, reading from the histories, and observing in the changes on the site itself as it was being re-purposed for industries other than those of asylum for sufferers of mental illnesses.

In order to work together in a cross-disciplinary way the researchers decided to frame their work according to Ellingson's crystallization methodology, because of its encouragement to focus in an in-depth way to “produce a variety of works that draw upon the same data” (2009, 17). During the *Up Top* exhibition, the artworks enabled the audience to think about the subject matter and draw on their own memories and personal connections to the place of Mayday Hills. For example, one visitor wrote in the exhibition guest book:

Mayday Hills Hospital was a place of family and friendship as well as despair for the clients and patients. The patients' lives were made richer by the compassion and caring by the staff who did the best they could with limited resources of the day (2016).

In encouraging researchers to consider the crystallization methodology, Ellingson describes a continuum of methodologies between Science at one end and Art at the other; not as excluded from each other but asking prospective researchers to be courageous in using a variety of forms of enquiry across the genres (2009). She identifies five characteristics that crystallization research needs. It should:

- Offer deep, thickly described, complexly rendered interpretations of meanings about a phenomenon or group;
- Represent ways of producing knowledge across multiple points of the qualitative continuum;
- Utilize more than one genre of writing (e.g., poetry, narrative, report) and/or other medium (e.g., video, painting, music);
- Include a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher's self and roles in the process of research design, data collection, and representation;

- Eschew positivist claims to objectivity and a singular, discoverable Truth in favor of embracing knowledge as situated, partial, constructed, multiple, embodied, and enmeshed in power relations (2009, 10).

The above criteria will be considered in the analysis of the artworks, along with other academic attitudes and ideas, when considering the works in the middle section of this article.

Artworks in Response to the Research Data

The research project initially began with the arts-based researcher attending a commercially run “ghost tour” of Mayday Hills as a social event. The asylum had been disestablished for fifteen years, sold, and the private owners of the property were trying to persuade different businesses to occupy some of the many buildings on the site. Ghost tours are very popular worldwide and the old disused asylum buildings held the atmosphere that the general public expected of lunatic asylums regarding the ill-treatment of those ostracized from mainstream society (Ruggeri 2016). The sense of place in the grounds and buildings of Mayday Hills impressed the researcher, and even though many of the stories told by the tour leader were outrageous and appeared to hold little truth from history, there was an evident sense of dramatic potential in what the real lives lived in such a place might be. The comparatively recent disestablishment of the asylum in 1994 also meant there were people around with living memories of Mayday Hills as a functioning mental hospital.

The research team began collecting data in the form of interviews from former staff and members of the community who had had relatives as patients or strong memories of the place that was Mayday Hills. The team was shown items made by patients and made aware of artifacts and items saved from the asylum days. Other artists had also documented aspects of their connection to the mental hospital and its disestablishment. As a social history museum the Albury Library Museum is charged with serving the needs and interests of its communities and hence agreed to exhibit early findings of the research. The exhibited materials have been discussed in an earlier journal article. The *Up Top* exhibition was an opportunity to gather several artworks by one of the researchers that had been created about Mayday Hills for earlier events, as well as two works that were created specifically for the exhibition. “Up Top” is a colloquialism that local people used as a nickname for Mayday Hills which refers to the institution’s location on top of a hill in the Beechworth township. The works will be presented chronologically.

Beechworth Ghosts (2010)

As mentioned above, the first visit to the Ghost Tour at Mayday Hills inspired a sense of dramatic potential in the derelict and disused spaces in the grounds and buildings of the old hospital. Visitors undertaking the Tour were encouraged to take pictures and so, on a return visit as part of a second “tour,” the main focus of the researcher’s participation was a series of digital photographs. The Ghost Tour guide told horror stories of the flimsy reasons that some people were incarcerated, particularly women. Some of these stories turned out to be true—for example, one story was that women could be placed in an institution by their husbands if they disagreed with them or if they became difficult. McCandless, describing the history of women patients in an American asylum (around the time Mayday Hills was being established) says of the time:

Women came to predominate as patients in asylums run by male alienists, who explained women’s insanity as a function of their reproductive systems and viewed deviation from normal female roles as both symptom and cause of madness (1999, 545).

We also heard from our participants that in more recent times many female patients were in Mayday Hills because they suffered from post-natal depression (Doug Craig, pers. comm. 2014).

Therefore, when an invitation was received to participate in an exhibition entitled *Women and Pain*, two photographs were submitted and sent to Croatia:



Figure 1: Beechworth Ghosts I
Source: Munday 2010



Figure 2: Beechworth Ghosts II
Source: Munday 2010

The research group has maintained a strong interest in the situation of women patients at Mayday Hills and the female workers at the institution; particularly since one of the current researchers based her doctoral study on maternal “insanity” in the state of Victoria, Australia, in the mid-1900’s (Watts 2016). Ellingson confirms the use of photography in the crystallization methodology, along with other genres “that detail the experiences of marginalized voices obscured by powerful others” (2009, 38). Using photography in research can “expand the field of data collection and analysis...[and] makes room for those creative leaps in thinking” (Shagoury 2011, 298). Even though the internet abounds with images of women historically photographed within mental institutions, the Beechworth Ghosts photographs attempted to communicate the coldness and emptiness of a life lived within asylum walls. Weber describes this type of photograph as having “connotative meaning” in research where “social conventions, codes, and meanings have been attached to or associated...in a particular context (2012, 45). The audiences for the photographs see stark black and white images—having them included in an exhibition for *Women and Pain*, or together with artefacts and stories from a former mental asylum—leads to imagining the life of someone caught in such a dehumanizing environment.

HaHa Wall; and Devil Grin (2015)

A great proportion of the data being collected for the research project was in the form of interviews with those with living memories of living or working at Mayday Hills. The researchers often visited the site of the former hospital. The gardens were a crucial aspect of the sense of asylum, specifically planned from its beginning. In the 1950s, a forward-thinking superintendent implemented the “Open Door” policy, which allowed mental patients greater freedom to integrate with their local community beyond the asylum walls, and likewise, made the grounds available to the community for recreation. The trees on the property are now classified by the National Trust and community members are still welcome to wander through the sweeping gardens.



Figure 3: HaHa Wall, Mayday Hills, Digital Print on Silk
 Source: Munday 2015

The landscape photograph above, with a small remaining section of the HaHa Wall, shows why townsfolk and patients alike could find some peace amongst the beautiful trees. The HaHa Wall, short for “Half up, Half Down,” was a type of wall specifically built around asylums. Prior to the Open Door policy at Mayday Hills the wall circled the buildings and gave the appearance of beautifully fitting in with the surrounding gardens. On the asylum side of the wall was a very deep trench, built so that patients could not escape (Jokiranta 2015). To the researchers, the Haha Wall represented the segregation from “normal” society of those afflicted with mental illness or disability, whilst appearing to passers-by as being “normal” surroundings.

When showing the photograph to participants they would talk about their connection to the grounds and the sense of place they felt when being in the gardens. The commissioned artist for the *Up Top* exhibition was so impressed by the grounds and trees she took many walks through the property and included the images of trees in her final work. One participant recalled her earliest memories of Mayday Hills, walking through the grounds with her mother:

Everything was big, I remember, like really big trees and big tall buildings. And I remember this big stone wall. But the part that stands out the most for me was the feeling that I had going there, it was like going to another country or another place where—I couldn’t articulate why at the time...I remember the patients being outside, like sitting under trees and reading, or just sitting with the staff and them just acting in ways that I clearly realized were not something that I was used to seeing. (Jessamy Davies, former employee of George Kerferd Hotel, personal communication).

Sense of place and place attachment research is a growing area of investigation, particularly in architectural design and environmental psychology. Place attachment is described by Raymond, Kyttä and Stedman as “the emotional bonds between an individual and a geographic locale, or how strongly a person is connected to a place” (2017, 2). Several participants in the study reported that patients who had been moved to other community facilities after the disestablishment of the institution persistently revisited the Mayday Hills grounds because the “place” held such a strong connection.

Although the gardens are still meticulously maintained, several of the buildings have fallen into dereliction and the current owner of the entire property is slowly persuading private businesses to renovate and re-purpose various sections. Several of the derelict buildings were used as the movie set for an Australian comedy horror film. The researchers were able to tour the buildings with the movie directors while they were checking the buildings for suitability. This enabled the researchers to collect more data in the form of photographs of the site and buildings.

In 2015 Murray Arts, the regional arts advocacy body for the Murray-Goulburn region, called for small works to be part of a travelling exhibition entitled *Cargo—Art in Transit*. A photograph and poetry on paper, accompanied by a soundscape, were included in the exhibition.



Figure 4: Devil Grin, Photograph and Poetry on Paper, with Soundscape,
Source: Munday 2015

Who came here to make the
devil grin?
Huddling in the darkness to
give form to fears
Will you share the fear?
A face emerging from a larger
blackness

Did you think there was
company in the darkness?
That your black paint-can
would outline it's fellow?
The walls hold memories not
ghosts
And tiredness of wear and
emptiness

If I watch the face, I won't
look into the black corner
I won't think of souls who
have been here
A century of memories with no
faces
Nothing and blackness to tell
their story.

Since the Ghost Tours were the most public event occurring at the disestablished site during the early years of the research project, the researchers expected to hear many ghost stories from participants. This turned out to not be the case, although many participants have talked about the “feelings” they had when visiting certain places on the grounds and buildings. The soundscape that is part of the Devil Grin work has layered polyphonic phrases and bass line, using the voice of one participant that did have a ghost story to tell. Lovelace and Huff remind us that “ghost stories and historical memory provide important means of articulating forms of marginalization that otherwise go unspoken (2012, 154).” Indeed, the 2005 report from the Mental Health Council of Australia used as part of their title, the quote “they are in the community living like ghosts—they are dying alone,” to emphasize the social isolation and discrimination towards those living with mental illness (2005, 372). Ellingson confirms the combination of media for these purposes: “Although not exclusive to crystallization, a benefit of this approach is that it enables authors to combine poetry, conversation, photographs, stories, and other genres that detail the experiences of marginalized voices obscured by powerful others” (2009, 38).

Many participants referred to the Ghost Tours with derision, claiming that what they tell their audiences “is a lot of rot that’s not right... when they’re trying to sell it” (Colin Cairnes, Film maker, Personal communication, Beechworth, February 2015). One of the researchers in the group is very interested in the popularity of the ghost tours in the light of the growing interest generally worldwide in “dark tourism,” and has interviewed the owner of the Asylum Tours at Mayday Hills with a view to understanding the sensationalizing of history, particularly in relation

to the history of this particular former asylum. The derision toward the business by the research participants is described by what Dale and Robinson term a form of “the Disneyization and McDonaldization of dark tourism attractions... grow[ing] out of the morbid curiosity for death and disasters” (2011, 205).

Postcards from the Asylum: Mad Washing and Snippets of Ethnotheatre (2016)

Van der Vaart, Van Hoven, and Huigen note that discussion about arts-based research would be interesting and helpful to contemporary researchers (2018). Hodgins and Boydell agree that the audience response should not be about the aesthetics of the art, rather more about the value of the work to the topic or theme (2014). Three new works were created specifically for the exhibition derived from the data collection. The first was a series of collaged postcards. Postcards had featured prominently in the collection of images the researchers found from the early days of the asylum. Mayday Hills is not alone as an asylum with picture postcards showing the administration building as if a picturesque “holiday” destination. Worldwide, where these large ornate buildings were being erected in the mid to late nineteenth century, postcards showing buildings and grounds were popular (Bogdan and Marshall 1997). Well-dressed men and women were posed, and in several examples of Mayday Hills, the staff was arranged in front of the building.

In response to these early postcards and contemporary popular trends in collaging, the arts researcher created six collaged works using images and materials from old magazines, books, maps, and art paper. The works were created quickly in one afternoon choosing images linked to thoughts about what was being learned from participants and the research data. The original postcards were a part of the exhibition, and multiple sets of postcards were printed and given to the attendees as gifts, much in the same way postcards are available at contemporary art and museum events.



Figure 5: Postcards From The Asylum, Collaged Postcards
Source: Munday 2016

Ellingson provides strategies for creative work and for improving writing through the possible narrative of creative and performing arts. In discussing genres, she encourages exploiting the advantage of various art forms. “One of the strengths of crystallization centers on the capacity to invoke multiple genres so that each piece fits its function with its ideal form...Photos freeze moments, and collages offer melding of textures” (2009, 163–164). Ellingson goes on to remind us that we cannot tell the whole story of a topic or even the majority of it in any one genre, but that we can provide “condensations” of experiences (2009, 163). Gerstenblatt emphasizes that collage works “move beyond the traditional research outcome of publication in a journal participants may never read, to sharing the results of the inquiry” (2013, 12), which has been the outcome for the Postcards—sets of the printed postcards have been shared and distributed at several presentations in addition to the exhibition.

The seed for the creative work *Mad Washing*, the final creative work to be discussed, came from the researcher searching online databases of Australian museums who owned historic artefacts from Mayday Hills. The Melbourne Museum listed a pillowcase from around 1900, described as cream cotton with a blue stripe. At the time, there was no image of the object online, but fortunately, after an enquiry, the museum staff took snapshots of the object with their smartphone and emailed them. Such specific details about the minutiae of daily experience had not been discussed with participants, but asking about pillowcases, bedding, and other aspects of laundry, resulted in learning about the mattress ticking used for patient and employee sheets and pillowcases - “blue and white for the patients, pink and white for the staff” (Val Craig, former employee of Mayday Hills, personal communication, Beechworth, December 2015). The bedding was made onsite by the female patients who worked in a sewing room—sewing being one of the dominant forms of occupational therapy for women at the hospital.

Figure 6 shows the work *Mad Washing* as it was exhibited, the Museum artifact pillowcase was also borrowed for the exhibition event. The *Mad Washing* work itself consisted of photographs from the research data collection printed onto homemade pillowcases along with poetry inspired by the interview data, in a similar manner to the earlier work, *Devil Grin*.² The presentation of the museum artefact and *Mad Washing* occurs in the first four minutes of the YouTube video.



Figure 6: *Mad Washing*: Homemade Pillowcases, Digital Prints, Poetry
 Source: Munday 2016

² A virtual walk around the exhibition, including a look at the museum artefact and *Mad Washing* can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/ZKQ7yO25id4>.

The discussion about laundry and other routines at the asylum led the researchers to explore more of the changes observed by long-standing employees of the institution. One participant told us, “In 1969, I was young, very young, and I started in the laundry actually, because nursing—you couldn’t start until you were 18. I was 17. So, they started me in there and then they changed the entrance age to do your training to 17 and a half” (Colleen Sinclair, former employee of Mayday Hills, personal communication, Beechworth, August 2019). The memories of experiences from this participant melded with other participants’ memories will enable the researchers to expand their current research to question and explain changes in nursing and mental health within institutions like Mayday Hills over the past fifty years. The poems and images on the works were, again, provoked by what was being heard from participants in the data collection—one of the poems was read aloud to conclude a session entitled “Mad Writing” in a writers’ festival held in the museum during the exhibition dates where authors discussed the topic of mental health in fiction and non-fiction writing (Write Around the Murray writers festival, September 13–17, 2016).

Ellingson, in encouraging crystallization-driven research across the aforementioned continuum, reminds us to:

Delve into the history of laws, regulations, and systems of categories that reinforce difference to show how, when, why, and by whom they were socially constructed. Emphasize that existing arrangements are neither natural nor inevitable, but the consequence of specific events and decisions that privilege some at the expense of others. (2009, 171)

Some participants in the research who were former employees of the institution lament some of the practices they needed to implement but acknowledge that as “good people” they were trying to do the best they could in a rigid system that was chronically understaffed. By using the images and responding through poetry the researcher is trying to “explore, appraise and utilize what is in between...the dichotomy of polarizing views” (Stewart, Gapp, and Harwood 2017, 5). The research team sees the Mad Washing work as having potential for future community engagement in a similar way to Christina Henri’s *Roses from the Heart* project where embroidered bonnets were created to commemorate convict women transported to Australia from Great Britain in the 1800s for crimes of poverty (Artscape 2010).

One of the early aims of the research group was the creation of one or more pieces of ethnotheatre as vehicles of communication, particularly since the dramatic potential of the site and history of Mayday Hills had been the initiating force for beginning the research. Leavy explains that “in ethnodrama the dialogue or monologue may be extracted directly from the raw data (e.g., an excerpt from an interview transcript), or the text may be constructed by the researcher during the interpretive process (2009). Regardless that there has been little discussion of ghosts from the research participants to date, that topic seemed a popular link that attendees to the opening of the exhibition would be able to make with the broad topic of Mayday Hills, so an ethnodramatic monologue using the pseudonym *Jasmine* was presented as part of the program.

I never worked out whether it was true or not, but apparently there was an underground area in the building behind the Bijou that was used for shackling the patients. And I can only imagine that being underground there was no light and it was a lot like a dungeon, so I guess there’s a strong area of fascination...

It is a scary place and I don’t think you can go there and not feel that...

There were places where I didn’t want to look. (Excerpt from *Jasmine*, monologue, 2014)

Ellingson describes the possibilities of multi-genre texts as “dendritic crystallization” and she encourages researchers to “adapt to your audiences and...reach lay audiences in the hope of engaging in productive dialogue and activism” (2009, 128). More characters have arisen from the research data with dramatic potential, and the group believes a longer work created by a commissioned playwright will facilitate more discussion around mental health in the community.

Summary

The research team grappled with the number of possibilities, links, and keenness of participants to tell stories, and who wanted to refer us to others who also wanted to talk of the changes in processes and the manner of dealing with those with mental illnesses over the lifetime of the institution that was Mayday Hills. We understand that there are many stories still to be told—some grim, some showing lack of compassion as treatments were still evolving. The main message we hear back from the community when we exhibit or find ways to tell the stories is “don’t stop,” “We want to hear more,” “They were our mothers, fathers, cousins, sisters...who were incarcerated...or who worked there...felt helpless...” These are important stories to be heard again and again, so we can work more positively in future for those with mental health problems.

The LibraryMuseum took a general visitor count over the period of the *Up Top* exhibition and noted that there were “15,000 visitors over the exhibition period... with many visitors coming specifically to see the exhibition and provided opportunities for visitors to record and/or contact the researchers with their own stories and memories” (Carina Clement, Team Leader Libraries and Museum, Albury LibraryMuseum, personal communication, February 2017). It is sometimes difficult to explain art or artmaking and why or how works are produced. Calver’s explanation is close to the purpose of the arts in the Mayday Hills project: “My process aimed to be both analogous and different enough with and from these things to add something useful and unexpected to the research, to contribute to its richness” (2012, 55). The works created by the arts-based researcher and shown in this article have changed in style and technique over the years but always with the words of participants “ringing in the ears,” along with images of artifacts and photographs “floating in the mind.”

The artworks in the *Up Top* exhibition have given members of the community something to refer to when thinking about the presence of Mayday Hills. The following responses were written voluntarily and anonymously regarding memories of the former asylum after viewing the artworks presented in this article at a recent presentation by the arts researcher:

Very “EMOTIONAL place,” one can feel the suffering. The Ghost Tours I feel show little respect for those who were placed for large periods of their lives. Most unethical, reducing their lives and suffering to ghoulish money making.

I love to take my bus groups to the Asylum and to relate some of the personal stories as well as connecting with the amazing architecture. I see the asylum as two entities—the buildings and grounds and the patients and their stories.

Where do you start? Or stop? In the 60’s—patients at church every Sunday morn, one of whom used to rock his whole body as he prayed. He had been a sailor and knew how to tie every knot known. And Dawn the ballet dancer stood beside him praying devoutly...Playing tennis with the patients on the courts on the grounds many many weekends...The “west wing” sends shivers up my spine. I will not go on a ghost tour.

I have been to weddings, funerals, concerts and love the outer area of Mayday Hills. I question who claimed these people as MAD. I would never go on a ghost tour.

Mayday gardens and buildings are beautiful but being inside gives me a feeling of great sadness and despair. The hopelessness of being incarcerated seems to ooze from the brickwork.

The overarching thought is about the very long time a lot of patients spent in “hospital” and the sense of lives wasted. (2019)

Knowing that publication through exhibition would be an outcome of the data collection and research findings, the intention to translate ideas into creative works has become a strong focus of the group’s research.

Conclusion

Publication through exhibition has been a fruitful and positive outcome of the data collection and research findings of this research project. The research work continues, and the curators at the Albury LibraryMuseum are keen to show more progressive artmaking and artefacts from the research as it proceeds, so exhibition is firmly in the future among expected forms of publication. As a result of showing the artworks, community members have very thoughtfully shared their feelings of the former mental hospital both as an historic institution and an area of space that continues in their present as having a sense of “asylum.” The more memories the researchers collect, the more they learn concerning the struggles of both patients and staff—the patients as real people who lived lives derived from sometimes tragic circumstances and the staff as employees trying to make the best of working with large numbers of patients and dealing with the mechanisms imposed by working within such an institution.

The responses of participants in the research and community members who have viewed and thought about the works have been fascinating for the researchers. Allowing those with memories to give voice has also provided the researchers with the opportunity to be empathetic and commit to continuing the work in all its facets. This relates, quite lucidly, to this final quote describing the arts-based research of Gadow:

Gadow emphasizes the importance of interpretive work as exposing *multiplicity*, rather than *unity* of meaning... She stresses the value of emotion, empathy, conversation, literary allusion and other humane approaches to methodology, which attend to what Gadow views as additional voices that have the potential to provide insight and meaning into a given phenomenon (Humphries 2012, 144).

This sense of multiplicity of meaning drives the research group to continue hearing as many stories as those who are willing to tell, and to seek new pathways to respond to the histories of all the communities connected with the institution that was Mayday Hills.

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