

Art Therapy and Studio

Cultivating self-expression and exploration through the creative process

Art can touch our lives, our fears, our dreams. Art is a form of action, capable of influencing change. It ties us together as a human race. Through experimentation, spontaneity and play, it can help us find ourselves and, at the same time, connect with others.

The Art Studio at Dr. Peter Centre West End is a therapeutic approach to wellness and self-expression for people living with HIV/AIDS, addiction, mental illness and other life disadvantages. It is an open and creative space providing our participants and residents with an avenue for transformation and greater self-care.

Spontaneous art expression in a safe, nurturing non-judgmental atmosphere allows people to freely articulate repressed thoughts, feelings and memories without the threat of repercussion. Our clients and art therapist explore issues that have surfaced and deal with a variety of needs through self-directed art projects that can include painting, drawing, fabric art, quilting, small sculpting projects, papier-mâché, beading, sewing, pottery and more.

Art activities are useful tools for healing and can:

- reduce client pain, anxiety and social isolation;
- improve stress management;
- enhance feelings of control, confidence and empowerment;
- stimulate functional, physical and memory abilities;
- generate life and hope affirming impulses that may help move people toward the will to survive or beyond to a different way of aliveness.

“It is always rewarding when someone comes to the Art Studio for the first time or does something they have never tried before. One man painted his first canvas with acrylics and is proud to see it on the wall. There is no shortage of creativity and talent amongst the participants. I was impressed by one resident who comes down in his wheelchair, has very little use of one hand but still persists with difficult projects and does as much of it as he possibly can without help.”

- Caroline Embling, Art Studio Programmer,
Dr. Peter Centre West End

Given the organic nature of the materials, as well as the imaginative process, art therapy also encourages creativity.

Artist-to-Artist, Heart-to-Heart

Our Art Studio is home to the exchange of many inspiring ideas. Caroline Embling, Art Studio Programmer at Dr. Peter Centre West End, says she is often touched by participants initiating projects to help them meet their own needs. “One man is currently making a comforting blanket – what a great way to do self care.”

Many participants generously share their time and skills to teach other participants, and enjoy making things for other people. One client has organized and presented workshops on three different types of leatherwork; another spent three days helping put tiles on the wall.



Each individual determines which programs to engage in, how often and for how long. This is especially important for people who do not have options or choices in daily life due to life circumstances.

Recreation therapists and volunteers work with individuals at their own pace. Projects are often assisted by volunteers and by students completing education-based work placements. The benefits of the arts are further supported by interdisciplinary treatment planning, client evaluation and follow-up with counselling, nursing and recreation therapy staff.

The Art Studio is a dynamic place that serves our clients five days per week. There are approximately 1,300 participant/resident visits to the art studio each year. Volunteers donate more than 300 hours annually to support participants in the studio.

Supporting a Civil Society

At the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation, we're helping to rebuild lives shattered by HIV/AIDS, addiction, mental illness, poverty and discrimination because of gender and sexual orientation. The innovative, comprehensive model of care at Dr. Peter Centre West End is improving people's health, helping people find strength in the face of an incurable illness, and inspiring health care providers around the world.

The ***Art Therapy and Studio Program*** provides an important component of care for the people we serve. Each year we require support from our community of caring donors for this initiative.

We hope you will share the vision and join the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation in making a tangible and lasting contribution to improve the health and lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

For more information on supporting the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation and its Art Therapy and Studio Program, please contact:

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