

**Title of Session:** ArtsSites - Arts for Healing

**Moderator:** BJ Berquist

**Guest Speaker:** Adrienne Fritze

**Title of File:** 20041007artssitesarthealing

**Date:** October 7, 2004

Room: After School Online Room

**BJ:** while we wait a couple minutes to see if anyone else will join us, let's do introductions.

**AdrienneF:** k

**BJ:** I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

**CarrieSt:** I am an elementary art teacher in Texas.

**AdrienneF:** I'm an artist and ontological coach - and I do my work in many places of the world....prisons, schools, community centers, here and in England...

**BJ:** great to have you with us, Carrie. I think you may get some wonderful ideas from Adrienne!

**AdrienneF:** let me know when you'd like to start...

**BJ:** Adrienne, I've finally started my own box project...

**AdrienneF:** woohoo!

**AdrienneF:** tell us a little bit about it...

**BJ:** so I'm anxious to talk to you about it, but how about if you explain what you do so Carrie can understand the concept

**AdrienneF:** Carrie, I began an arts-based project about 4.5 years ago

**AdrienneF:** which I call "Empty & Meaningless: the Box Project"

**AdrienneF:** the project is a combination of ontological inquiry, the study of BEING human

**AdrienneF:** and using collage to explore oneself and our relationship to the world

**BJ** wonders if Carrie knows what ontological is?

**AdrienneF:** ontology is the study of the "beingness" of human

**BJ** . o O ( I keep thinking it's something to do with cancer, but that's oncology )

**CarrieSt:** thanks for the explanation I had no idea

**AdrienneF:** to get access to our being we look at things like our attitudes, opinions and judgments about ourselves, our relationships and the world

**AdrienneF:** I've come to think of ontology as the "spiritual" component of life....not religious per se...rather the essence of our beliefs

**AdrienneF:** so in E&M (the Box Project) we look at the ontology of a relationship

**AdrienneF:** first through verbal exploration...

**AdrienneF:** drawn against a background of a topic

**AdrienneF:** say something like addictions

**AdrienneF:** we choose a relationship that is, for us, an important one related to the topic

**AdrienneF:** then we begin the inquiry...

**AdrienneF:** asking questions about our attitudes about the person and ourselves

**BJ** . o O ( an elementary topic could be 'family' or 'neighborhood', Carrie )

**AdrienneF:** then we dig deeper and discover what those things we say really mean to us

**AdrienneF:** what are the stories we tell ourselves, and project to the world that create our experience of the world

**AdrienneF:** then we look at how that story affects us

**AdrienneF:** and the person we've chosen for this exercise

**BJ:** how long does this part of the process take, Adrienne?

**AdrienneF:** then the impact on family

**AdrienneF:** about 1 to 1.5 hours

**AdrienneF:** I like it around the 1 hour mark

**AdrienneF:** just scratching the surface it would seem....

**BJ:** and how many are typically in a group?

**AdrienneF:** anywhere from 6 to 80

**BJ** agrees that you would be just scratching the surface

**AdrienneF:** the whole idea behind the conversation

**AdrienneF:** is to get folks armed up to the topic

**AdrienneF:** and to begin digging into their own powerful stories

**AdrienneF:** then we begin the art

**AdrienneF:** and THAT's where the real work happens

**AdrienneF:** the instructions are simple

**AdrienneF:** the canvas is a box

**AdrienneF:** an empty box

**AdrienneF:** nothing ever goes inside the box

**AdrienneF:** as it represents the infinite power of creation inside ourselves

**AdrienneF:** regardless of the stories we tell on the surface

**AdrienneF:** on the outside of the box

**AdrienneF:** the workshop participants are to decorate one side of the box with images representing what the participant says doesn't work in the relationship

**AdrienneF:** on one other side they are to use images to explore their "dream" of the relationship

**AdrienneF:** the way they really long for it to be

**AdrienneF:** the other four sides are left up to them

**AdrienneF:** and may represent any expression that occurs to them

**AdrienneF:** that part of the process can take 2 hours or 2 weeks

**AdrienneF:** it just depends on the design of a given workshop

**AdrienneF:** at the end of the art inquiry

**AdrienneF:** I then ask the group to share the stories of their boxes

**AdrienneF:** it's voluntary

**AdrienneF:** and there's always a lot of folks who will share

**AdrienneF:** sometimes the whole room will share

**AdrienneF:** what happens then is magical

**AdrienneF:** the participants go from being alone in their query

**AdrienneF:** alone in their thoughts and storytelling

**AdrienneF:** and emerge as a new culture

**AdrienneF:** a group

**AdrienneF:** seeing the power their stories hold for them

**AdrienneF:** both the debilitating ones we tell that keep us separate

**AdrienneF:** and those we create that call us into a powerful, related community

**AdrienneF:** I think that's it in a nutshell

**AdrienneF:** make sense? do you have questions?

**CarrieSte:** so would this be something that could be done in a family art night

**AdrienneF:** oh yes

**AdrienneF:** I've used this basic concept for pre-wedding parties, small mothers-to-be groups that want to transform their relationship with their mothers so they can be an empowering source for their children

**BJ:** where do you get your boxes?

**AdrienneF:** In Portland OR where I live there are several box manufacturers and distributors

**AdrienneF:** so I'm lucky to get donations from a variety of folks

**BJ:** cool.

**AdrienneF:** you can also buy them at fancy packaging stores

**AdrienneF:** here's something ironic

**AdrienneF:** I now have an art studio

**BJ:** o O ( I just ordered a bunch from a package company in CA )

**AdrienneF:** that is owned by

**AdrienneF:** a carton company!!!!

**BJ:** smiles...very cool!

**AdrienneF:** it's funny

**AdrienneF:** appropriate too

**AdrienneF:** LOL

**BJ:** ok...here's my version...

**AdrienneF:** Here are a couple of hints re: your participants

**AdrienneF:** go ahead

**BJ:** can use the hints

**AdrienneF:** you first and then I'll share hints

**BJ:** I've been using bits and pieces of this project for a number of years

**BJ:** all connected with cultural identity and communication

**BJ:** I've had my students design symbols that represent their cultural identity

**BJ:** o O ( that was the foundation for the hats off to peace project )

**BJ:** and I've used the idea that education is the foundation for communication...if you can teach people about who you are and what is important to you...

**BJ:** then they will not be fearful of differences

**AdrienneF:** so true....

**BJ:** I've been trying to figure out how to tie all this together in simple project...

**BJ:** I had a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson that a kid did for a poster assignment...and it all clicked

**BJ:** What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.

**BJ:** the students discuss and define communication

**BJ:** then we work on Cultural Identity...what makes each person what they are...family, heritage, religion, interests, etc.

**BJ:** and finally, we take a look at symbols...what they are and how they represent an idea of an interest: ie they communicate information

**BJ:** I have the students design four symbols. On one side of the box they put a copy of the Emerson quote

**BJ:** on one side they put their digital photo

**BJ:** and on the remaining sides they put their symbols

**BJ:** I explain that we leave the box empty because...

**BJ:** as they mature and grow, their symbols will change...their values will change

**BJ:** so we need to leave room to put the things that 'lie within us.'

**BJ . o O ( the end )**

**AdrienneF:** very, very cool

**AdrienneF:** can I come to class?

**AdrienneF:**

**BJ** grins. I wish you would!

**BJ:** the hardest part of the project...

**MattGst4** joined the room.

**BJ:** is having the kids come up with symbols for their cultural identity

**BJ:** hi, Matt. Welcome

**BJ:** I have a nice selection of books of signs and symbols and cultural artwork

**AdrienneF:** symbols are an interesting art form....

**BJ:** I was going to spoon feed them a specific selection for each identifier..

**AdrienneF:** I've developed a new workshop series for the high schools here

**BJ:** but then I figured they needed the experience in researching and thinking

**MattGst4:** Hi - Thanks. I was reading about Tapped in in an article for a class I'm taking. It's pretty cool here! Just been looking around...

**BJ** listens

**BJ:** great, Matt.

**BJ:** Adrienne is the speaker for the ArtsSites event that was scheduled on the calendar for tonight

**AdrienneF:** Hiya Matt!

**BJ:** are you a teacher, Matt?

**MattGst4:** Hi there Adrienne

**BJ** would like to hear about the high school project Adrienne is working on

**MattGst4:** I am. Tech Ed at a Mass Middle School

**AdrienneF:** yes, the project is called "Anything But Ordinary"

**AdrienneF:** cool - this is an awesome way of using technology

**AdrienneF:** the workshop is 8 weeks - one day a week

**BJ:** cool, Matt. One thing I'd recommend is that you get a free membership to Tapped In. That way you'll get a transcript emailed to you when you log out

**AdrienneF:** and looks at symbolism from the storytellers toolbox

**BJ:** 8 weeks is a long time!

**AdrienneF:** it is....

**BJ:** one hour a week?

**MattGst4:** Absolutely. I think I'll create a permanent profile soon.

**AdrienneF:** and it's just the first of two

**AdrienneF:** the second series is 12 weeks

**AdrienneF:** in the first 8 weeks we look at archetypes

**MattGst4:** Nice to meet you two. Have to go. Take care!

**BJ** waves bye to Matt

**AdrienneF**: cya Matt!!!!

**BJ**: give me an example of archetypes

**MattGst4** left the room.

**BJ** . o O ( please )

**AdrienneF**: So it's the archetypes that become our symbols...

**AdrienneF**: we focus on three archetypes...

**AdrienneF**: Hero, Mentor and Threshold Guardian

**AdrienneF**: To learn about them we have the students use a workbook I developed

**AdrienneF**: in it they explore the notion of themselves as hero

**AdrienneF**: foibles and all

**AdrienneF**: we also look at their views of what a hero is

**AdrienneF**: and who a hero is

**BJ**: wow...is this workshop offered as part of their regular art course?

**AdrienneF**: and how one relates to heroes

**AdrienneF**: no, it's an afterschool series

**AdrienneF**: part of a new program

**BJ** nods. Fantastic!

**AdrienneF**: it's cool

**AdrienneF**: I use the Box Project

**BJ** . o O ( sorry to interrupt )

**AdrienneF**: no prob

**AdrienneF**: I use the Box Project to explore relationships between hero and mentor

**AdrienneF**: and Hero and Threshold Guardian

**BJ**: what is threshold guardian?

**AdrienneF**: a threshold guardian is someone or something that represents a barrier in the growth of the Hero

**AdrienneF**: sometimes the TG is the negative speak in the Hero's head

**BJ**: hmmm. Interesting

**AdrienneF**: or a Parent, Sibling, etc

**AdrienneF**: or

**AdrienneF**: it could be something like a disability

**AdrienneF**: or a cultural taboo

**AdrienneF**: but it always serves one purpose

**AdrienneF**: to challenge the Hero on her path to maturity....

**BJ** nods

**AdrienneF**: so this first 8 weeks is devoted to these three - and we briefly look at 5 other archetypes...

**AdrienneF**: I used a book called "The Writer's Journey" to map the outline of the workshop progression

**BJ** thinks Adrienne should join the WriteTalk group that meets in Tapped In

**AdrienneF**: and my experience of the Box Project and the work I did in consumer research to open up the exploration of self as Hero

**AdrienneF**: WriteTalk?

**BJ**: it's a group that discusses writing ...personal and writing across the curriculum

**BJ**: it's led by Sandy Shattuck and is a part of the National Writing Project

**AdrienneF:** aaahhh....well, all my work combines visual art and writing.....and when I can find a theatrical partner - drama

**AdrienneF:** interesting...

**AdrienneF:** I didn't tell you yet....out of all this work I've done with folks....

**AdrienneF:** I have been inspired to return to school....

**BJ** smiles. Good for you!

**AdrienneF:** so next fall I go back to study art.....

**AdrienneF:** LOL

**AdrienneF:** It's the most traditional thing I've ever done

**BJ:** then you'll really be busy!

**AdrienneF:** Well, it's an old dream

**AdrienneF:** and my job is to have others take their stories, re-create them to inspire them into living a life they love...

**AdrienneF:** so I thought I should walk the talk

**BJ:** it's a wonderful dream...and is what keeps your creativity flowing

**AdrienneF:** Dreams are important

**AdrienneF:** it's what has the inmates and challenged kids I work with go way beyond what they believes were their boundaries

**BJ:** what kind of art classes will you be taking?

**AdrienneF:** well, my first year is color, form, and different kinds of labs

**AdrienneF:** drawing, sculpture, printmaking

**AdrienneF:** a bit of everything

**AdrienneF:** then I begin my major field of study

**AdrienneF:** which is multidisciplined

**BJ:** will this be for a degree?

**AdrienneF:** yes

**AdrienneF:** Right now I believe I'll be continuing down the path of installation work

**AdrienneF:** I love creating and building installations

**AdrienneF:** but

**BJ:** will we have to call you Dr. Adrienne?

**AdrienneF:** I want the discipline of the formal arts

**AdrienneF:** It's so odd starting over

**AdrienneF:** but

**AdrienneF:** it is a direct result of the healing I've done

**AdrienneF:** through the use of the arts

**BJ:** one of the results of participating in writetalk...

**BJ:** has been that I also am keeping a journal in class with the kids

**BJ:** and am working on my own symbols for my box

**AdrienneF:** most excellent

**AdrienneF:** perhaps you will scan them and I can see the work?

**AdrienneF:** It sounds fabulous.....

**BJ:** it has been amazing for us all...the kids see how much work I put into my art

**BJ:** and I am focusing a lot of energy into the ideas and the design

**AdrienneF:** there's lot of room for work like that in the world....

**BJ:** It has made me more relaxed and happy in the classroom

**AdrienneF:** that's a great side benefit!

**BJ:** dearheart, this dialogue has been wonderful. I've missed talking with you

**AdrienneF:** thank you sweet lady....

**BJ:** thank you for being here. I'm all inspired again.

**AdrienneF:** as am I

**AdrienneF:** thank you for inviting me....

**AdrienneF:** I am now off to the "Art of Surviving" show

**BJ:** we need to have more of these discussions...maybe I'll poke the arts in corrections group and see if anyone is interested in meeting regularly

**BJ:** ahhh, yes...your grand opening!

**AdrienneF:** that's a good idea

**AdrienneF:** cuz

**AdrienneF:** doing this stuff alone is....

**AdrienneF:** well

**AdrienneF:** lonely

**AdrienneF:** LOL

**BJ** agrees!

**AdrienneF:** okay my dear - I am off to be with the folks at the YWCA!

**BJ** lets Adrienne go to her meeting.

**BJ** hugs warmly

**AdrienneF:** Let me know when the next event is....

**AdrienneF:** Hugs back my friend

**BJ:** will do

**AdrienneF:** take care - and one day I do hope to be in your classroom

**AdrienneF:** more later.....