

## Eco-Artistic Therapeutic Effects and Tools in Medical Humanities

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Submitted : 2 Sept 2025 ; Published : 23 Sept 2025

**Citation:** Bandalo, V. (2025). Eco-Artistic Therapeutic Effects and Tools in Medical Humanities. *J Sur & Surgic Proce.*,3(3):1-4.

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** In tracing the proto-ecological aspects, the analyses will be made from various spheres of visibility, attuned to the symbology of nature connectable to the Anthropocene, in their interweaving with the literary realm, with the purpose of developing effective interpretative and practical artistic tools for the enhancement of resilience and mindfulness strategies to achieve wellness.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** The present paper offers completely original angles and an innovative approach, allowing for the highlight of the multidisciplinary connections in the light of modern ecology and literarily mediated visibility, consisting of sets of techniques and an array of methodologies of intersectional nature, adaptable to the field of psychosomatic medicine in clinical settings.

**Results :** Of particular interest is the regulation of psychological mechanisms applicable in narrative medicine based on the categories related to the idea of consciousness, as explorations of imaginative and unconscious components innately present in artistic creations, presenting themselves also through concepts of preverbal or non-verbal memories as belonging to natural wholeness, and producing entwinements between one's instinctual selfness and social markers. Analyzed are the relational, cognitive, and affective aspects that lead to the development of hermeneutical skills, which are relatable to autonomous creative acts.

**Conclusion :** This paper aims to research scientifically innovatively and in great detail unexplored psychoanalytical and ecocritical perspectives focused on canonical modern artworks having ecopoetic dimension as the main constituent, and referring to their literary expressions, thereby creating a significant increase in societal knowledge of both philosophical and empirical nature. This paper places attention on the observations of natural phenomena, as reflected in sublimated art and literary experiences. It highlights the aesthetic purposefulness with its positive psychological effects, also in the reception of respective works, as being in tune with eco-interconnectedness. The paper elaborates on visual art pieces and graphically representable literary works resulting from or inducing further reflective writing.

**Keywords:** Bio-Art Therapy, Brain Science, Conceptual Tools, Expressive Writing, Narrativity, Psychosomatic Medicine, Visual Realm.

**Introduction**

This paper presents a novel approach by framing aspects of natural philosophy and reconnecting them to the concept of internal ecology (Ley, 2008), illustrated on the examples of various forms of visual artistic expression and envisaged as an intermedial comparison with literary creativity, especially in the modern period, through the framework of comparative psychology. By engaging with artistic fields, particularly in the domain of fine arts, and incorporating insights from both natural and social sciences, the paper evokes a multidisciplinary perspective.

In this paper, I will focus on showcasing how the outcomes of scientific psychology can be utilized in clinical practice for psychosomatic therapies (Dolce, 2010) by analyzing on chosen

examples premises of visual artistic expression and correlative thematization from the perspective of essayistic, reflexive and diaristic literature, especially in the modern period, as features of ecopoetic type, and as for potential somatizing effects (Jouanna, 2012). Intermedial comparisons will be conducted between visual artworks and writings referring to them or vice versa, interpreted from the ecocritical perspective as for inter-artistic and intertextual echoes, and giving it at the same time a medical orientation in a psychosomatic sense.

There are also considerations on ecopoetical content and ecopsychological ideas (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009) when applying literary patterns in the visual medium, such as artists' books and illustrations, while developing notable reflections on

psychosomatic medicine (Levenson, 2005). Further examples of literary eco-traces are directly present until the newest era, including digital exhibition spaces that promote science engagement and ecological awareness at the intersection of the humanities.

The scope of this paper, exhibiting simultaneously traits of the psychological and sociological approach to the field of environmental critical studies, is, therefore, to contribute to the development of the understanding of concepts of eco-consciousness and sustainable art in such a light, in relation to the ways of experiencing artistic pieces and literary oeuvres of modern visual artists reflecting therein on their canvases, with the tools such as observational, reading and interpretative strategies (Bodola & Isekenmeier, 2017). Such mindfulness-based techniques can enhance clinical practice in the immediate pre-operative and post-surgical stages, as will be showcased.

### Materials and Methods

As for a parallel environmentally sustainable literary vision, in conjunction with a medical perspective, which therefore considers both art historical and philological standpoints, it originates from the Romantic period, which marks the beginning of the modern era in a scientific sense. However, there were precursory signs of these developments since antiquity.

It's essential to note that, alongside the modernization of stylistic innovations in poetic typology and basic expressive techniques at that time, the ability to interpret from an ecologically focused psychological perspective became possible due to significant advancements in brain science. The increased knowledge about the brain as the organ of thought and mental processes has had a multidisciplinary impact on a wide array of natural and social sciences, as reflected in research literature and medical practice. This new understanding of the connection between the body and mind inspired numerous references in the fields of literature and fine arts. A more structured conceptualization of the natural self through artistic exercise is relevant to the modern era (Kusserow, 2021).

The paper explores the modern cultural and social environment of the Anthropocene through the lens of visual artworks and reflective essays. Simultaneously, it entails relevant neuroscientific methodologies to identify therapeutic moments that enhance brain health, improve mental well-being, and foster better self-regulation of psychic processes.

In analyzing artistically sublimated energy, I will refer to a set of artistic examples evoking eco-expressivity in their interdisciplinary intricacies (Atkins & Snyder, 2017), especially those that take the form of visual narrative or art-inspired mental pictures, to evidenciate relations to the medical field regarding processing somatic emotional memories and trauma healing, as well as in practicing attunement to how to achieve positive goal-oriented and action-related behavior. Methodologically, this paper presents applicable and uplifting results with clinical implications for enhancing psychological coping capacities through mindfulness.

This paper promotes neurocognitively based methods in trauma healing as a form of psychosomatic therapy, illustrating how scientific findings can be integrated into clinical practice as aspects of applied research, thereby ensuring the viability of outcomes. Visual art and related writings, interpreted in both environmental and medical contexts, are analyzed through literary materials, exhibition catalogs, museum elements, public collections, and digitized archive sources.

### Results

As noted by French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his work on nature, echoing Sigmund Freud's principles (Freud, 2012), natural philosophy can be understood as an all-encompassing term: "Nature is present wherever there is life that holds meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, 2003). Exemplarily, spiritualized aspects of nature's patterns, reflecting Romanticism, can already be found in certain essays and verses of American author Ralph Waldo Emerson. They have the savor of environmental tales, for his tendency to skillfully think ecologically. Emerson's remarks on paintings and sculptures contain an ecocritical potential. For instance, the descriptive features of nature possess a pictorial quality, which Emerson compares to art in his narrative. He expresses this concept in his text *Art from Essays*: "the eternal picture that nature paints." Among other influential texts is his essayistically structured narrative *The Naturalist and the Poet* (Emerson, 2017), published in 1836, that inspired many authors in the American literary canon, such as the poet Emily Dickinson.

Nature, one of the key inspirations in Emily Dickinson's literary works, is notably recalled in her poem "Mother Nature" and in the first quatrain of her iconic poem "This is my letter to the World." In these verses, she masterfully interprets the theme of nature. It reflects her life close to the countryside in her native Amherst, Western Massachusetts. It has subsequently inspired a series of visual artists who have imaginatively continued that ideal lineage of artistic thought as visual examples springing therefrom, as can be seen, for instance, in the piece of art titled *I think that the root of the wind is water*, an artist's book designed and produced by Susan Lowdermilk in Oregon based on the poem by Emily Dickinson touching on a topic of inherent interconnection of environmental elements as a "relevant reminder to honor and protect our environment" as expressed in 2016 (Lowdermilk, 2016). Emily Dickinson's lyric soliloquy characterizes a series of her poems on nature. Natural motifs are a constant in Dickinson's poetic oeuvre. Her fascination with herbarium is showcased in the collection titled *Poetry in Silver: The Language of Flowers in the Works of Emily Dickinson*, by artist and illustrator Kandy Vermeer Phillips, from the American Society of Botanical Artists, on display at The Emily Dickinson Museum in 2019.

The way we use language helps mold our perception of the world. Our experiences influence how we think, and engaging in eco-artistic activities can have a positive impact on our cognitive processes. We can use words to shape our experiences, and conversely, we can also use our experiences to rethink and reshape our understanding.

This analysis examines a diverse range of artworks to explore specific literary features within both structural and expressive contexts. The works include diaries and essays created by visual artists, aiming to investigate how artistic practices can assist in processing trauma. The paper proposes utilizing art and literary patterns to enhance coping strategies and organize perceptual experiences. This artistic visuality serves as a means to raise awareness and offer healing techniques.

## Discussion

In these artistic derivations, often explicitly considered of a diaristic type by the authors themselves, it can be observed, in fact, the episodic nature or compositional periodicity, as a distinctive feature of the diaristic genre, that is the procedural character in the way of representing the visual sequences, which then gives continuity, despite the pauses, creating the sensation of a narrative element, alongside improvisation, uniting the flow of particular signs, and in this way, the aesthetic transposition of the message takes place which also frequently involves a psychological effect.

In the visual oeuvre of Polish naturalized French artist Roman Opalka, the pictorial conceptualization develops around the idea of the diluted act in a chronological sense, and thus is linked to the notion of temporal organization. On the one hand, the inscription of the date on the canvas represents the daily chronicle and at the same time, the signal of the artistic activity, while in the other case, the cataloging of the progressive numbering as well as the conception of similar self-portraits over time gives these paintings the meaning of the symbolic panoptikum. Through Opalka's reflective diarism, the role of traumatism in the creation of artworks is also alluded to.

The figurative aspect, and also chromatic (coloristic, with the use of color spots) arises as the main expressive thread, for example, on a literal level, in the paintings of the Japanese artist On Kawara who in other paintings, interprets the landscape, according to Linda Weintraub (Weintraub, 2012), in pre-ecological light as an innovator within a conceptual art movement.

As mentioned, paintings of factually diaristic status also include those based on the coloring of planes, as, for example, in Maria Morganti's chromatic diaries, and cases when the diaristic framework is adapted to the photographic-cinematic subject matter dealt with or to installation and video art.

In this context, hybrid ecopetic diaristic books are common. Many texts exhibit features that relate to multiple categories, making it difficult to draw clear boundaries between them. For instance, an exquisitely literary notebook may include occasional intimate reflections or thoughts with a psychological focus, often infused with a deep appreciation for nature themes. Similarly, a personal diary can transform into a remarkable document of public life during a specific period, serving as a platform for the author to critique their own artistic work, reflect analytically on their creations, and theorize about their identity as a painter or writer. Moreover, no two diaries

share the same characteristics, and the purposes achieved by their authors vary each time. Each diary represents a unique combination of elements, resulting in original proportions that reflect the individual experiences of the writer.

## Conclusion

This paper establishes new insights that strengthen the interdisciplinary connections between the natural sciences and the humanities, particularly in areas related to medical topics that impact mental wellness and emotional health. Additionally, the paper provides context for cultural situations up to the present day, along with related non-literary phenomena. The paper includes a mention of paintings, drawings, and sketches that depict natural motifs, explored through an ecocritical lens and informed by medically grounded scientific perspectives.

On the other hand, regarding our most immediate contemporaneity, when it is of primary importance to protect biodiversity and ecosystems, fundamental intercultural healthcare planning is also aware of the ecological dimension (McGeeney, 2016). NASA defines biology in terms of the Darwinian perspective, which can be helpful when considering ecological questions that intertwine with medical thoughts: "life is a self-sustaining system capable of Darwinian evolution."

Being sentient can be viewed as equivalent to a natural state of awareness. This natural perceptiveness is related to the idea of internal ecology, which represents a holistic approach to achieving optimal health (Heginworth & Nash, 2019). In terms of conveying sensory information, artistic consciousness can serve as a pathway to access the unconscious or dreamlike states.

Hence, sensing through artistic exercise, as well as gratification coming therefrom, can help positive sensory messages to the brain and thus aid the self-view in raising awareness of one's internal states and evoking empathetic emotions, whether perceiving art experientially as creator or observer.

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