

Back of House/Under the House: Some Psychoanalytic Aspects of the Acquisition and Exhibition of Art by Survivors of the Holocaust

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ABSTRACT

The phrase “back of house” often refers to art gallery processes that are rarely seen by visitors. These include the processes of acquisition, cataloging, conservation, the development and production of exhibitions, and the planning of related public programs. This paper proposes that a psychoanalytic consideration of “back of house” art gallery processes can provide important insights into the nature of trauma that is manifested through creative efforts. It explores some of the psychoanalytic aspects of a unique project concerning the art by survivors of the Holocaust. It highlights transgenerational trauma and how a thoughtful process of acquisition and exhibition can facilitate the working through of a collectively painful experience in a traumatized community. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: Holocaust survivors, transgenerational trauma, art, creativity

INTRODUCTION

The Holocaust is one of the most significant events in modern history. The systematic killing of over six million Jewish people by the Nazis during World War II is perhaps the most documented and studied of all genocides. It is a universal benchmark of suffering and trauma for its survivors and subsequent generations. However, the interest of this project and this paper goes beyond the Holocaust. Studies of the Holocaust and its aftermath have a great deal to teach us about genocides, trauma and its transgenerational transmission. They can also teach us about the processes of recovery and healing, or, in some instances, the impossibility of it.

This paper explores some psychoanalytic aspects of a unique project carried out by the Cunningham Dax Collection in collaboration with the Jewish Holocaust Centre of Melbourne over a three-year period. The culmination of that project was the exhibition *Out of the Dark: The Emotional Legacy of the Holocaust*, held in October 2009.

The lessons learned while acquiring and exhibiting the artworks for *Out of the Dark* not only provide insights into the trauma experienced by survivors of the Holocaust, they also demonstrate how to work with other traumatized communities.

BACKGROUND

The Cunningham Dax Collection is one of the world's largest collection of artworks by people with experience of mental illness and trauma. Its 15,000 artworks comprise drawings, paintings, sculpture, textiles and multimedia amassed over the past 65 years. It is, however, more than an art collection or gallery. The Cunningham Dax Collection is dedicated to the promotion of greater understanding of mental illness and trauma through the art of those who have suffered from these conditions. It has an extensive education and outreach program and operates with a particular awareness of psychodynamic issues. It has a psychoanalyst in-residence, and its director is a psychiatrist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist.

Melbourne has one of the largest number of survivors of the Holocaust in the world per capita. The Jewish Holocaust Centre of Melbourne was established in 1984 and has grown into an active and internationally recognized institution dedicated to combating racism, hatred and prejudice by fostering tolerance and understanding in the Australian community. It has an extensive collection of materials related to the Holocaust, which includes original documents, photographs, textiles, craftwork, precious objects and memorabilia. It has a small impressive art collection but these works are not displayed as exhibitions.

In 2007, the Cunningham Dax Collection and the Jewish Holocaust Centre of Melbourne established the *Out of the Dark* steering committee. It included an art therapist who has worked with survivors of the Holocaust, the Curator of the Jewish Holocaust Centre and the authors of this paper. The steering committee met regularly to consider some of the psychological, ethical and cultural sensitivities that emerged during the project's three year course.

During the initial period, the steering committee sought to establish a sense of common purpose, understanding and trust. It agreed that the aim of the project was to collect about 200 artworks by survivors of the Holocaust in order to mount an educationally focused art exhibition that would promote greater awareness of the psychological dimensions of this traumatic event. The Cunningham Dax Collection took responsibility for exhibiting the artworks, hosting an educational public program, and public relations.

*Some Thoughts are the Beginning**Anxieties*

There have been many exhibitions about the Holocaust and most of these have displayed historical artifacts with a focus on the events that occurred. Much has been written about the Holocaust, but art exhibitions featuring artworks by survivors are relatively rare. A reason for this may be that art, when compared to text, is potentially more unsettling and threatening because it can invite viewers to respond at a non-verbal, developmentally more primitive level.

Furthermore, the viewing of historical artifacts tends to evoke an “about them/not me” response. Viewers, therefore, can safely remove themselves from experiencing the trauma of others. In viewing an artwork, particularly when it occurs in a gallery space that encourages reflection, viewers might be lured into reflecting on their own traumatic experiences. This can provoke considerable anxieties.

The steering committee was aware that such anxieties might arise among all involved, for a range of reasons. It was particularly important to focus on this possibility, so the project sought to explore the emotional legacy of the Holocaust. As far as the committee was aware, an art exhibition featuring the art of survivors of the Holocaust, and that specifically explored its emotional legacy, had not been mounted before.

Trust

Trust was central to the success of this project. The importance of this was emphasized in 2002, when the Cunningham Dax Collection exhibited the artworks of adult survivors of severe childhood abuse. A group of therapists and their clients approached the Collection to donate approximately 400 artworks that were created as part of their therapy. It was agreed that all parties should meet several times over a two-year period to establish trust and mutual understanding. The meetings focused on some of the anxieties experienced by traumatized individuals and groups.

Traumatized individuals and groups who have endured systematic and sustained abuse and, in many cases, violent physical and sexual abuse, have every reason to be mistrustful. Similarly, survivors of the Holocaust have very good reason to be fearful of possible persecution and to be mistrustful of an outsider, such as the Cunningham Dax Collection, a non-Jewish organization. Furthermore, the Collection, which is historically aligned with institutional psychiatry, brought with it the baggage of coercion, authoritarianism and a history of abuse of power. Trust in this context could not be assumed; much work was required to prove the Collection's trustworthiness.

The mind of a traumatized individual or group may regress to what Melanie Klein described as the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1946). While in this position, the mind is more inclined to experience persecutory anxieties and

symbolization processes are likely to operate at a more concrete level (Garland, 2004). A related concept to the concretization of thinking is that of a failure of mentalization as proposed by Fonagy, Gerely, Jurist, and Target (2002). The construct of mentalization locates it as a preconscious mental activity that enables an individual to understand an experience through an awareness of their own state of mind, as well as that of others. They suggest that the traumatized mind has an impaired capacity to mentalize and develop secure attachment and trust.

These dynamics impinge on the development of trust. They have significant implications for the acquisition and exhibition of artworks from these individuals, as well as the presentation of education programs and other related activities, as highlighted throughout this paper.

Risk of re-enactment

A survivor/artist's history of trauma, their possible lack of working through its associated mental pain, the uncertainty of trust, and the power imbalance between an institution and an individual, rendered this project vulnerable to the re-enactment of their original trauma.

Freud highlighted the problem of repetition compulsion, the tendency for an individual to repeat an experience that they cannot recall regardless of its negative outcome. He noted, "we may say the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (Freud, 1914/1995, p. 150).

Individuals with a history of severe trauma often find themselves in situations that recapitulate earlier traumatic experience. This well recognized response has been described as "traumatic re-enactment" (Van de Kolk, 1989). While Freud postulated repression as the mechanism in repetition compulsion, recent findings from the study of trauma suggest dissociation as the basis of traumatic re-enactment.

Although it is unclear if repetition compulsion and traumatic re-enactment are identical psychic processes, there is general agreement that the lack of *thinking* in these situations, either as a result of dissociation or other mechanisms such as a failure of mentalization (Fonagy & Target, 2008), increases the risk of them occurring. The un-thinking individual or institution that come into contact with traumatized individuals also risk colluding unconsciously with them by taking on a role that recreates an earlier traumatic situation (Levy & Lemma, 2004). There is some evidence that dissociation in one individual could induce dissociation in another (Schoore, 2009).

The steering committee was mindful of the risk of unconscious collusion through re-enactment resulting from dissociation and failure of mentalization. It gave considerable thought and particular care to ensure that the survivor/artists were approached with utmost respect and sensitivity, and that their rights were protected. It also prioritized the thoughts, feelings and wishes of each indi-

vidual to avoid the convenient but dehumanizing tendency to treat survivor/artists as a collective whole.

If re-enactment of the original trauma were to occur it could re-activate the traumatized parts of the mind that is unable to mentalize and symbolize. This in turn increases the risk of further re-enactment, and the viscous cycle of escalating failure to mentalize and symbolize will result.

The status of creative works

While the project made assumptions about anxieties, trust and the risk of re-enactment, it did not set out with any assumptions about the artistic qualities of the artworks. It was motivated by an interest in the subjective experience of the individual as revealed through their creative expression.

This point is particularly important given there has been a tendency to approach the creative artworks by people with experience of mental illness or trauma with broad assumptions about their aesthetic style and content. There has also been a tendency to approach these works not as art but as objects with little aesthetic value. Some would focus on the psychological dimension, which results in these works being treated as clinical material, often as an adjunct to their case history. Such an approach has been criticized for unfairly pathologizing the art and for being reductionist. Others, however, strongly emphasize the aesthetic dimension and insist that the artwork is simply art, which minimizes any significant exploration of their deeper psychological meaning.

Approaches that consider these works as simply art carry the risk of treating them as objects and commodities where the importance of the subjective experience is lost. The Cunningham Dax Collection actively promotes a multi-dimensional approach towards the creative works of people with experience of mental illness or trauma. Its conceptual and practical validity was closely examined in an interdisciplinary research project, *Framing Marginalised Art*, a collaboration between the Cunningham Dax Collection, the University of Melbourne, Melbourne Museum and the Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Jones, Koh, Veis, & White, 2010).

The multi-dimensional approach adopts the psychoanalytic principle of the multi-determined nature of the symbolic in dreams as proposed by Freud (1900/1995). Creative works may be simultaneously an art object, a clinical or therapeutic material, a socio-cultural artifact or, indeed, a transitional object. The relative importance of a specific dimension of the creative object is determined by the subjective experience of the person who approaches it at a particular time and in a particular space. *Framing Marginalised Art* also highlighted the ethical dimensions of exhibiting these works, the importance of the subjective value of an object to its creator, and how this might influence processes of acquisition and exhibition. These issues were foregrounded throughout *Out of the Dark*.

On Acquisition

More than an artwork

After more than a year of carefully considering potentially sensitive issues, the steering committee produced a prospectus that invited survivors of the Holocaust to donate some of their artworks to the Cunningham Dax Collection. It was explained that this was for the purposes of staging an educational exhibition and for future research. The prospectus was distributed through various Jewish organizations, art therapists and individual contacts.

Several months went by with only a limited level of interest, given that some survivors were quite ambivalent about relinquishing their artworks. While many understood how the exhibition could help others understand their experience, they still found it difficult to part from their artworks. Some were able to articulate how the artworks embodied their traumatic experience, particularly the loss of loved ones, and how the artworks were connections with the past. It seemed that giving up these works would require them to go through another stage of painful mourning. They may have also feared that any grief associated with relinquishing a work could threaten to re-awaken all past unresolved grief. However, many of those who expressed interest in the project from the beginning did work through a process that enabled them to finally relinquish their works, which were more than art to them. Some of them required several months before they could donate, and some required more than a year.

One survivor was quite willing to donate most of her artworks but was concerned that her grandchildren and their children might not have access to them in years to come, long after she died. It emerged that she considered her artwork to be an embodiment of herself, her traumatic experience of the Holocaust, and her family history.

This notion of embodiment varied in its concreteness in different individuals. In some individuals, the artwork symbolized a part of themselves or their experience. In others, artworks did not *represent* parts of them but *was* part of them. Such concrete or literal experience of one's created object may be "symbolic equation", as described by Hanna Segal in her consideration of the process of symbolization in psychosis (Segal, 1986). The capacity for symbolic functioning is also impaired in the traumatized mind. As Caroline Garland described it:

There remains an area in the mind, the no-go area occupied by memories of the trauma, in which true symbolisation is never recovered, and what Hanna Segal (1986) called "a symbolic equation" dominates. Those same sensory stimuli – which might even include certain words themselves said out loud – do not any longer *stand* for the event in the past. They become instantaneously the event in the present, evoking the emotional and physiological responses suffered at the time of the trauma. (Garland, 2004, p. 38)

The process of symbolization is closely linked to the process of mentalization. Fonagy and Target (2008) observed that the failure of mentalization led to an inability to distinguish between inner and external reality, a phenomenon they

called “psychic equivalence”. Within this construct, an individual is unable to distinguish between an object that is subjectively experienced as part of them from that which is observed by others to have its own objective reality, and is therefore quite separate from that individual.

Containment during acquisition

In the commercial sector of the art industry, where artworks are often treated as mere commodities, the personal and emotional dimensions of artworks and their creators are rarely given much consideration. The Cunningham Dax Collection took particular care in its approach to survivors of the Holocaust. It was mindful of the possible risk of re-awakening hidden traumatic memories at all stages of the project, and sought to understand the special meaning of the artworks for each survivor/artist. After an initial telephone conversation a form outlining required information was sent to each survivor/artist. An interview was arranged several weeks later. This waiting period gave them time to consider what they would feel comfortable about discussing and revealing.

Two Cunningham Dax Collection staff members, one with a curatorial background and the other an experienced mental health clinician, conducted these interviews with great sensitivity. The interviews were semi-structured, took the form of an informal discussion about the artworks, and were held in the homes or studios of the survivor/artists. Some interviews lasted several hours. Each survivor/artist was encouraged to talk about their personal history and their experience of the Holocaust, particularly in relation to their artworks. They were also encouraged to express any ambivalence or concerns they had in relinquishing and exhibiting their artwork. Some survivor/artists became emotionally distressed when they spoke about their artwork, yet all of them persisted with the interview despite their distress. Most welcomed the opportunity to tell their story. For some, the interviews facilitated some “working through” past trauma. The interviewers were moved by such courage.

While the Collection did not aim to conduct therapeutic interviews, it was aware of the importance of containment, and that the opportunity for working through might prevail. The interviewers may have offered themselves as what Wilfred Bion called “containers” for unprocessed thoughts, in this case, the unbearable mental pain from the traumatic experience of the Holocaust (Bion, 1959/1984). The interviews also raised a question about the extent to which the artworks themselves also served as containers for fragments of primitive unsymbolized thoughts, as postulated in the upper left segment of Bion’s grid (Bion, 1963/1984).

Policies: special considerations and practical realities

The Cunningham Dax Collection’s policies may have provided a containment for the project, particularly the process of acquisition. These policies, which address acquisition, exhibition, education and ethics, have the potential to be

obstructive or even destructive if rigidly adhered to. However, if they are drawn up to be responsive to issues as they arise, they can create a space for the careful consideration of the survivor/artists' needs and interests.

For example, the Collection appreciated that some of the survivor/artists would need considerable time to relinquish their work. Some of these artworks hold special significance to the survivor/artists and so it was important that they had the chance to work through their emotional attachment to them. Accordingly, the Collection's current acquisition policy allows a three-year cooling off period for any gift of works. Although many art institutions consider this concession to be impracticable, the Collection has persisted with it since 2005 with only minor inconveniences.

The steering committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing how to approach the ambivalence that some survivor/artists had towards relinquishing their works. An extended cooling off period was proposed at first, but after much debate it was deemed unworkable. The Collection's acquisition committee acknowledged the special significance that some of the artworks would have, not only to their creator, but also to their children and subsequent generations. As a consequence, it introduced a new provision in its acquisition policy that enables the artists and their families to have access to the artworks indefinitely, despite a full transfer of legal ownership after three years.

The ability of the Cunningham Dax Collection to listen to the concerns of the survivor/artists, give careful consideration to them, and to respond in ways that are practicably possible, may be compared to what Donald Winnicott described as the attuned mother who could create a holding and facilitating environment (Winnicott, 1960).

The Exhibition

Curatorial considerations

The steering committee appointed one of its members, an art therapist, and the Cunningham Dax Collection curatorial staff who collected the artworks, as *Out of the Dark's* curators. Twenty survivor/artists donated 123 works. The steering committee decided to include a selection of works from all of the survivor/artists. The curators grappled with the question of how to present over 66 works in two large gallery spaces. The option of displaying the works on a thematic basis was not adopted because it risked imposing meanings and interpretations from an external source. It was decided that the works would be presented by each survivor/artist so the exhibition could better highlight individual narrative and subjective experience.

About half of the survivor/artists were first generation survivors of the Holocaust and the other half were second generation, that is, the children of survivors. Several second generation survivor/artists expressed some concern that their artworks might not be displayed with enough prominence and that they might be lost among works by first generation survivor/artists. These con-

cerns reflected the commonly expressed view among second generation survivors that their experiences of trauma are often not recognized or validated. Several second generation survivor/artists asked for their works to be displayed alongside first generation works, fearing that their works might go unnoticed if they were shown in a separate gallery.

The decision to show the works of the two generations in two separate galleries adjacent to each other had a profound impact. The atmospheres in the two galleries were quite different. One viewer described the exhibition of first generation works as “historical” and “about what happened”, while the exhibition of second generation works were “more about personal experiences”. Several viewers noted that the first generation exhibition was lacking in emotion when compared with the palpable yet restrained emotionality of the second generation.

The exhibition enabled the differences between the traumatic experiences of the two generations to be explored. It also vividly illustrated the transmission of trauma across the two generations. It asked if the apparently greater degree of emotionality felt in the exhibition of works by second generation survivor/artists support the view that the emotional response to the trauma had been repressed in one generation and transmitted to the next generation. Various mechanisms for this transmission of trauma have been postulated, including the possibility of displacement or projective identification (Kellerman, 2009).

The experience of the survivor/artists

A private viewing of the exhibition was held for the survivor/artists and their families before it was opened to the public. This was a profoundly moving experience for everyone present, and particularly cathartic for many of the survivor/artists. Many commented on the sense of relief they felt by seeing their works on display so publicly. Several second generation survivor/artists tearfully spoke of a lifetime of bewildering emotional turmoil and unacknowledged suffering.

During this private viewing most of the survivor/artists spent a long time studying the works of the other participants. The significance of this becomes most apparent when considering what usually happens at group exhibitions. In most cases, the artists offer passing acknowledgment of other works. In *Out of the Dark*, however, many artists commented on how important it was for them to know that others have had similar experiences of trauma, assuring them that they are not alone. This exhibition enabled them to gain a sense of peer validation, support and solidarity.

A few first generation survivor/artists brought their children and grandchildren. It was an opportunity for them to gain an insight into how it was for their parents and grandparents. Written text from each survivor/artist with varying details about their personal lives and experiences were displayed next to their artworks. Several second generation survivor/artists wrote about how the Holocaust affected their parents and the family environment, and how this in

turn affected them. In one instance, a parent became quite distressed as she read what her daughter had written. The daughter responded with a loving and supportive embrace, trying to remain composed. This shared moment of mutual attunement may have led to some reparation and healing. The incident may have also typified the lifelong experience of many second generation survivors, which is the need to protect and comfort their parents while pushing aside their own emotional pain.

The audiences

Out of the Dark not only brought multiple generations of survivors of the Holocaust together, but also general audiences. The Cunningham Dax Collection is located 20 kilometers away from the heart of the Jewish community in Melbourne, very much at “the other side of town”. Many elderly survivors were unable to attend the exhibition on their own and needed the assistance of their children or grandchildren.

For some, visiting the exhibition together was an opportunity to talk about their experiences. In this sense, the exhibition inadvertently created a space for each generation to understand how the other had been affected by the Holocaust. It also allowed each generation to help the other work through the mental pain they have carried for so long. Some, perhaps many, second and third generation survivors may not have seen themselves as survivors of the Holocaust. The exhibition was an opportunity to learn how it could have affected them and to help explain their own bewildering experiences.

The exhibition also attracted a large number of non-Jewish visitors. Surprisingly, many openly related their own experience of trauma and, in some cases, their experience of genocide, such as the Armenian and Cambodian genocides. It raised the question why many spoke so openly about their personal experience. Indeed, the Cunningham Dax Collection has always been mindful that exhibitions with depictions of trauma can trigger past experiences. Viewers are forewarned of this possibility and the Collection’s clinical staff members are ready to assist when necessary. While it is not always possible to anticipate who may attend a particular exhibition or who may need help, information about seeking appropriate professional assistance is made available.

Programs Related to the Exhibition

Art galleries often host a series of public lectures, workshops and seminars that relate to a specific exhibition. The Cunningham Dax Collection hosted several carefully planned events. Most of these events (apart from the art therapy workshop) were held in the gallery space with *Out of the Dark* in the background.

Public lectures

Again, several members of the audience openly reflected on their own experience during the public lectures. There may be several explanations for this phenom-

enon. Firstly, the whole environment: the exhibition, the artworks, the gallery space and the subject matter might have encouraged open and personal reflection. Secondly, the event might have triggered past memories and these mentally painful recollections could not be contained. Thirdly, some might have been aware of their traumatic past but were too burdened by these memories to continue keeping them to themselves. Fourthly, for some participants, the re-emergence of these traumatic memories might have been experienced unconsciously as indigestible toxicity to be expelled with a compulsive urgency.

It is unclear what impact such open disclosure of past trauma had on these individuals. It is possible that it left some feeling quite anxious and overwhelmed, while in others it may have led to further working through and resolution.

Art therapy workshop

Given that the exhibition encouraged visitors to speak freely about their own traumatic experiences, it was not surprising that all 12 participants of an art therapy workshop painted their own past experience with outbursts of emotionality.

The participants were first asked to view the exhibition prior to settling into the workshop. They were asked to draw or paint something in response to what they just encountered. Significantly, none of them drew or painted anything about the Holocaust but each expressed something about their own personal experience of trauma. For most participants, the event was an unexpected opportunity for healing, and they shared their emotional experiences with the art therapists and mental health clinicians running the workshop.

It is unusual for art therapy to be conducted against the backdrop of an exhibition of art about traumatic experiences. This event highlighted the importance of contextual factors in art therapy and how creative expression can mobilize traumatic memories.

The extent to which creative art therapies can facilitate the process of mentalization and symbolization is unclear. Theoretically, creative art therapies promote the exploration of pre-mentalizing and pre-symbolic states of mind. If such therapies are conducted in secure and contained environments, they could offer the facilitatory space where traumatic experiences could be worked through. In such an environment, affect associated with a trauma could be experienced in a regulated and manageable form as fragments of *pre-thoughts* are mentalized and symbolized into *thoughts* that make sense of unbearable and bewildering experiences.

Reaching across traumatic divides

More than 70 psychotherapists attended a unique professional development seminar with *Out of the Dark* as the backdrop. This seminar involved a Jewish psychoanalytic psychotherapist and a German psychoanalytic psychotherapist who were both born at the end of World War II and lived in the shadow of the Holocaust. Their 10-year long friendship encouraged each of them to explore

how the Holocaust had affected them individually, consciously and unconsciously. Their regular dialogue over the years helped them understand the impact of the Holocaust on each other.

This seminar was conceived to explore how dialogue and exchange can assist individuals to work through their own painful past and reach across traumatic divides. The seminar highlighted how an empathic understanding of a person's experience reduces the likelihood of that individual becoming a repository of negative projections.

There was considerable anxiety among all those involved in this seminar. A group consisting of the two presenters, two members of the steering committee (the authors of this paper) and the Collection's psychoanalyst in residence was formed. In the six months leading up to the event, the group met on three occasions and communicated regularly between meetings to consider the possible unconscious dynamics that might emerge during the seminar. As far as the group was aware, the nature of the proposed seminar was unprecedented.

These preparations gave each group member the opportunity to work through their own anxieties. This preparation proved to be most useful because it enabled the group to contain the tension and anxieties of the audience, as well as their own, during the seminar. The apprehension that some Jewish members of the audience might respond with hostility towards a German person speaking about how the Holocaust affected them did not occur. The seminar was well contained and it created a space for the audience to reflect on a fuller picture of the emotional legacy of the Holocaust.

The importance of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of a traumatic event may parallel the psychic movement from a part-object relation to a whole-object relation, from a paranoid-schizoid position to a depressive position (Klein, 1935). Gaining an understanding of an event from both (or all) sides requires enormous courage and emotional effort. Participants faced the possibility of having to relinquish long-held feelings of hatred and resentment. They might have also been confronted with the re-emergence of unbearable mental pain relating to guilt and loss.

A surprising contribution to the understanding of trauma

The fact that acquiring and exhibiting artworks by survivors of the Holocaust has an unconscious dimension should not be a surprise. What might be surprising is how this process provides new insights into several aspects of trauma.

Firstly, the revelation that some survivor/artists relate to their artworks as if they were part of them illustrates and supports the clinical observation that the process of mentalization and symbolization can be impaired in the traumatized mind.

Secondly, the different emotionality experienced in the two galleries, one consisting of works by first generation survivor/artists and the other by second generation survivor/artists, highlights two important aspects of the transgenerational transmission of trauma. It showed how the experiences of the two genera-

tions of survivors are different, and how the emotional experience of one generation can be displaced onto the next generation.

Thirdly, the impact of the exhibition and its related programs on audiences and participants can be quite profound. Further research into the observation that many of them are eager to speak about their own personal experience of trauma in this context might help us understand how repressed and dissociated traumatic memories are brought into the conscious mind, and how creative expressions could facilitate it. The findings of such a research project would have therapeutic implications.

Finally, members of the steering committee and Cunningham Dax Collection staff had to be vigilant in ensuring that the trauma endured by the survivor/artists was not repeated during the course of the project. This could have occurred quite easily through insensitive comments and un-empathic approaches towards the survivor/artists throughout the project. Re-enactment was avoided through the anticipation of sensitive issues and careful consideration of the complex issues that emerged. In short, much thought was brought to bear on the whole undertaking. At times the effort required was so great that it seemed that all involved were resisting a very powerful unconscious collusive force to compulsively repeat the trauma.

AFTER THOUGHTS/FUTURE THOUGHTS

Out of the Dark enabled the Cunningham Dax Collection to gain more experience in the acquisition and exhibition of artworks by traumatized individuals and communities. The project highlighted the importance of giving careful consideration to unconscious and dissociative processes that could have a major influence on its outcome. It required an inordinate amount of physical and emotional effort.

This project began with the hope that the acquisition and exhibition of artworks would lead to a better understanding of the emotional legacy of a traumatic experience. The steering committee came to understand much more than the experience of trauma and its transgenerational effects. It learned something about the importance of working through. While it is known that art making can be a process of working through and healing, *Out of the Dark* demonstrated that the process of acquiring, exhibiting, viewing and talking about an artwork can also present opportunities for working through.

These opportunities, however, cannot be taken for granted. They need to be created through a process of containment and thought. With this in mind, similar projects have the potential to create a space for working through and healing for traumatized communities whose members may participate as artists and audiences. The lessons learned here may be applied to the acquisition and exhibition of artworks from other traumatized communities.

Psychoanalytic theories have largely been applied to the processes of making or viewing artworks. This paper highlights how useful and important insights

may be derived from a psychoanalytic consideration of “back of house” activities, particularly the acquisition and exhibition of artworks. One might refer to the psychoanalytic exploration of these activities as occurring “under the house”. One is also mindful that this project is about the millions of Jewish people who hid “under their house”, some survived, many did not.

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