

Meditative Process Art Method (MPAM)

The Meditative Process Art Method (MPAM) is an arts-based method developed by Dr Patricia Morgan for exploring psychosocial aspects of individual and group experience. It combines meditation and art to support practitioners' access to underlying feelings, which they assimilate using multimodal creative practices such as drawing, poetry and movement. The MPA method is led by imagery, meditative consciousness and somatic, psychological and affective experiences. It employs central tenants and practices from process art, contemplative science and creative arts therapy. The MPAM engages the chance occurrence or unintentional outcome and deep focus in art-making from process art. This art movement from the 1960s takes an anti-form approach and has its roots in Performance Art and the anarchical Dada Art Movement. Contemplative science offers contemplative practice and research findings, particularly findings related to learning, such as the heightened meta-awareness and executive function gained from contemplative practice. The MPAM also employs practices and theory from Creative Arts Therapy, which is grounded in Jungian psychology with its focus on accessing pre-conceptual experiences. Humanist psychologists and gestalt therapists expanded Jung's work by including somatic and affective experience so paving the way for the creative, holistic therapeutic approach of Creative Arts Therapy.

The MPAM utilizes the pedagogical scaffolding practice in which students move from introductory to more complex concepts and tasks. The efficacy of the MPAM results from its iterative cycles of: reflection, creation, realization, and application, facilitated by rounds of meditation, creative practice and story-telling. The meditation offers in-depth access to practitioners' pre-conceptual, somatic, affective, and psychological experiences, while the creative practice gives form to these experiences. Reflection and discussion then provide discursive space from which to view and cognize the newly fashioned personal symbology. This is a meaning-making process in the constructivist sense, in which practitioners' self-awareness grows and their realizations are solidified then embedded in new meaning systems.

Dr Patricia Morgan's development of the MPAM evolved across a number of stages. Starting with her design of creative self-development classes integrating art and contemplative practice which she facilitated in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers. She further developed the MPAM in her community education work and finally in courses and lectures in and outside of the academe. Through her research in contemplative inquiry, Dr Morgan identified links between the creative and contemplative state of consciousness, which led to pedagogical experiments with the Embodied Design Research Lab at UC Berkeley. This research revealed the educational and healing potential of combining process art and contemplative practice and led the way for Dr Morgan's creation of the MPAM. The method has been trialed and refined in collaboration with Dr Carter and colleagues in the *Positively Women* research project, an arts-

based study exploring experiences of living with HIV among women in Australia, housed at the Kirby Institute, UNSW.