



Florida Sandplay Therapy Association

Fostering growth & healing through symbolic process

Interview with Rie Rogers Mitchell, October 2012

Rie Rogers Mitchell taught Understanding the Sandplay Therapy Process at STI in October 2012. No one could come with a better résumé. Dr. Mitchell is a licensed Psychologist in California and a Professor of Psychology at Cal State, Northridge. She has taught Sandplay Therapy all over the world and has many publications to her credit, including two books: *Sandplay Past, Present and Future*, written with Harriet Friedman, Routledge 1994; and *Supervision of Sandplay Therapy*, edited with Harriet Friedman, Routledge, 2007. She has served STA and ISST in several capacities and is currently the Co-President of ISST.

Recently Rie Rogers Mitchell emailed some of her thoughts and feelings about Sandplay Therapy to us. We offer them here as a way for you to get to know Dr. Mitchell.

STI: Have you a favorite Dora story or quote?

Rie: Yes, I do have a favorite Dora story. One that is precious to me. I studied with Dora Kalff for several weeks in the late 1980s. During that time, I had the opportunity to create several sandplay pictures in her presence. In one of the sessions, I placed a woman in the tray who was playing the piano. Frau Kalff asked me if I played the piano, and I answered in the affirmative. She then shared with me that at one point in her life, she had studied to become a concert pianist, and she talked about that at some length. This was a special moment for me. I was happy that she was moved to share that experience with me. Later, a number of people told me that she was quite an accomplished pianist.

STI: Dora created and taught sandplay therapy. How do you carry forth her work?

Rie: I studied with Dora Kalff, because I was so impressed with the positive growth I saw in the children and adults in my practice who used sandplay. However, my love of and commitment to sandplay became even deeper during the time I was in Switzerland, and I made a silent promise to myself that I would help to support the growth and development of sandplay. I know that many sandplay therapists have felt similarly and they have joined with others to build on Dora Kalff's vision of creating a world-wide network of sandplay therapists, teachers, writers, and researchers. Dora Kalff founded the International Society for Sandplay Therapy (ISST) to guide that vision together with the National Societies leading the development of sandplay in their countries. Over the next few years, I believe that the growth of sandplay will continue to be tremendous. Our challenge will be to keep the essence of sandplay alive and well, while managing its growth.



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STI: If she were alive today, how might Dora Kalff teach sandplay?

Rie: Although Dora Kalff always included information about theory and symbols in her lectures, she largely allowed her clients' sandplay pictures to speak for themselves. If she were alive today, I think she would teach in much the same manner, however, and I think she would feel very comfortable in using modern cameras and PowerPoint slides. She would be delighted with the improvements in the images.

STI: How do you see sandplay evolving over time?

Rie: In some countries, sandplay is not only used in traditional therapeutic settings, but also in schools, prisons, and other institutions. I see the use of sandplay broadening even further; however, I am very concerned when I learn that the sand, miniatures, and tray are being used in a manner that is totally different from sandplay tenets while using the name "sandplay" to describe what is being done. I fear that sandplay, as we know and practice it, will be confused with approaches that are not as meaningful or effective.

For more information, please visit the Florida Sandplay Therapy Association website at www.sandsearch.org.