

SOUTH AFRICAN SANDPLAY THERAPY SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2025

This newsletter provides information about the South African Sandplay Therapy Society (SASTS) and Sandplay Therapy as developed by Dora Kalff. It aims to facilitate communication between all SASTS members and to provide access to current research, events, and educational opportunities in the field of sandplay therapy. SASTS is a member society of the International Society of Sandplay Therapy (ISST) that encourages the highest quality of sandplay therapy practice from ISST certified sandplay therapists.

Visit our website at www.sasts.co.za

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Jungian Sandplay Therapy Colleagues and Friends

As a Member Society of ISST, we were deeply blessed by the progress we made in 2024. Thank you to all of you.

In November 2024, I attended the ISST Board meeting in Estoril, Portugal (pictures on page 7). It was a dynamic and creative five days of working hard for ISST behind the scene. I presented to the Board the "growing up" and work of our Society in South Africa, our successes and challenges. I would like to also share with all of you my personal wish to maintain a dynamic Society in South Africa based on mutual respect, a stable, efficient and "at home" Society.

In the words of our ISST President Prof Natori-san : "While we think mostly of the importance of "growing up" , I would like to remind us of the importance of "growing down" , of maintaining secure roots so that the tree of our Organization will remain stable."

Whatever we do in Kalfjian Jungian Sandplay Therapy ISST, let us continue to work within the context of our three roots: The World Technique of Margaret Lowenfeld, Analytical Psychology, and Eastern philosophy (or what we call Mindfulness these days).

Let us always respect the tradition of Dora Kalff and her vision, even in new developments in the field of Kalfjian Jungian Sandplay Therapy ISST.

Enjoy our Newsletter!

I send you my best,

Braam



**CONGRATULATIONS TO
BRAAM**

**for being appointed to the
Editorial Board of
Jung Journal: Culture and
Psyche.**

**[https://www.tandfonline.com/
journals/ujun20](https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/ujun20)**



IN THE BEGINNING

Judith remembers...

The Egg

The egg - this was the subject of my first symbol paper and I have been reflecting on its meaning ever since. Over time, I have revisited it repeatedly, reaching different insights along the way. Now as I write this article, I recognize a fundamental truth about the egg as it relates to my life: the shell holds and protects all the fragile parts. In my life, specifically my journey in Jungian sandplay therapy, that shell is made up of so many people who have contained me over time and continue to do so. After qualifying as a psychologist, I became part of a supervision group of fellow 'newbies' to the field - Habib Kagee, Welma Wehmeyer and Sylvia Clutten - together with our esteemed supervisor, Elzan Frank, who since has become a cherished friend. We met regularly and affectionately called ourselves "Boston Supervision" (See Figure 1).

Figure 1 : Boston Supervision. From left to right: Welma, Judith, Habib, Elzan and Sylvia



Although I was introduced to sandplay therapy during my Master's degree, I will always consider my sandplay journey to have truly begun during one of our supervision sessions.

At one of our meetings, Elzan mentioned that someone named Deborah Bedford-Strohm - an American living in Germany - would be coming to South Africa to train therapists in sandplay therapy. Elzan encouraged us to attend. I must admit, at that time, I thought sandplay therapy seemed a bit like hocus-pocus. However, I was searching for a way to connect with clients on a deeper level, and we have learnt over the years, that when Elzan suggested something it was worth paying attention, and embracing - it never failed to make you better.

I began my sandplay journey with Sylvia and Habib, and instead of encountering the hocus-pocus I had anticipated, with Deborah's support, I discovered the solid foundation I had been seeking for my therapy practice. Sandplay therapy gave me the framework around which I could build the approach that shaped my work. It allowed me to go deeper, better understand the child I worked with (as my focus is predominantly on children), and support them in strengthening emotionally from the inside out. Throughout my journey, Deborah was a constant source of guidance, seamlessly integrating theory with practical application all while embodying a spirit of remarkable generosity.

Unlike any other training, sandplay therapy training—which, for me, began in Paarl at Lemoenkloof—was filled with distinct moments of joy. I eagerly looked forward to making the journey to Paarl for the week-long sessions twice a year. Sylvia and I would cheerfully sing, "Hier's ons weer! Hier's ons weer! Met ons wit kar voor jou deur," as we travelled together.

It was during this time that Deborah introduced us to Anke Seitz, who joined her in South Africa for training. What an incredible gift! Anke, with her strong Jungian background and expertise in working with children, became a guiding force for me. Thanks to Sylvia's hospitality—she provided a space with Wi-Fi for our meetings—Anke, all the way from Germany, became my supervisor. Sylvia and I regularly connected with her online to discuss our cases.



Figure 2: ISST Congress - 2019. From left to right: Deborah, Anke and Judith

Sandplay expanded my world in different ways and in 2019, I was fortunate to meet Deborah and Anke in Berlin at the ISST congress (See Figure 2). Deborah and Anke strengthened my “eggshell”, providing support that encouraged me to believe in myself and find my voice within the sandplay community.

Sandplay therapy has helped ease my anxieties about working with children. It has provided me with a powerful tool that meets my needs as a therapist while reinforcing the core principles of therapy: being fully present in the room, truly listening, staying curious, and striving to understand. However, as I grew in my practice, I became acutely aware of a potential shadow side to my journey: the risk of over-relying on the tool itself and an imbalance this can create. This understanding emerged as I progressed through my own personal process, where I became increasingly aware of how much of myself—especially my unconscious—I was sharing and allowing to be shaped in my personal sessions. The importance of the marketplace sandplay scenes I created and the talk therapy sessions that occurred between building in the sand, served to balance the exploration of the unconscious with conscious reflection. This realization highlighted the value of the experiential training prescribed by ISST.

So - while sandplay therapy grounded me in my work, I also came to understand that it was not meant to simplify the complexities of therapy, as the broader context of the child’s life and experiences cannot be overlooked. Building on this understanding, I also came to believe that just as my own 'eggshell' supported my growth, the child’s 'eggshell' would similarly nurture their development. However, I also believe it is misguided and an overestimation to think that the therapist alone can serve as the child’s eggshell. This understanding reinforced for me, the importance of including the child’s parents in the therapeutic process, ensuring that the child’s broader context evolves alongside them. How to include parents in the context of the child’s sandplay therapy process, was a challenge for me. I saw a possible solution for how to do this more intentionally when Anke introduced us to the house-tree-fire-water-person drawing. Grounded in Jungian principles, this drawing beautifully aligns with Jungian sandplay therapy.

Sharing the child’s drawing with their parents seemed like a meaningful way to include their parents thereby nurturing the child’s “eggshell”. Inspired by this idea, I decided to formally explore the drawing’s potential within the context of parenting and sandplay therapy. Encouraged by Anke, I presented my concept at the IAAP congress in Vienna (See Figure 3).



Figure 3: IAAP congress in Vienna – 2019
From left to right: Anke and Judith

This proposal was well received and became the foundation of my doctoral studies at the University of Pretoria where I had the privilege of meeting another special person who supported my growth – my doctoral supervisor – Prof. Linda Theron. Linda guided me in refining my concept, conducting my research and writing up my study. With Linda's invaluable support I presented my findings at two congresses in South Africa - The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) in 2023, and South African Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (SAACAPAP) in 2024 (please see Figure 4).

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has been part of my "eggshell": Boston Supervision, Elzan, Deborah, Anke and Linda. There are many others, including Braam Beetge, Retha Roux and Imme Thom, who continue to help me grow and to whom I owe immense gratitude. Jungian Sandplay therapy, along with my supportive community, has been the perfect medium to help me hatch my egg. It allowed me to grow, evolve and find my own space within this work. What an exciting journey I have been on - and the best part is that it continues.

By Judith Bredekamp
Cape Town



Figure 4: PsySSA Congress 2023. From left to right: Judith and Linda

A little bird tweeted into the editor's ear that Judith's PhD thesis was accepted. WELL DONE JUDY!!



**SAVE
THE DATE**

SASTS SYMBOL SHOWER
Saturday 21 June 2025 on Zoom

UBUNTU

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu

"I am, because you are"

In this special feature, SASTS honours the Sandplay Therapy journey of Dawie Carolus, who completed his two years of intensive training with ISST between 2011 and 2013.

In Dawie's own words:

It took place at 25 on Catherine Guest House in Sandton, Johannesburg. A few sessions were conducted at Bass Lake Lodge near the Roodepoort Dam (April 1-6, 2012).

The four facilitators were: Dr Martin Kalff, Ruth Ammann, Judy Zappacosta and Deborah-Bedford-Strohm. The program coordinators were Reyhana Seedat and Braam Beetge.

The three classmates in my group that I can recall, were Karin Bronkhorst and Elana Burger, both from Paarl and Karine Borman from Johannesburg. I am still in contact with Karine and Elana.

I initially stayed at a Formula 1 Hotel near Alexandra Township. Karine was so kind to offer me accommodation for a major part of the training. She also drove me to and from Lanseria Airport. My only duty was to drive her big automatic Mercedes Benz car to and from training. Every morning I experienced an anxiety attack because I am a manual car driver.

I started to collect sandplay miniatures furiously from the seller during our tea breaks outside the training room. The miniatures were so dear to me that I insisted that the flight attendants keep it in their cramped space and not store it in the overhead lockers on my way home.

My symbol paper was on the crocodile. My short paper explored the symbolism of the gorilla in the ego development of a neglected boy in state custody and was accepted. My longer paper was about the healing process of anger and abuse in the ego development of a neglected boy in state custody. As far as I can recall, he completed 27 trays. I sadly could not continue.



Picture: Johan Roux

In November 2014, Dawie was diagnosed with cancer. He recalls: *In an e-mail to me, Deborah wrote that I will have to be patient in my healing process. She also hoped that I will be able to develop some patience with the sandplay and my clients and trust that they will come to me when the time was right. She mentioned that a sandplay therapist cannot force things to happen in sandplay; they must occur naturally, and it is hoped that the right children will come. Sandplay therapists can only continue on their own path of personal growth through reading, meditation, and living. Whether or not children will arrive is not in the sandplay therapist's hands.*

Dawie's battle with cancer continues: *I could not speed up my healing process. A long, challenging journey followed. I recently saw my oncologist for a follow-up visit after radiation therapy. I was glad when I heard the word "follow-up" after being contacted to come in. I believe the radiation therapy was successful and that my body was finally healing. Some hurdles remain.*

He reflects: *Due to unforeseen health challenges, I had to discontinue my Sandplay studies. This decision was not easy but it was necessary for my wellbeing. I am grateful to the four facilitators involved in the theoretical training, my program coordinators, my individual and group supervisors, classmates Karine and Elana, and my colleagues and friends.*

I also informed Reyhana Seedat about my illness. She was very supportive and I told her I intended to donate my sandplay miniature collection to SASTS.

After deciding to move to a smaller house, I felt I had to get rid of my miniatures. Retha Roux offered to dispose of my sandplay miniatures. It filled her husband's bakkie.

Retha reports: What an incredible honour to help a sandplay colleague find new homes for his treasured collection. The SASTS community rallied to support Dawie by purchasing his exquisite miniatures and play therapy equipment for their own collections between August and October 2024. We all agreed that Black Friday and Christmas had arrived early and all at once!!

Dawie concludes: All your empathy has made a significant contribution to my wellbeing. While this chapter is ending, I am hopeful for the future and plan to focus on my full recovery. Another door has opened because I will be getting involved in the activities of the Tygerbear Foundation. Thank you for your understanding and support.



A truckload of miniatures. Picture: Johan Roux



Making sure each item goes to its rightful new owner. Picture: Johan Roux

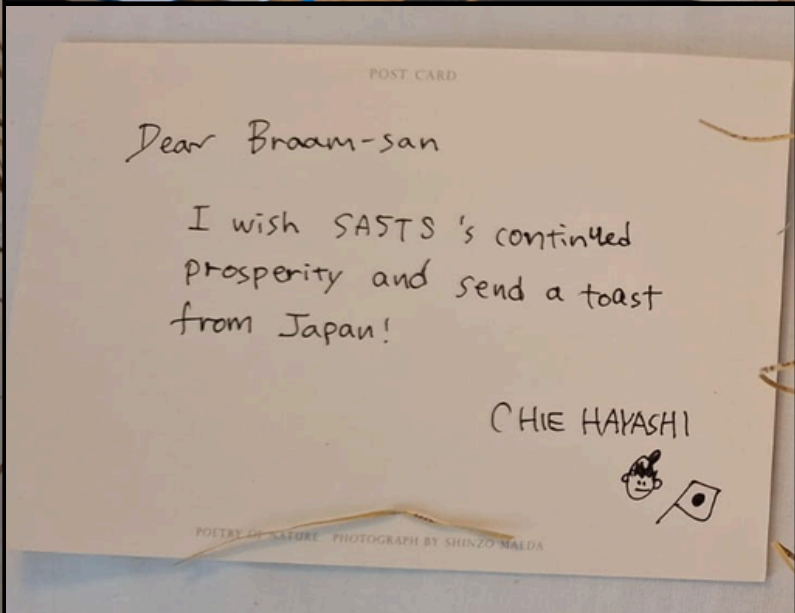
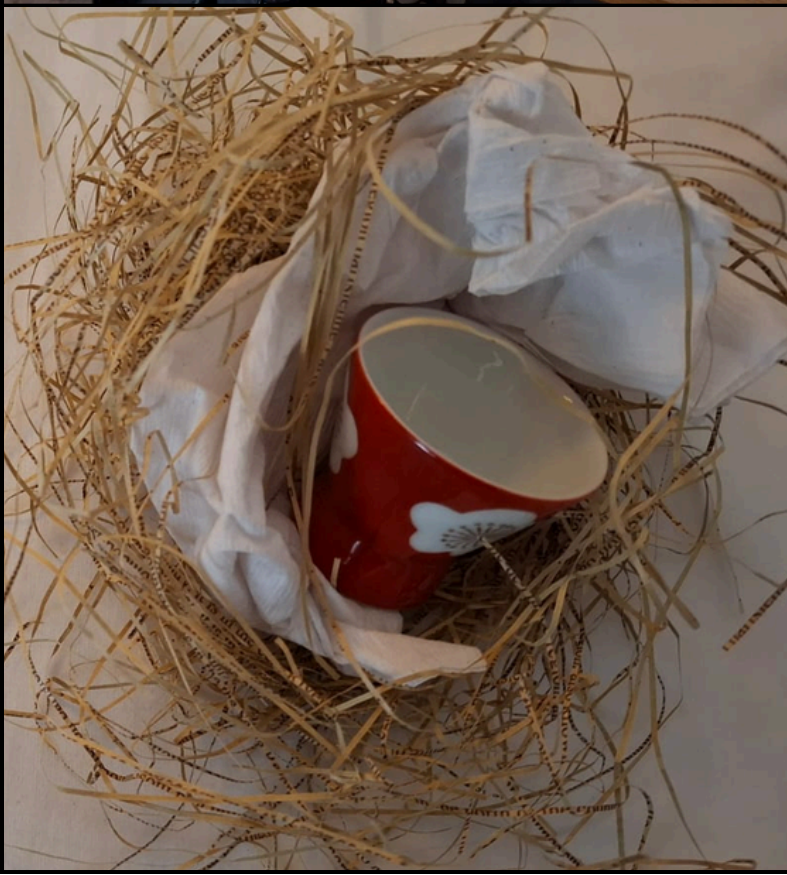


The pleasure of new treasure! Sheryl, Jessica, Madelise and Tania offer Sandplay Therapy in four of the nine provinces of South Africa.



INDABA

ISST BOARD MEETING PORTUGAL - NOV 2024



INTENSIVE TRAINING WEEK PORTUGAL - NOV 2024

SASTS President Braam Beetge was invited to teach during the ISST Intensive Training Week 1 in Portugal in November 2024.



Intensive Training Week 1 Teaching Team

Standing from the left: Ulrich Gundermann (Germany), Olga Lipadatova (Portugal), Braam and Lorraine Freedle (USA)
Sitting: Betty Jackson (USA)

Time to replenish and connect



*The way is within us.
May each one seek out his own way.*

CG Jung, Liber Novus



SUPERVISION & PERSONAL PROCESS



Individual Supervision: Braam, Gwenda, Imme or Retha

Group Supervision: Braam

Personal Process: Braam, Gwenda, Imme, Retha, Sylvia, Judith

2025 WEBINAR PROGRAMME

Thursday, 27 February & 6 March

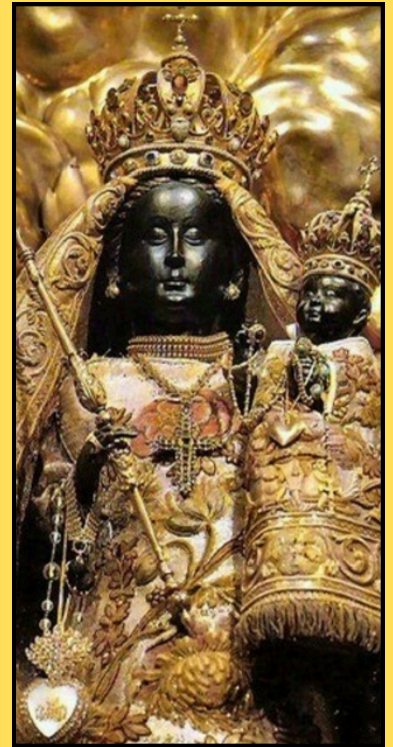
Loving our Brokenness: The Human Dimension of the Archetype of the Black Madonna

Presenter: Judy Zappacosta (ISST Teaching Member)

Thursday, 29 May

Processes in Sandplay

Presenter: Ulrich Gundermann (ISST Teaching Member)



27th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

Changing Horizons: Encountering the Other in Sandplay Therapy

Egmond aan Zee | THE NETHERLANDS

August 18-22, 2025



International Society for Sandplay Therapy
Associazione Internazionale della Sandplay Therapy
Internationale Gesellschaft für Sandspiel Therapie
國際箱庭療法學會

**Visit the congress website
on www.isst2025.com**



THE SYMBOL SHACK

Donkey

In contemporary society, being called a donkey comments on foolishness, stupidity or stubbornness. This stems from Greek mythology where Silenus rides a donkey in a drunken state and Midas earns the ears of an ass after misjudging a musical competition. However, a donkey's obstinacy can also be understood as a protective measure as they instinctively know the right path to follow.

In literature, donkeys often feature as faithful companions along the journey to find meaning in life. It seems that growth and existential wisdom is acquired at the donkey's slow and laborious pace rather than at the hectic speed of modern living.

Jungian analyst Barbara Hannah (1957/2006) describes the donkey as a marvellous image of docile obedience and work ethic, complemented by wild unruliness and potent sexuality. She points out that domesticated animals "represent the lower instinctive forces in man that often know the way when our conscious is entirely at sea...if we follow the way of nature, it will lead us to follow our own law... or lead us to the kingdom of heaven" (Hannah, 1957/2006, p. 122).

Hannah (1957/2006, p. 123) asserts that "all instincts serve the process of individuation" and that "their negative aspects are only constellated when we are not serving this goal ourselves." The donkey's earthiness implicitly challenges us to accept our savage primeval urges as we learn to discriminate whether to trust their survival purpose or to tame them in service of reason and transcendence.

The link to lesser human qualities and ridicule is contrasted by donkeys' consistent symbolic association to spirituality. It was the symbol of the Egyptian sun god Ra and the Hindu goddess Devi Kalaratri destroys ignorance and darkness astride a donkey.

The word 'donkey' has become the preferred word for 'ass' – the classic English word for *Equus asinus*.

Donkeys became domesticated over 6000 years ago (Viviers, 2019). Highly adaptable to both hospitable and harsh habitats, they have played an ongoing role in the civilisation process. Although slower and less aristocratic than horses, donkeys are known to be stronger, and more agile and tenacious.

The position of a donkey's eyes allows it to see all four feet at any given moment. They are notable surefooted and careful about where they put their feet, even when they are moving fast. This quality often makes them the equine of choice for economically strained communities, difficult burdensome travels, and wartimes, when treacherous terrain needs to be traversed (Murrayfield, 2008).

Donkeys forage a rather meagre diet compared to horses. Yet, their milk is rich in vitamins, anti-bacterial agents and anti-allergens. The closest animal product to human breast milk, donkey milk has a high lactose ratio and low-fat content. It is known to alleviate conditions such as psoriasis, eczema, asthma, and bronchitis.

The donkey features prominently within the Judeo-Christian belief system. The Old Testament kings David and Solomon significantly chose the “children of the she-donkey” as the royal animal above the horse to express their abundance, power, and influence (Almalech, 2017). It is the donkey who carries the pregnant mother of Christ to Bethlehem for His birth, who carries Him as an infant refugee to safety in Egypt, and who carries Him towards His suffering.

In a Jungian Kallfian sandplay therapy journey, the donkey may be indicative of psyche’s loyalty, its self-preservation, and its determination to bear the arduous work and suffering that is required. The donkey may also appear as an instinctual “spiritual director” (Duhan-Kaplan, 2021), highlighting strong natural impulses as well as alerting to the spiritual significance in a psychological journey and the imminent unfolding of a spiritual milestone.

In summary, the donkey is regarded as “symbolic of versatility, intelligence, an eager worker, determination, stubbornness, spiritual dedication, undying faith in the creative force, willingness to take onboard the responsibilities and burdens of others” (Wolcott, 2015).

By Prof Christine Laidlaw

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Picture: Retha Roux