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Narrative Medicine in Primary Care: Witnessing, Representing, Affiliating

Rita Charon, MD, PhD.
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René Leriche, 1936

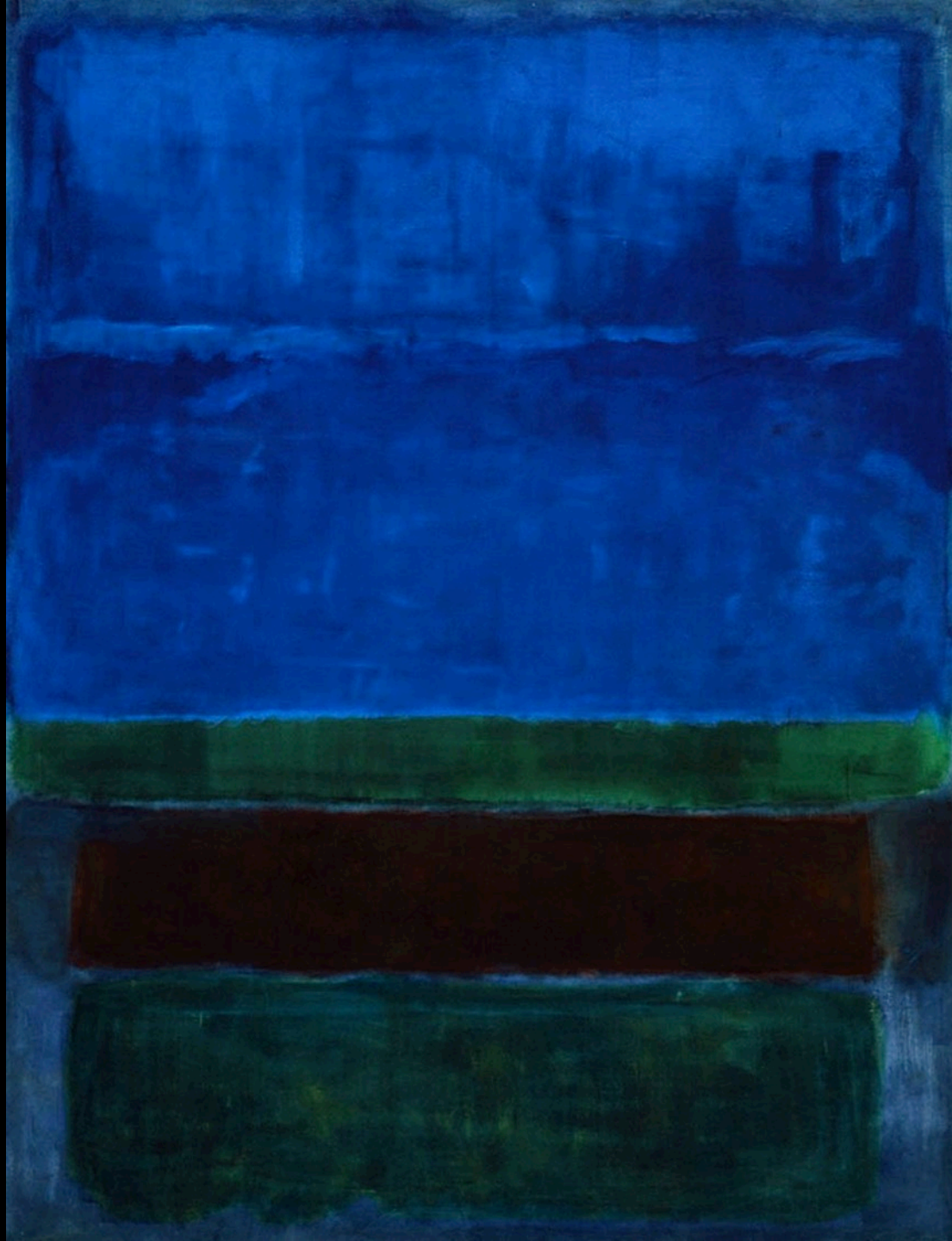
“Health is life lived in the silence of the organs.”

Cited in Canguilhem, *Normal and Pathological*



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Narrative Features of Practice

Creativity—use of the imagination, sensory detail, discovery through craft, play.

Reflexivity—Awareness of process in real time, self-correcting insight, co-constructed encounters.

Reciprocity—bilateral, mutual benefit, mutual growth



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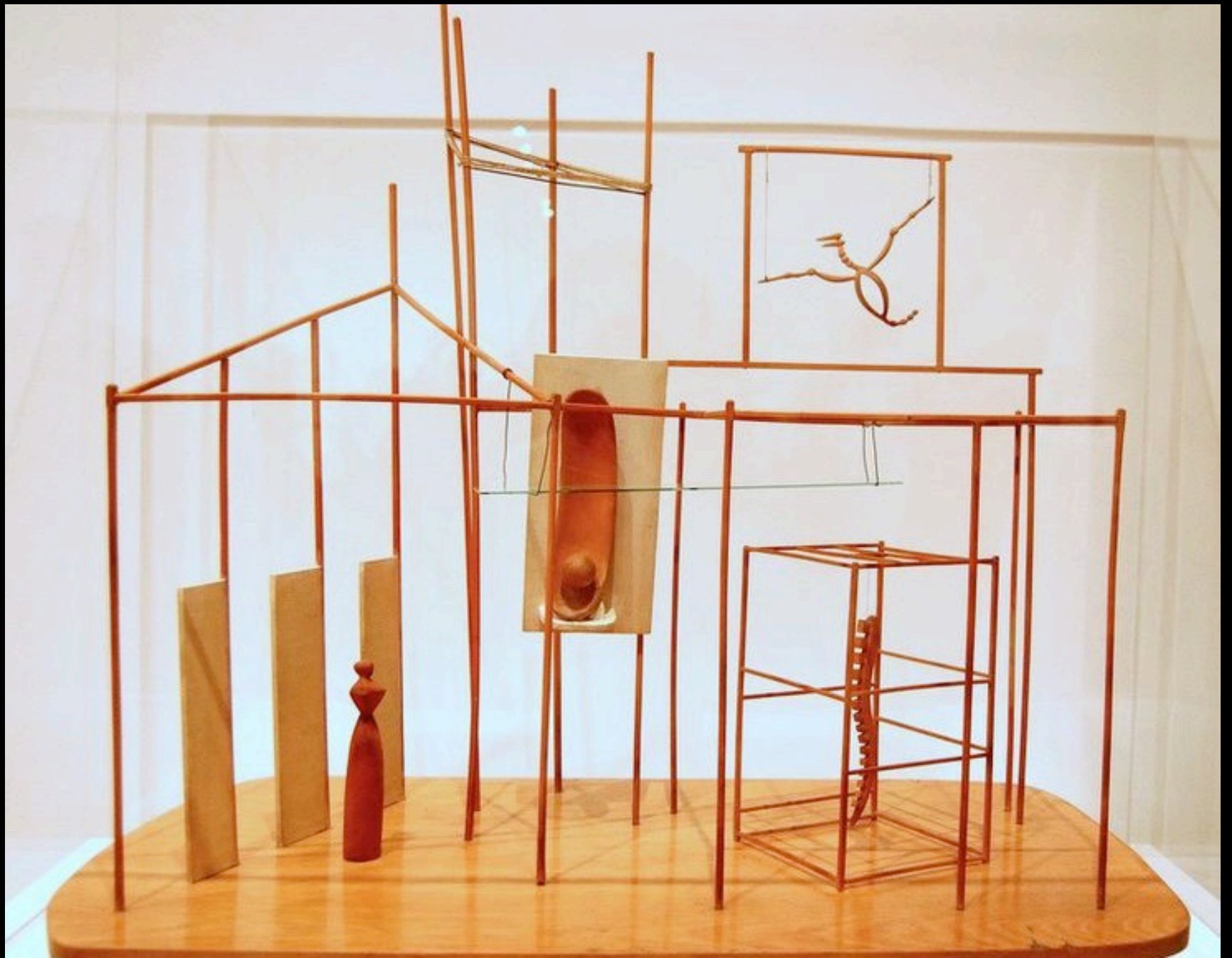
Creativity: Winnicott, *Playing & Reality*

It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self. . . *Psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist.*”



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Reflexivity

- Self-awareness during encounter
- Transmission of present moment to self and other
- Sense of one's position vis-à-vis the other
- Capacity to change in real time: flow



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Reciprocity: Witnessing

- In routine office practice
- In trauma care
- In narrative therapy
- In palliative care



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Writing about Patients

- Discovery
- Diagnosis
- Affiliation
- Confidence



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