The background of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. The top half is dominated by warm, vibrant colors like red, orange, and yellow, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of movement. A series of horizontal, slightly wavy blue lines cut across the middle of the image, creating a layered effect. Below these lines, the colors transition into darker, more muted tones of brown and black, with some blue and red accents. The overall texture is rich and painterly.

# The Doctoral Journey in Art Education

Reflections on Doctoral Studies by Australian  
and New Zealand Art Educators

*Edited by Dr David Forrest and Elizabeth Grierson*



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THE  
DOCTORAL  
JOURNEY  
IN ART  
EDUCATION

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*Edited by*  *David Forrest and Elizabeth Grierson*

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‘Sing for our time too’  
Doctoral research in art education

*David Forrest* ∞ *RMIT University*

In the opening of Homer’s *Odyssey*, the Muse implores the reader to “start from where you will — sing for our time too”. This collection builds and complements the work of music educators in *The Doctoral Journey in Music Education: Reflections on Doctoral Studies by Australian Music Educators* (2003) and *Journeying: Doctoral Journeys in Music Education* (2009). Across these collections approximately thirty Australian music educators reflected on their experiences in undertaking, completing and surviving the doctoral journey. The journeys in this collection are concerned with the visual arts, and particularly the visual arts and education. The commentaries provide insights into processes, issues and ideas that “sing for our time too”.

In considering the notion of the journey as a title of the collection I returned to *The Doctoral Journey in Music Education* (2003) where I suggested:

There is a range of metaphors that can describe the course of a doctorate. The deliberate choice of the word ‘journey’ for the title of this collection provided some direction to the writers. It could have been a trip, pilgrimage, voyage, expedition, or passage. Each of these words has its subtle connotations. Collectively they are all concerned with the transit of time and effort to a destination, whether predetermined or not. (Forrest, 2003, p. 1)

Literature and art are rich with accounts and images of paths and journeys. Often they capture a moment that is within an expanse of time, with its long preparation and final resolution. These journeys were undertaken for a diversity of reasons and intents.

The journeys are transformative and often life-changing. In undertaking the research journey we start to see things differently and adopt (and adapt) different philosophical, artistic or educational stances. I am reminded of the comic strip *Peanuts* where Lucy, Linus and Charlie Brown are lying on the ground looking up at the clouds. Lucy says “If you use your imagination, you can see lots of things in the cloud’s formations.” She asks Linus what he sees, and among other things including the map of the British Honduras he says “That cloud up there looks a little like the profile of Thomas Eakins, the famous painter and sculptor.” Our attention is then directed to Charlie Brown who says “I was going to say I saw a duckie and a horsie but I changed my mind.”

So many of our ideas and intentions are changed and transformed – not just the “duckie and a horsie” but our thinking and level of understanding. Whether it is gazing into the sky, the screen of a computer, or the shelves of books in the library, we question what it is we are doing and see how it is changing around us. As time progresses the significance of the meaning of our research is refined and clarified, and its understanding by others is hopefully increased. In allowing ourselves time to think and reflect we begin to see things differently and come to new understandings and insights, and perhaps even marvel at what has emerged from our original “duckie and a horsie”.

Doctorates have a tradition as old as the universities. Parry (2007) reminds us that “The research doctorate is a distinctive award. Earning it represents the attainment of a pinnacle of academic achievement.

It holds more *cache* than nearly all other awards” (p. 3). Parry (2007) also suggests that a doctorate “connotes mastery of a discipline area, confidence and ability in the making and reporting of new knowledge in a particular field, and ‘know-how’ in the construction of a sustained argument” (p. 3). In this collection we see how the writers have developed and gained mastery in their discipline, how they went about constructing and refining their sustained argument, and importantly how they survived the arduous process. In most cases mastery is not achieved quickly – it is a long process (beyond the boundaries of the commencement and completion of candidature) and accentuated with an ongoing desire to understand and make sense of a particular part of the world.

In 1978 the first PhD in art education was awarded by an Australian university to Dr Geoff Hammond. The reflection by Dr Hammond opens this collection. I am most grateful that he generously agreed to be interviewed. His thesis – “Changes in Art Education Ideologies: Victoria, 1860s to mid-1970s” (Monash University, 1978) – remains a landmark in doctoral research.

The reflections in this collection cover a wide range of time: there are those who are considering from the distance of some 30 years to those whose thinking is quite new and at times raw. They all provide facets in the realm of doctoral research. A diverse range of art educators were invited to contribute to this collection. A number declined due to work commitments at this time.

As with *The Doctoral Journey in Music Education* (2003) the writers in this volume were asked to provide details of their thesis with an abstract – this provides us with a focus for the reflection, as the subject of the research became so much a part of their lives. They were then invited to consider all or some of the following questions:

1. Why did you decide on your university?
2. Reflect on the process you underwent to decide on the topic/thesis and how it changed/emerged?
3. Reflect on the process you underwent to decide on methodology for the research and how it changed/emerged?
4. How did you go about organising your life and work around the thesis?
5. What advice would you give to prospective doctoral candidates?
6. What was the most difficult memory of your time as a candidate?
7. What was the most memorable time during the thesis journey?
8. In retrospect what would you do differently in your journey?

The contributors have generously provided their individual reflections and commentaries around these questions. They provide a multitude of perspectives related to their study. As the contributors have all completed their doctoral studies they have talked about how they eventually emerged from the end of the metaphoric tunnel – some more recently than others.

This collection is significant as it is the first time that a group of Australian and New Zealand art educators have reflected on their doctoral journey. The reflections span the personal extremes from deep poignancy to sheer excitement, as well as the academic, social and political dimensions of their work. They have been written with the knowledge that through these commentaries the journeys of others might be easier – but, hopefully just as adventurous, and in doing so they also will “sing for our time too”.

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A pioneer in art education:  
An interview with Geoff Hammond

*David Forrest*

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Changes in Art Education Ideologies: Victoria, 1860s to mid-1970s.  
*Monash University 1978*

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**Abstract of Thesis**

This study looks at questions concerning the manner in which art education as subject in schools is defined, the mechanisms by which its boundaries are established and controlled, and the processes by which changes in the field take place. It is argued that these questions may be examined through an analysis of the subject's ideologies. This involves an identification and interpretation of the system of beliefs and values which have supported and justified the field at a particular time (and which have helped to determine the content of the courses and teaching methods), and an exploration of the various influencing factors and institutional processes which have acted either to protect and maintain existing attitudes and practices or to initiate change. The relationship between the world of public art and the system of public education is examined in this context.

From an historical viewpoint, the study provides an account of the evolution of art education in Victoria's government schools, from the 1860s to the mid-1970s. The origins and nature of drawing are examined, together with the emergence, justification and establishment of manual training. Attitudes towards these subjects gradually changed, and the term 'drawing' was replaced by 'art', and 'manual training' by 'handwork' and 'craft'. The two subjects always possessed related and overlapping ideologies and in recent years they have virtually merged to form a single area of the curriculum (normally referred to as 'art education'). Two relatively 'stable' phases in the ideological evolution of the subject are identified and examined ('hand and eye training' and, later, an era of 'creativity, self-expression and taste'), and two periods of transition (the first between World Wars One and Two, and the second from the mid-1960s).

From a theoretical viewpoint the study provides some insights into the complex nature of art education ideologies and concomitantly some understanding of the processes by which particular 'definitions' of the subject are established or changed. In general, it is shown that dominant values associated with art as an autonomous institution in society are selected and modified in accordance with prevailing attitudes and practices within the education field. This may involve a broad network of direct and indirect influences, and an analysis of the process therefore requires a case-study approach to allow evidence to be drawn from a specific location and period of time. In Victoria, there has always been a general dependence on overseas initiatives although, until recent years, this dominant influence has been mediated by important factors operating within the local system of education (such as strong central administrative controls, the public examinations system, and the conservative and utilitarian traditions within the field generally).

However, major changes have taken place from the mid-1960s. From this period, increased experimentation and diversity in both the fields of art and education, and a more immediate and widespread acceptance of overseas developments, have had a considerable impact on the ‘boundaries’ of art education and the values attributed to the subject. Because of the nature of these changes, it is argued that there is strong need for further locally-based research into the area.



### **Can you give me some background to you commencing your PhD.**

I finished my thesis in 1978. It had taken about eight years, including two years full-time. I enrolled at Monash University because the Faculty of Education at the time had a number of eminent scholars working there in the fields of philosophy, sociology and history. It was an exciting time to be there as a student.

I initially enrolled in a Masters degree, but reached the point where I either had to ‘cut’ some of my material, or continue expanding and upgrade to a PhD. I chose the latter.

At the start of my journey I was thinking along philosophical lines. I was interested in justifications for art as part of the curriculum. I was concerned that art teachers always seemed to have to justify their discipline – unlike teachers in some other areas.

Not far into my research I came into contact with Peter Musgrave, the Professor of Sociology. He was terrific. He said something like, ‘What you seem to be wanting to do with regard to philosophy is the long way round. It seems to me that you’re interested in ideologies.’ I didn’t know much about the notion of ideologies at the time, but what he said to me just

seemed to fit. It was this that really got me going. I began thinking about the values that supported the subject area. But I didn't know where to start. However, he asked me to write a paper for a colloquium. But when I started working on this paper I found that I was going back much further than I had envisaged. I thought that I would just be starting in the mid-1940s because at that time what influenced us most as art teachers was creativity and self-expression. But it quickly became apparent to me that what happened before this period was also important. As a result, I took a few years going into the precursors of this period. At this time I also came under the influence of another great academic – the historian Professor Richard Selleck.

I reached the point where I knew I had to start at the 'beginning': when art was included in the curriculum of public schools in the 1860s. At that time children were taught 'drawing', not 'art'. The background to this notion of drawing fascinated me and I had to go to England because all of the people who were teaching it were trained there. It was known as The South Kensington System. Most of the drawing masters here in Australia were South Kensington trained. All of this history formed the basis of the paper I wrote for the colloquium.

Another important aspect that I had to consider was that part of the other side of art was craft – something that continued in the twentieth century. But not only this: late in the nineteenth century the 'Sloyd' movement that had its roots in Scandinavia became prominent. Sloyd in fact became a cult. It became the basis of craft in England and this spread to Australia. An early representative of this movement in Victoria was an inspector, John Byatt, who was also involved in the tonic sol-fa movement in music. This also formed part of my colloquium paper. It was at this point that Peter Musgrave, seeing how much material I had amassed, gave me the option of upgrading to a PhD. He pointed out that the area I was

researching was an untouched field. By this stage I had spent about two years working on the Masters degree.

### **How did you go about putting ‘limits’ on your thesis?**

Understanding “ideologies” was a hard task. But I realized that this was a key to my research. Then I had to work out a theory of what was influencing art teachers and the art community. Of course there were lots of things to consider: one of the big things was the art world itself. I was very interested in the thinking that lay behind people calling something ‘art’ as distinct from ‘drawing’. This came to the fore in the 1940s.

At the same time – in the 1940s – educational theory itself was changing. This change was not especially to do with art, but it had a great influence on curriculum in general and what was taught. My thesis spanned the period 1860 to the mid 1970s. Since completing it a lot of people have wanted me to go beyond the 1970s. The late 1970s was an interesting time because it signalled the beginnings of a discipline-based approach.

### **What were your main sources?**

Public Archives and reading Inspectors’ reports. They were good. I read widely and searched widely. I must give credit to the Education Departments Archival Service: the staff there were excellent. Of course, I was writing before we had computers; I used the shoe box and card system. It worked but it was slow. That was probably why it took so long. I wrote everything by long-hand and then had to get it typed-up.

I enjoyed interviewing art teachers who had retired, some of them having written books about art education, including people like Max Dimmack a prominent art educator in Victoria. One of the people I interviewed ended up being one of my examiners. This was Professor Joseph Burke, the first Professor of Fine Art in Australia who held the

Herald Chair in Fine Art. The other examiner incidentally was Bernard Smith, whose book on art is still one of the highly regarded publications in the field. Both of these men had a great interest in art education and it is to their credit that they supported art teachers and art education seminars and conferences.

### **What was the most memorable aspect?**

I still remember my son at the age of three who would sometimes sit alongside me when I was writing, and him asking me, ‘When will you finish your faeces Daddy?’ But I suppose that finishing the thesis was the most memorable thing. So too was the PhD party! The thesis had been so much a part of my life for the best part of a decade.

### **What about the miserable times?**

Although not miserable, the hardest thing was keeping a kid quiet. Everyone who writes a thesis learns that it is a discipline. You have to sit there every bloody day. I would try to write three or four pages a day. It was all written by hand and then handed over to a typist.

### **What would you say to someone starting out?**

I’ve been there at the beginning for lots of students and I always made sure that I gave them great encouragement. And I used to say to them, ‘Just do it.’ I think it’s important to tell a beginning student that it’s a hard slog and is something that you have to learn to stay with. That’s the main thing.

### **Was writing a PhD part of the professional culture of your workplace at the time?**

No, not at that time. When I began I was lecturing at Melbourne Teachers’ College, which later amalgamated with The University of Melbourne.

The emphasis on undertaking a doctorate was not strong at that time. And certainly, there weren't many other people who had done research in my area. I was invited to do a lot of talking and made numerous 'guest appearances'. But as for getting things going as far as research was concerned, that happened a good few years later.

I should add that the Teachers' College was extremely supportive and generous in giving me time off. My wife, Nancy, in fact, took over my teaching for a while. But most of the time I continued lecturing. Of course, I didn't do much painting during this time – something that I took up again after I had finished, and which I have continued doing to this day.

### **How did you have a break from your PhD?**

In a sense I didn't have a break. It was just full on. It never went away. We had this great big blue trunk full of all my research material and it was only relatively recently that I disposed of it.

### **You've worked and consulted beyond art education *per se*. Would you talk about some of the work?**

Yes. Although I am an art educator, I think it is difficult not to become involved in education across the various arts forms. I believe that arts educators gain strength in terms of advocacy when they work together and not compete for what is often a limited part of the school curriculum. This was evident for example with the National Affiliation of Arts Educators, of which I was the Foundation Chair. This was established in the late 1980s to give arts educators a stronger voice at the national level. We were extremely fortunate in that the late Dr. John McArthur, who was Secretary for the federal, state and territory Ministers of Education, saw a need for arts educators to have a national voice and he invited us to join forces as an advocacy group. He very generously hosted meetings for representatives

from all of the arts disciplines to come together from across the country. As result, for some years NAAE had a very positive effect on arts education nationally and locally.

I also have worked in arts curriculaon various other major developmental projects. For many years I was an Australian representative on the World Council of the International Society for Education through Art (INSEA). I was one of two key writers of a national curriculum framework project. *The Arts – A Curriculum Profile for Australian Schools* had a major influence on arts education throughout Australia. I was also the Senior Curriculum Writer for the Arts *Curriculum and Standards Framework* in Victoria. I worked with a group of curriculum writers across the arts disciplines to produce a very innovative Arts curriculum for Victorian schools P-10.

After I retired from The University of Melbourne I worked as a consultant even more broadly to conduct Triennial School Reviews for Victorian primary and secondary schools. This involved reviewing a school's performance in relation to curriculum, management and resource provision over the previous three years, and assisting the school to set goals for the following triennial period. I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to work more globally than that of art educator or arts educator. In this role I was required to look at a school's entire curriculum.

Recently, I have had two large-scale exhibitions of my paintings, which has been hard work but an exciting challenge.

Beyond the aesthetic discourse:  
A PhD about drawing and art education

*Linda Ashton* ✨ *James Cook University*

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Drawing subjects: A poststructuralist study of generalist primary teachers and pre-service teacher discourse in art education ✨ *James Cook University, 1999*

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**Abstract of thesis**

Generalist teachers are responsible for implementing the visual art curriculum in Queensland primary schools. Many lack confidence in drawing and intentionally refrain from teaching it. I researched this problem with twenty-nine generalists. I wanted to know which art and art education discourses had been taken up by the participants, and how these altered upon resuming drawing with a critically reflexive focus. Twenty-six of the twenty-nine (9 teachers and 17 final year pre-service teachers), participated in research discussions and drawing workshops. The participants experienced a rapid personal transition from ‘drawing discouraged’ to ‘drawing encouraged’ positioning. The study’s poststructuralist perspective highlighted the power of language to camouflage, perpetuate and challenge historically repressive, aesthetic discourses. My study suggests that critical methodology combined with the acquisition of specific drawing skills,

helped to make visible the hierarchical Westcentric lens, through which these teachers and pre-service teachers viewed drawing.

Research methodology incorporated drawing instruction, interviews, a questionnaire, group discussions, critical readings, collective memory work and journal entries. In the process of regaining drawing confidence, participants were encouraged to critique the privilege held by pictorial realism as an indicator of talent. They also began to reflect on their discursively imposed repertoire of clichés about art and pedagogy. My teaching and theorising reframed drawing ability as the learning of varied styles, rather than unidirectional progress through developmental stages. I argue that this shift is a necessary aspect of making visible the hierarchical discourses which continue to frame talent, creativity and criticism, within school art contexts. I conclude that focussing on art as social discourse within pre-service teacher education, is an empowering way to challenge hierarchically derived pedagogical alignments. Involving generalist teachers in research is another way to strengthen awareness of art education issues and foster pedagogy which is more attuned to inclusive cultural practices in art making and appreciation.

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### **Choice of university**

It is essential that a doctoral candidate commences with a deep and resilient passion for reading, thinking, creating new ideas and sharing these, to make a positive difference in their lives and the lives of others. I always had a sense of this “knowledge creating” responsibility from the outset of my candidature but the paths and end point for my journey could never have been envisaged until the last full stop was inserted on the thesis. Intellectually, the PhD process was the most engaging and challenging experience of my education and academic career.

I can still read the now ten-year old thesis and feel a sense of “yes that is what I meant to say then and those words are still relevant to the story”. Back then my emergent postgraduate, feminist, poststructuralist, postcolonial, art education voice felt somewhat lonely as a remote, regional murmur. Now, the themes and issues which my contemporaries and I raised and wrote about have bubbled (at long last) into national and state agendas and debates about empowerment, equity, citizenship, environment, literacy, teaching and learning. I have published a number of articles around these social and education foci (Ashton, 1999b-2009). It’s one thing for research and publication to be injected with strong recommendations for change. It’s quite another for the ripple effect to occur where it is most needed – in my case, Australian classrooms. Unfortunately art education which should be a vital conduit for twenty-first century forms of literacy has been positioned and remained in the curriculum backwaters and clearly can’t thrive in the latest National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) literacy discourses.

Echoing this same hierarchical positioning one of the biggest challenges for me was to have my art education topic recognized as a serious one to research. I wanted to research a classroom reality – the fear which most teachers have, openly or secretly, about drawing. My first supervisor at a NSW University had some understanding of what I was looking into but was ready to retire (I know the feeling well now). External mode study in the early 1990s had so many glitches and disadvantages. The best move I made was to change supervisors after twelve months to a new academic at my work place at James Cook University. I am very privileged to identify Professor Bronwyn Davies as the person whose deep critical thinking and celebrated scholarship impacted most profoundly impact on my own research direction. Finding a fantastic, personable supervisor is the best start a candidate can hope for.

Finding a theoretical perspective, which will thread all your little data gems together into a dazzling research necklace that fits and suits, is also

very beneficial. What each candidate does to address these variables, impacts directly on their thesis which can be, and in my case, became an exhilarating, creative thinking journey. It also (and very fortuitously) created a permanent nexus between my tertiary art education teaching, my passion for drawing and emergent research. While the drawing topic provided a sense of direction nothing really prepared me for the intensity and complexity of the doctoral workload and the impact on family life as I continued to work full-time at university and raise a young family. Every candidate must be aware, while consulting with the people they love, to what extent the PhD beast imposes on their lives and how to minimize this. The end product certainly reaps benefits but the process can at times create family havoc. What had to be abandoned for the duration was my own practice as an artist and I worked predominantly with written text. This dichotomy remains contentious from the perspective of many academics whose preference is to think and research through artistic modes. Determining 'research active' status in contemporary university contexts is hardly a beacon or reward for arts-rich doctoral theses.

In hindsight, what the PhD experience did prepare me for well, was a supervision style which blended what I thought were the strongest features of my own supervisor with my considerable experience as an educator. I am confident that this intentional blurring helped to minimize the potential supervision pitfalls identified by Sinclair (2004) and Whitelock, Faulkner and Miell (2008). I have recently written about this process in a joint paper with a PhD graduate (Lord & Ashton, 2009).

### **Process of deciding on the topic**

As is common for doctoral candidates, there were multiple areas I could have focused on for intensive research. My work had already spanned several decades, multi-arts genres and modes and in culturally diverse

learning contexts. The one topic, which had always been simmering, actually bubbled to the top during some professional development sessions I was running with teachers in schools in the early 1990s. Previous to this, children had often lamented in my own classrooms that they “couldn’t draw”. That was easily fixed (or so I thought) with some well timed teaching intervention and specific strategies. The children all learned to draw “well”. What I had also noticed was that the teachers (who were supposed to be teaching children drawing as a vital part of every art education curriculum) were also saying, in alarming numbers “I can’t draw to save myself” or “I can only copy”, or “I am just not creative at all really”. These statements by very competent teachers of English literacy concerned me. Their words were not just evidence that they had never been taught some basic drawing strategies, but that they felt excluded, didn’t see drawing as a way of thinking, and that it was alright for them to be so artistically discouraged.

Longstanding theories, which support the notion of ‘artists’ having natural innate talent, had added scientific authority to exclusion, and a survival of the fittest justification, in this drawing context. Upon reading Araeen, Chalmers, Friere, Christie, Davies, Duncum, Fairclough, Fehr, Freedman, Jordan and Weedon, Clark and others in my early doctoral phase, resonant themes emerged. I started thinking less about how to teach drawing and more about dominant discourses, transmission pedagogy versus transformational educational practices, and of language being embedded with historically imbalanced power positions. These feminist, critical and postcolonial theories impacted on my thinking dramatically and permanently as an educator and as a neophyte researcher. I realized that up to that point in university teaching (at Charles Darwin University and then James Cook University) I too had at times been a conduit for elitist modernist, Eurocentric art education discourses many of which continue to thrive in 2009 art classrooms. Fortunately my simultaneous

immersion in Aboriginal communities had already begun to eat away at that limited world view. Reading about poststructuralist theory and completing doctoral research obliterated it.

### **The process to decide on the methodology for the research**

Once the critical theoretical perspective was established I found that the research focus and questions flowed. The particular questions which framed my study were:

1. Which art education discourses do this group of drawing discouraged generalist teachers align?
2. How do their embodied discourses alter upon resuming drawing with a critically reflexive focus?
3. How does a poststructuralist perspective create space for (re)viewing drawing ability?
4. Are there suggestions for art in teacher education contexts from this study?

Specific data from individual interviews, focus groups, memory work, practical drawing sessions and reflective writing took only six months to collect. Transcribing, sorting and making sense of this data through my poststructuralist lenses took nearly four years. The writing process was not difficult but it was difficult to find uninterrupted time and head space to keep writing. What I found useful was to work for a number of hours on the heavy theorizing and interpretive parts and intersperse these with busy editorial work on the bibliography, table of contents, image formatting and so on. Sometimes not reading a chapter for a few days or a week to see it with fresh eyes helped tremendously. You can read your own words too often and miss what the text might be saying from another's perspective. Pausing and revisiting at well timed intervals were vital strategies for me.

## **Organising life and work around the thesis**

I am not sure, upon reflection how I managed these things concurrently. It is a bit of a blur. I do know that without a helpful husband and understanding family I imagine the blur would be more of a nightmare. I know why most people only ever do one PhD! Being 'chalkies' and organized people generally helped our situation to some extent but I do remember sitting at the computer (a very old Mac) with tears running down my face when my two children were wanting attention for the most mundane yet vital things. They were 13 and 9 years of age when I commenced the study. They survived the challenge and so did our marriage.

## **Advice to prospective doctoral candidates**

My advice (not rocket science) for prospective students (and anyone who has to spend many hours at a computer) is almost prescriptive. Look after your eyes. Use artificial drops without preservatives and keep them beside the computer. There's not much point being visionary in your chosen field if you lose your sight in the process. Look after your diet. Eat healthy snacks regularly rather than large meals or sugary treats whenever you feel pain from hunger. Drink lots of water but don't keep the liquids near your computer! Keep an old fashioned note pad beside the bed so those really great insights aren't lost in the blur of sleep. Back up work electronically every night. This is much easier to do these days but some people still have too much faith in one vulnerable digital copy. When that fails, the consequences are disastrous. When saving files, embed the date they were last amended in the filename. Doing so saves printing out the wrong version for your supervisor to read. Throw all cursor touch pads and mouses - mice (mouses sounds too weird) in the bin and treat yourself to a digital pen with a wacom tablet. This eliminates wrist and arm strain dramatically. Be conscious of your posture at the computer.

Have a mirror which shows how you are sitting and glance regularly. Go for regular walks to get the blood pumping with valuable time away from the paragraphs which just won't flow. Take the dog and discuss your theoretical perspective with someone who cares about you. Have a critical friend other than your supervisor, editor (or the family dog), who will read drafts for free or maybe for free coffee. It helps if editing readers know very little about your topic and keep asking you what you mean. Jargon is a very common PhD complaint.

For art educators, keep arguing wherever it counts that imagery is a valid and vital part of your thesis. Imagery should not be something that is 'tolerated by the academy, relegated to appendices, or risks a penalty for excess page numbers in the thesis. Images are part of knowledge and they matter as much as words and should be celebrated as such. While many contemporary art education thesis formats are now embedding imagery, there is still resistance and outright discrimination for some candidates who complete the equivalent of two PhDs – one visual and one written.

Select examiners wisely. This is again a contentious and variable factor. There are obvious arguments about conflict of interest and so on if the supervisor knows one or more examiners. As the field of expertise dwindles this is almost inevitable in Australia. Academics who know very little about your area of focus, while they might understand your argument, are not necessarily well equipped to examine and judge its contribution to the field. I was very fortunate in this regard with three suitable examiners appointed. Some of my own postgraduate students have not always had this aspect addressed. Final advice: print thesis drafts after major writing sessions to read on paper, recycled where possible. Stay focused and enjoy the ride because chance and luck will each play their part.

### **The most difficult memory of the time as a candidate**

When I commenced my candidature I was a contracted staff member hoping for tenured appointment. The university guidelines at the time were that staff in this situation should expect tenure following a maximum of three years of articulated contracts. Mine was drawn out (for external reasons) to five years. The stress of not knowing for sure if I would be re-employed each year was considerable. I am a much more politically aware and agentic person after immersion in feminist, poststructuralist theory but the system is still far from fair for many part-time and contracted staff, upon whom all universities rely.

### **The most memorable time during the thesis**

My most memorable experience is still that of reading the first full draft of the printed copy. Until doing this from start to finish I didn't have a strong enough sense of continuity or significance. The major contributions that I was making were there, but needed to be showcased more obviously. Constant reading on screen did not allow me this lateral, multidirectional scrutiny. As I have already mentioned, printing drafts, while there is an environmental impact and considerable eco-guilt, is still a very important strategy. The ideas that I have subsequently published from the thesis reflect a strengthened awareness of its overall significance. I will share briefly the three key contributions.

The first major contribution from my thesis is the construction of a new model about drawing styles and repertoires where learners are tutored and copying encouraged as a way of learning the various conventions. The concentric circled diagram (Ashton, 1997) was and is an alternative to the dominant, rungs or hierarchical age-stage models and their normalizing, privileging and deficit discourses. The rings (Appendix 1) represent the myriad of purposes, which drawing and linear literacy can fulfill, and the

different types of thinking they activate. My model is more about social process and providing access for all learners rather than rewarding those labeled as individually talented or about judging the end product (drawing in this case) as evidence of “development”. No single drawing style, and especially not realism, is positioned as “better” than another. Each is positioned as teachable, learnable and purposeful. The model is about genres rather than genes.

My second major contribution (inspired by Paul Duncum’s prolific writing at the time) was critically theorizing about the aesthetic discourse. By listening to the everyday language of my teacher and pre-service teachers, some tips of the aesthetic iceberg became evident. Terms like “good” art and “bad” art, “creative” and “copy” were ubiquitous. I published an abridged version of the extensive table of binary terms (Ashton, 1999b) which are embedded in and maintained as dominant teacher and pre-service teacher discourse about “art” The thesis became the place where I teased out what these words meant in an Australian education context and in connection with diverse literature. A postcolonial reading of many of these terms (see Appendix 2) was illuminating indeed. It showed me that art, like any cultural field, is not uncontaminated by practices which are far from educational or emancipatory. I started the thesis knowing lots about the art isms, such as romanticism, impressionism, expressionism, cubism, fauvism, primitivism, surrealism, modernism etc. I exited the thesis much more focused on the isms that have and can impact on educational outcomes, both positive and negative, such as elitism, colonialism, progressivism, social Darwinism, racism, sexism, feminism, consumerism, capitalism, post Colonialism and pluralism. Post PhD this has been a major focus in my art education course work and teaching, addressing teacher talk and deconstructing the Westcentric discourses around image making, which are invariably loaded and exclusive.

The third contribution in my thesis was to contribute to the postcolonial deconstruction of “creativity” (Ashton, 2008). Since doctoral study, this approach has become the lynchpin of my undergraduate and postgraduate courses and not in the usual way where art and creativity are automatically shackled. I have found it useful to challenge students’ common sense understandings of what creativity means and what else it could mean. The journey for most is confronting and for many, empowering. Reframing twenty-first century ‘creativity’ as part of the capitalist, consumer-driven agenda, and as potentially destructive, is new for most. Critical visual literacy must be part of such an understanding. The idea that “Art is just about individual artists making stuff that is all that is needed for creativity to flourish” is one common pre-course assumption about the art-creativity nexus. This view positions the art product as evidence of creativity without pondering or actively facilitating the mental processes which creative thinking must involve. These can accidentally accompany art time but styles of teaching and the purpose of the art learning will determine creative responses or not and awareness by the learner of these. Playing with paint or clay will not help society to challenge rising pressure for six year old girls to have pretty, padded bras with lingerie-like adornment. Colouring-in neatly won’t help young boys question the ubiquitous violence they view and are targeted with in electronic games, movies and some styles of music. In the thesis I identify that definitions and discourses for creativity still appear more focused on individualism and want, rather than collaborative problem solving and need. The historical and unabated pressure upon the arts as the curriculum area to “take care of” creativity in schools remains. To summarise and extend what was a full chapter in the thesis, I will present my updated 2009 postmodern definition of creativity ...

*CREATIVITY is a social learning process where individuals are first taught accepted genres, symbol systems and conventions. They are then provided with explicit thinking strategies and LANGUAGE which enable them individually or collaboratively to combine & stretch the limits of existing conventions, providing opportunities to create new ideas ... & even invent new genres.*

### **In retrospect what I would I have done differently in my journey**

There isn't much I would, or rather could have done differently at the time. Had I asked and been approved to work part time, we would have managed financially (just). Would the thesis have been stronger or more focused with a less intensive timeframe when I did work full time? I will never know. Illness in the family did lead to a six month break to care for my terminally ill father. His passing was significant. Dad was an avid reader of quantum physics, Zen Buddhism and theories about thinking, despite being taken out of school at 10 and joining the Merchant Navy at 15. Except for his last few weeks of life, Dad had read every word in each of my thesis chapters as they rattled out of the printer. Sadly, at 78, just one year before I did receive my award, Dad passed away. I guess at the time I became even more committed to ensuring I would be the first one in any of our collective families to go to university and to earn a PhD.

### **Other issues**

The "other" issue I have chosen to feature is the ongoing resourcing-status-challenge for art education especially in tertiary education contexts and in schools. Over the years I have witnessed resistance by successive political agendas and education systems to listen to art educators and researchers who have unequivocally documented the benefits of multimodal learning (e.g., Davis, 2009). When one starts on the heady road to PhD everything is very new, hopeful and, by nature, self serving to some extent. Despite a

thesis being well argued, celebrated and published, the filter through factor to transformative change, is a rare outcome. My thirty year art education career and those of my research colleagues from the same era, has been devoted to transformative change. It is always a joy to see how children and adults alike become engrossed in and excited by arts-based learning facilitated by pedagogy based on an assumption of capability not deficit. Despite our combined and considerable efforts, there are many factors which have worked against visual art education, in particular, being taken more seriously. Economic, political, social, administrative and individual stumbling blocks lead many teachers to program art time irregularly – without consequence. Sometimes they do include art in their programs but as decorative down time or window dressing time.

In my own institution the art teaching space (except for a small computer lab and mostly hand me down hardware) has not had any significant upgrade since the early 1970s. When I visit other small universities the situation for art education is often similar. While flash new art premises do not guarantee quality teaching and learning, student fees should filter more obviously into visual art teaching space upgrades. Specialist staff members for visual art education are an increasingly endangered species. My team has been whittled over time from three full-time positions to one, to teach undergraduates across all five strands of the arts – art, dance, drama, media and music. The timeframe to do this within the four year degree is now one semester. There remains an assumption that literacy and art do not coincide. Art is still positioned as being mainly for fun, therapy and display. Art curriculum status is still problematic in many 2010 education contexts.

In schools, I have seen colouring-in activity escalate to an extraordinary level and small children mindlessly, and with great risk of RSI, fill in slabs of ‘colour’ with hard, sharp pencils, in “art time”. In many early childhood

and primary classes computers sit idle or do not have adequate technical support for hardware and programs which encourage ICT design and visual exploration. Some of my pre-service teachers indicate that their schools no longer provide any art resources at all. Classroom teachers often pay for these themselves or if a child's family has not paid the school art levy they do not partake. I have included these negatives as a stark reminder that all is not right within art education. There is still much to do to ensure it remains part of the key curriculum agenda at National level and a more educational experience in classrooms of the future.

In closing I think it is always humbling to remember that despite holding a PhD, not many individuals can change the world for the better, but every individual can change a little bit of their world for the common good. I would like to conclude this paper with the voice of one of my international students from Papua New Guinea. Her abridged journal comment indicates that my PhD topic and findings, which were subsequently embedded in my postdoctoral teaching, made tangible positive changes in this regard.

My reaction to learning about the two groups - white dominant culture and the black primitive art as they say was surprising. I was never taught at school to appreciate and study my own cultural artwork but we were taught to believe that everything 'white' was the best. We learnt English, read and used foreign curriculum etc., and my pre-conception before this course was that I believed everything I was told. After having gone through this course I find that there were indeed exclusive practices and social binaries. Even if the western artist didn't think they degraded the primitive art, in action, it shows clearly that they did and it is still in the language of art used to this day. The words used to talk about different cultures' art clearly discriminate white from black, and also the men from women, the child from adults

etc. As an indigenous student, I am now more critically aware of art history and discourses used in art. It is quite disheartening to know that many of the cultural 'artefacts' which were classified as 'primitive' are still in foreign museums etc. Also that many indigenous artists were never recognized ...

The 20 philosophical questions we had before the course were a great guide. My perception has changed from believing in the DWEMPS (dead white male painters and sculptors) as the pinnacle or best or that this should be the model for art education. As a student teacher, I have to be very culturally aware of the language as well as the artwork I use and do with children in classrooms. I will never be able to look at an easel in a school again without thinking about these issues. I have had my pre-conceptions challenged and I feel empowered.

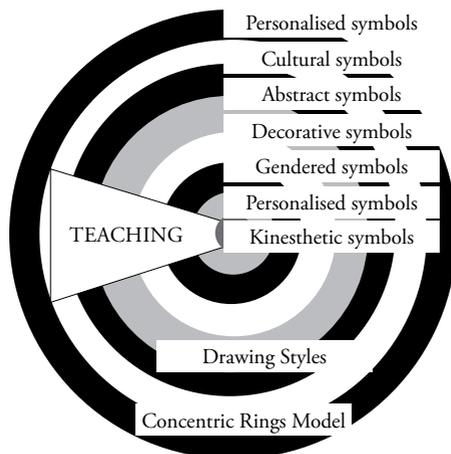
By Wagi ❷ Post Graduate Student, Master of Education 2002

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## Appendix 1 Rings model for reconceptualising drawing ‘development’



Ashton 1999

Unlike the unidirectional RUNGS model with ages and stages this concentric RINGS model has different drawing styles. It is like the game of ring toss where rope circles can be tossed in any order onto a central anchor point. Teaching and imitation are the base plates which anchor the game. There is no “preferred” style. It is a GENRE based model.

## Appendix 2 Teacher and pre-service teacher talk and dominant discourse about art

The word lists which follow illustrate how binary opposites terms in everyday language about art, tend to perpetuate dominant power relationships. The left column contains words which are historically associated with powerful, privileged positioning in art. The binary opposite in the right column presents the terms more commonly associated with those who have been systematically devalued, colonised, excluded or patronised. The table also echoes differences for the social categories of – race, gender & class, age, ability and location. Some of these terms were present in the data collected for my doctoral study and spoken by teachers and pre-service teachers about

drawing 'ability'. Many of the words are in art history texts and used by teachers when talking to children about their own and others' art.

GOOD ART LIKE	BAD ART DON'T LIKE
Western aesthetic	Non-western aesthetic
Coloniser landowners	Colonised dispossessed
Powerful evolved	Powerless rudimentary
Developed (1st world)	Undeveloped (3rd world)
Modern civilised refined	Prehistoric primitive exotic savage
Strangelight skin	Dark skinned oriental ethnic
Caucasian	Middle eastern foreign other
European avant-garde	Non-european / indigenous native
Progressive	Barbaric mysterious extinct
High culture 1st rate	Low / culture / 2nd 3rd rate "other"
Complex / beautiful	Simple rough / ugly shabby
Famous named / individual	Anonymous unknown group
Gallery / studio	Museum cottage- industry markets home
Central important	Peripheral irrelevant
Written history	Legends / spoken signed sung danced
Literate	Oral history / sung / illiterate
Permanent grand	Ephemeral ceremonial ritualistic
Have a 'voice' & name	Silenced artefacts stolen
Male	Female
Mind	Body
Virtuous / clean	Immoral / unclean
Enlightened	Ignorant
Art producer art critic	Art consumer the masses
Original rare unique	Copied mimetic common
Valuable / priceless	Cheap / bartered
Worthy true expensive	Worthless / forgery / fake / cheap
Aesthetic fine art	Utilitarian / craft
Creative / high quality	Reproductive
Hand made / tasteful	Mass produced / kitsch

Patrons / monks / clergy	Patronised / commoners sinners witches
Nobility / elite pharaohs	Commoners / slaves
Monarchs wealthy	Poor / homeless / nomadic
Free well fed	Controlled / censored oppressed hungry
Christian / religious	Pagan / heathen / voodoo / spell / cursed
Divine enlightened / white	Evil /dark / black / sinister / demonic
Heavenly divine angelic	Impure idol
Painting sculpture	Souvenir / artefact object
Nude refined	Rude / earthy / soiled / crude
Creator object de art	Viewer
Active / superior strong	Inferior / weak
Aggressive	Passive / submissive
Creative expressive	Decorative / repetitive
Artist	Artisan / craftsman
Painter sculptor	Textiles / sewer / weaver
Innate artistic gift	Not gifted / not in the genes / bones
Developed (piagetian)	Socially constructed modelled (vygotskian)
Mature	Immature childlike
Adult & child prodigy	General public
Extraordinary	Ordinary hopeless
Famous documented	Anonymous / excluded silenced
Celebrated serious	Stylised naive cute
Complex / sophisticated	Simple raw
Professional proper	Amateur naive
Work bus(y)ness	Idleness therapy
Talented skilled	Untalented unskilled scribble
Genius advanced	Remedial / regressive / retarded
Realistic proportions	Distorted
Specialist	Generalist
Master	Apprentice
Masterpiece	(No binary equivalent)
Artistically enabled	Artistically disabled
Empowered encouraged	Restricted discouraged
Says or is told i can draw	Says or is told i can't draw

Possibility, impossibility and responsibility:  
Doctoral journey in art education

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Catholic University*

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The formation of visual as concept and practice in art education:  
Towards an understanding of disciplinarity ✎ *University of New  
South Wales, College of Fine Arts, 2009*

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**Abstract of thesis**

This research investigates the formation of visual as discursive practice. Discourses that celebrate, denigrate and omit visual are examined with a particular focus on discourses of the child and technology in art education. This thesis applies poststructural methodologies of discourse analysis to disrupt traditional accounts of discipline configurations determined in histories of art education. With a particular focus on Michel Foucault's methods of history, archaeology and genealogy, art education as discipline is mapped through an investigation of visual as concept and practice. This research contends that the emergence of current practices in visual culture, as configured within the constraints of art education amplifies the conditions of visual to define art education as a field. It examines

the mobilisation of discourse, verified by discipline formations in art education, and the way in which such formations distribute and categorise knowledge that is sequenced within power structures. Therefore, visual, as a discursive practice is one way through which to trace the conditions of the field, including the structure of discipline as knowledge and subject in art education.

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## **Introduction**

To help map my personal doctoral experience I will narrate, analyse and examine discourses to reveal the possibilities, impossibilities and responsibilities, which arose from engaging with a process loaded in power configurations and knowledge formations (Foucault, 1998, 1984, 1980). This doctoral journey will be told in order to analyse the power domains that implicitly and explicitly developed through the six-year journey. In the words of Michel Foucault to understand the self and concepts of subjectivity one needs to examine the relations between individuals and groups, whose practices govern the conduct of particular individuals (Foucault, 2002, 1986, 1984). In the case of my doctoral journey I became aware of my subjectivity through transformations, which inherently interwove configurations of “governmentality”, in that “the government of the self”, that is, me, as the doctoral candidate, can only be articulated in relation to others, which are spoken for and represented through systems (Foucault, 1986, p. 41). It is not my intention to marsh my doctoral journey in Foucauldian speak, rather Foucault gives me a way to understand my journey as a collective discourse that was disrupted, discontinuous and discursively constructed. The order of this tale speaks volumes about individual decisions and challenges (some of which were

mine and some of which were from other individuals); it magnifies the intentionality of the collective (the institution and the propositions of official knowledge managed by ‘authors’ of the field, supervisors); and it examines the productivity agenda that omitted and exemplified practice during my doctoral process.

### **From lecturer to doctoral supervisor: A possible fit**

After completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Arts I continued my studies and completed a Bachelor of Art Education at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). My interest in the visual arts was further enhanced during my art education degree when deeper analyses of political and institutional structures were explicitly examined through educational theory and philosophy (Foucault, 2005, 1977a). My interest in the politicisation of the visual arts as intellectual property was the impetus to develop a doctoral proposal through the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney. I wanted to further develop my scholarly practices and explore another institution. The proposal was scrutinised to no avail; it was rejected on the basis that it had an education focus with minimal emphasis on the law. My attempts to traverse disciplinary fields were founded on discipline expansion. I believed that I could further expand my knowledge in the field of the visual arts and art education if I mobilised my explorations through a discipline that had a presence of discourse in broader fields of the social sciences, the law. However, as I developed the proposal it became apparent that a critical investigation of practices in education was the direction I was authorising in my research work.

I continued to teach as a visual arts teacher when an academic from the University of New South Wales, who was a lecturer of mine during my education studies and who was to become my first doctoral supervisor, suggested I consider doctoral studies and begin a PhD in Art Education.

This person was to become my mentor and build on a track record that saw her as part of my transformation into my research activities. At the time she was the Head of School of Art Education and guided me through the process of writing the doctoral proposal. Her expertise in applying Foucauldian methodology to critically examine discourse practices directly altered my approach in examining visual in art education. Her critical approach and her finesse in developing rich conceptual links in my argument still to this day has transformed the way I teach, research and think. There was no question in my mind that the mentor capacities that were being presented to me were exactly the supervision I was looking for.

### **Visual Arts as Fine Arts and Visual Arts in Art Education**

As my professional endeavours moved from the visual arts, as a practising artist/painter, to art education, a teacher, I noticed and was intrigued by the ways in which *visual* as concept and a practice was authorised within the visual arts and within art education. The varying approach was the impetus for my inquiry. As a teacher in the visual arts classroom and a member of education associations the term visual was represented in the broader field of educational practice and research was at variance to the propositions set out in the visual arts. I was puzzled by how art teachers represented themselves as 'visual' arts teachers. During the later part of the 1990s the term visual had vast representation in the subject areas of English and History. My interest increased as I inspected the discursive shifts that were occurring with the use of the word 'visual' and the implicit links to progressive and 'new' ways of knowing (Foucault, 2002, 1998, 1990, 1983). Similarly, visual culture and visual literacy, as multidisciplinary terms were being formulated and constructed within education fields.

Since the late 1990s, with an increase in conference representation and publication, visual culture in art education was mobilised as a discursive

practice of the field. The distinct appearance and currency of the use of *visual* as term, practice and concept in visual culture informs the conditions for the use of visual in art education — that is, how the term is mobilised, omitted or redistributed by discourses in art education. In general, visual is attributed to Visual Arts Education as subject curriculum and as discipline knowledge. However, visual as both theoretical and empirical knowledge, waxes and wanes in the field of art education. The distinctive practices of visual are regulated by discourses that are authorised to function as representatives of disciplinary knowledge in art education (Foucault, 1972, 1977b, 1980). Two such discourses are the child and technology. It was the particular focus of discourses of the child and technology that saw the development of my research hunch begin to be cultivated – I saw the direct links to statements that endorsed the child and technology with accounts referring to visual as concept and practice in art education, represented through discourse in the field.

As a distinctive discursive practice, visual in Visual Arts Education draws from discourses of the Visual Arts and Education. The divergence of this distinction impacts on the way in which visual as concept and practice formulates the conditions of the field of art education. In other words, the authorisation, the appearance, and the omission of visual in the field of art education determine the discipline characteristic of the field. Visual as knowledge is established and grounded within the constraints of the field. It is from an inspection of discursive practices, such as the status of visual, that I begin to assess a history of art education as a knowledge discipline that can be examined through the illusive word, visual.

As an inherent history of education, discourses of the child formulate the conditions from which education is politicised and interrogated for its practice. I examine accounts of discourses of the child in education with reference to the work of Carmel Luke (1989) and Jacques Donzelot (1997). The investigations of discourses of the child in art education were examined

for the synonymous links to conditions of visual that regulate the body to function and operate in alternate modes. The child as concept and practice, and visual as concept and practice in art education form a contradiction or what Foucault terms “the condition of existence” (Foucault, 1972, 1980).

Through the work of Viktor Lowenfeld, discourses of the child are considered to explore the cemented conditions of the child-centred focus in art education. The child is empowered through the discourse of Lowenfeld to promote and omit the conditions of knowledge and the perception of discipline formation within the field itself. Visual as a discursive practice in art education is subjected to the conditions of the child who forms attributed knowledge. The Lowenfeldian focus of child-centred learning and the devotion to creative growth mobilises the discourse of the child through the theoretical underpinnings of Lowenfeld (Lowenfeld, 1960, 1968). The discourse of the child constructs and omits the discursive practices of visual in art education (Luke, 1989; Baker, 2001).

Similarly, the discourse of technology is interrogated as a specific discourse that authorises and prohibits the conditions of visual in art education. An inspection of the discourse of the child and technology in art education will examine the rules and regulations that situate the formation of visual as concept, practice and knowledge in art education. Particularly through the inclusion of visual culture in art education the role of technology in the endorsement of a ‘new’ way to consider practices in art education, discourses of visual culture celebrate technology as the panacea in understanding visuality in a technological world (Duncum, 1997a, 1997b).

### **Foucault as a political tool: An inspection of the field of Art Education as a responsible challenge**

Utilising Foucault’s methods of discourse analysis, archaeology and genealogy, a construction of a history of art education is assembled within

the conditions and constraints of a poststructural investigation. An examination of visual is undertaken through an inspection of statements, objects, and archival data, documents/monuments of the field. The purpose of this research investigation is to interrogate the workings of art education through an inspection of discourses that promote, demote, and conceal visual as concept and practice (Foucault, 2002, 1983, 1972).

Foucauldian methods of discourse analysis develop *a* history of art education purported through objects of the field, as opposed to *the* history of art education that is manufactured by suppositions and formulated commonplace understandings. In other words, an examination of the term visual, as it functions in art education characterises the conditions from which the field sees itself. Therefore, an investigation of practices of visual examines a history of the present rather than a retrospective account driven by chronology and narrative. Through practices and conceptual propositions discourses in art education are determined by discipline power that produces knowledge and circumscribes the deployment of practices. The mobilisation of the concept of the visual as a defining attribute of Visual Arts Education is problematised and the subject distinction of *Visual* Arts Education is examined for its appearance in publications and conference proceedings. Specifically, the appearance, endorsement and omission of visual as concept and practice in art education are interrogated through an inspection of two critical and pivotal discourses in art education: the discourse of the child and the discourse of technology.

Although no discrete literature review chapter is included, it should be noted that the data for this research has been generated from art education journals which include: *Studies in Art Education*, *Journal of Art and Design Education*, *Visual Education Research*, *Australian Art Education*, *Art Education*, *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, book publications and archival documents. Similarly, the breadth of publications by Paul

Duncum and Kerry Freedman are considered in this research. Moreover, Viktor Lowenfeld's publications and publications distributed in art education journals, which discuss Lowenfeld's influence on art education as a field of knowledge, are examined. The data for the discussion on the Visual Education Movement (VEM) of the 1920s was generated through a discrete archival search through digital databases and delicate archive documents administered at: The Australian National Library, The Australian National Archives, The British Film Institute and the University of Chicago Library. As a Foucauldian historical investigation the documents of the field are the objects from which this research investigation organises and designs an analysis of discourse. It is hoped that the scope of the literature examined is evidenced in the document analysis that forms the body of the thesis.

This thesis questions traditional formations of histories of art education to define discipline configurations. With an application of Foucauldian methodologies, history is treated as a process from which discourse analysis discloses the ordered knowledge of a field. A poststructural historical approach questions existing formations of grand narratives that subsist in discipline configurations, and examines selected monuments of the field to locate the discursive practices supported or opposed by discourse and endorsed or rejected by institutions of the field. Therefore, the discursive practices of visual are examined to attribute the way in which art education speaks of itself and to itself through the endorsement of discourses that are mobilised as power/knowledge of the field.

With the guidance of my doctoral supervisors Foucauldian methodologies transformed what seemed to be a simple investigation, to the exploration of practices in the broader field of education. The inspection of a term, visual, provided me a way to map practices in art education that were humming under the surface, omitted from official

policy and curriculum yet explicitly present in other discourse formations. The political potential of Foucauldian methodologies has allowed me to further explore the construction of curriculum through the implicit and explicit representation of discourse as knowledge formation – what is included and excluded as a political act.

### **The balance: An impossible possible equilibrium**

The two modes of doctoral candidature offered at UNSW were either, full-time or part-time – full-time denoting completion in three years and part-time, expected completion in six years. As a part-time student I found it intriguing that such a distinction could be made due to the fact that my inquiry and exploration of content and ideas went beyond the part-time capacity. The use of part-time as a differentiation of candidature was not synonymous to part-time work. The commitment and responsibilities of part-time doctoral candidature was directly linked to full-time academic employment as a continuing lecturer at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). Therefore the organization of a continuing academic position and the completion of a doctorate were tantamount. My full-time work fed into my part-time candidature making the commitments to doctoral completion a full-time endeavor. In other words, although my academic employment and my doctoral studies were from differing institutions the completion of my doctorate was directly linked to the conditions of employment. The pressures of completion were not only administered by the institution of candidature, but also from the place of employment. With this gift and curse, the completion of my doctorate had invested interests from two institutions. The gifting being that my doctoral studies were linked to the development of my academic career, the curse being that the added pressure of completion and responsibility of publication increased the candidature capacity. As such, the pressures of completion

and the availability of support were buttressed between two institutions with particular interests for the completion of my doctorate.

The inclusion of a research day and the structuring of my academic timetable to allow for thesis writing and block research time allowed for consistency and momentum. The regulative structures that came from both institutions worked both as impingements and opportunities in the completion process.

### **Think big work small: The internal battle**

A regular dialogue that comes out of the vernacular speak about the doctoral process is the difficulty to simplify a research investigation for a doctoral thesis. I found it essential to expand and ‘think big’ in the early stages of my candidature to maximize the capacity of my inquiry. I found I was reading about the bionic eye and eye construction in the field of Science and Biology to add to my knowledge of vision and in turn visual theory. These ‘ground work’ investigations, as I coined them, comprised essential working time that did not have direct representation in my thesis however these were essential in the conceptualisation of ideas and theories. The ‘smallness’ of the project comes through an ability to know the difference between the ‘thinking big’ activities and the ‘small possibilities’. I found that the relationships between these two, quite different ways of thinking and doing, were fundamental in understanding my own contributions to research process.

In starting a PhD and knowing that by the end of the process a printed document with a great deal of words had to be submitted for examination, the writing process for me was an absent discourse – writing was just going to happen. I found the process and progress of writing the most challenging in understanding and owning the research. However, there was also an essential part to silencing writing at different times of the research process in order to allow for high level conceptual

thinking rather than focusing on tense, split infinities, grammar and sentence structure. The two aspects of research, conceptualisation and writing were not necessarily one and the same. These opposing practices had distant similarities that forced me as the researcher to mediate between the two in order to develop an understanding that allowed for progress and completion. Therefore, part of my research practice was to develop mediation skills that would help bridge the impossible relationship between conceptual research and writing up research: this was a silent and isolated mediation practice.

### **From doctoral student to nurse Betty**

The memories of my doctoral candidature linked to challenging and often difficult events that had direct associations to supervisory relationships. Before documenting the particular practices and events that attributed to a memory of the process that was complex, it is worth noting that my foremost doctoral supervisor had a debilitating disease. As a student during my undergraduate degree there was always speculation about her health but nothing was ever declared. In deciding to become a doctoral student to my supervisor I was unaware of the possibilities and impossibilities I was getting myself into – above and beyond ‘normal’ supervisor and student expectations.

As I commenced my doctoral studies my supervisor was going through some very difficult health issues, in her words: “I have fallen over”. This was a statement that continued to come up at different times of my candidature. Nevertheless, my supervisor was committed to taking up her role although some changes had to be made. Due to the symptoms brought on by the debilitating disease, time and place was a very real issue in conducting effective work. It was agreed between my supervisor and me to conduct meetings and consultations at her home, to allow

for consistency and continuity in her day. Although the meetings were productive and led to taking big conceptual leaps in my research the supervisor and student relationship was highly compromised. I found my role shifted from student to carer and my supervisor referred to me as “Nurse Betty” to make light of the situation. This was a situation where two people who were represented by the university in the capacity of supervisor and student had no direct support by the school or the university to assist in setting up the conditions of candidature. For reasons of privacy and discreetness this complicated relationship had implications for my progress and completion of my thesis.

As the health symptoms worsened and the supervisor/student relationship gained complex momentum I felt that in order to complete my candidature I needed to reconsider the role of my supervisor and seek out another supervisor. I contacted the school and noted that things were not progressing well; the school felt obliged to intervene. The dismantling of the supervisor relationship was very difficult and there was high level of tension and discomfort during this process for all involved.

## **The Ah-Aha’s and the possibility of completion**

### ***Conceptual unpacking***

As mentioned previously, my foremost supervisor mentored me through the process of unpacking and intellectually inquiring into ideas in a sophisticated and complex manner. She scaffolded critical possibilities in examining text, assumptions, normalisations and commonsense issues. She introduced me to poststructural endeavours and allowed me to further develop my inquiry capacities. I would come in with an idea and leave with a range of complex possibilities that helped me map my initial inquiry. I left the meetings with ‘ah-aha’s’ that were about my research question, my data collection or the role of the methodology to the project.

### ***Thesis construction***

My foremost supervisor taught me how to maximise my conceptual understanding and my subsequent supervisor allowed me to mobilise my conceptual understandings in my thesis writing. In setting out the structure of the thesis I started to recognise and value the role that writing and structure played in the formation of a doctoral thesis. Another ‘ah-ah’ moment came when I was writing my thesis and restructuring and editing sections that I realised the role of simplicity and simple writing in showing an understanding of complex ideas. This was highlighted in one of the thesis examination reports where the examiner noted that, “too often those using the writing of Foucault fall into a theoretical mess so that the writing is not clear or accessible. In this thesis the writing was highly impressive”.

### **Seeing my role in it: Responsibility**

The relationship between the student and supervisor, which develops during the doctoral process, is complex and driven by events that affect the conditions of the relationship. What I would change or amend in hindsight is to not ignore the elephant in the room – my supervisor has a debilitating disease and this will affect the doctoral process. I saw the intellectual inquiry as the utmost importance and I failed to recognise the impact that a severe health issue could have on the supervisory exchange. I needed to address the supervisor and student dynamics early on in my candidature with the presence of the school executive.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper this tale unpacks my doctoral journey and reveals the role of individual decision-making in developing relationships, research ideas and productive agendas with the aim to complete a doctoral thesis. I have explored a research question that politicised the formation of visual in the field of art education and

I have expanded my insight into discursive formations within a research inquiry and gaining understanding of discursive formations that develop and exist in a doctoral journey. In the words of Foucault, “power is exercised from innumerable points” making not one person the author and giver of power, and as such “power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled ... power relationships are both intentional and nonsubjective” (Foucault, 1980, p. 94).

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# A doctoral journey with picturing artists

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Picturing artists: A feminist poststructuralist study of nine women  
✎ *La Trobe University, 1998*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

This study has sought to address the neglected area in research in the visual arts of women's perceptions and strategies for sustaining their careers as artists. It aimed to investigate the formative life experiences of nine women and how they perceived their positions as students, artists, art teachers and family members in relation to the discourses dominant in their lives. The study aimed to identify new discursive practices undertaken by the women to contest their positioning and was guided by a feminist, poststructuralist methodology that acknowledged the notion of the constitution and the positioning of the subject in discourse. The focus was on nine women, with data collected through interviews and documentation including curricula vitae, exhibition catalogues and photographs of work and work spaces. Two main methods were used to analyse data: comparative induction of the women's understandings about their social, aesthetic and professional

contexts; and discourse analysis. Discourse analysis was used to uncover discursive constraints upon possibilities for women's speech and visual expression. As well, it revealed the emancipatory language practice of the women which allowed the adoption of alternative subject positions. Further concepts to guide the analysis were subjectivity, agency and self-reflexivity. There were four major findings. First, the obstacles to women's careers identified in the review of literature were substantiated by the empirical data. Second, women challenged and restructured constraining discourses in negotiating their careers. Third, the women utilised a range of strategies to negotiate obstacles to their careers. Further possible strategies were identified by the researcher based on the literature and the empirical evidence. Fourth, the provisional research framework has indicated possible directions for a more relevant art education research paradigm.

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As an academic I have been accustomed to write or speak from my work rather than about my work. Marjorie Theobald (1998) and Anthony Potts (2003) both make this distinction. This paper follows the second pathway and maps the sources and the landmarks that have made the journey possible. As Theobald revealed (1998, p. 30) one's early biography influences the steps, and deviations, and destination of the journey.

I returned to study in 1976 after discontinuing a Diploma of Art and Design due the birth of twins and a third baby two years later. Then as a single supporting parent I was relieved to gain a state teaching studentship. My decision to teach was made on the need to support and care for my children so I was determined to do as well as possible. In my Bachelor of Education I undertook an honours program and graduated with first class honours for my thesis.

I became highly politicised throughout my student years becoming a member of the Women's Electoral Lobby and of the Australian Democrats. I stood for the Victorian Legislative Assembly as a candidate for the Democrats in the seat of Geelong West. This is important because it prepared the ground for my later research orientation. I taught for almost fifteen years throughout country Victoria as a generalist primary teacher and specialist in art and in science. At the same time I struggled to maintain my art practice. When a position was advertised in 1991 for Lecturer in Art Education at the University College of Northern Victoria (now La Trobe University's Bendigo campus), I applied and was appointed. I was assured that my initial three-year contract would be on-going so I commenced a Masters in Education. I was able to move directly into a research degree because of my earlier honours degree. I appreciated the sound advice I had been given at Geelong State College.

While working full time, it made sense to study in my own institution. However this period coincided with the college's growing relationship with La Trobe University and a rationalisation of positions seen as peripheral to the main business of the school. Along with positions in art, those in music, social science and physical education were cut back. Science was protected by management with a science orientation. Staffing came to reflect the 'back to basics' curriculum policy emphases of the state Liberal government and included, as well as science, information and communications technology (ICT).

So I returned to the classroom and awaited the result of my application for an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) that would enable me to continue my research studies full-time. Two months of teaching convinced me that I was no longer happy in the classroom and, upon receipt of the APA, I resigned from the Education Department. Hoping to receive one of the many redundancy packages available at this time, I discovered I had missed out by only a couple of weeks.

Now a full-time student, I needed to consider where my study was taking me. In consultation with the Higher Degrees Coordinator, I decided to apply for an upgrade to a doctorate. My writing to date, chapters one through three, were sent out for independent assessment. The report was good; apparently the reviewer felt that I had the capacity for doctoral study but the research needed more focus to give it greater depth. This resulted in over 30,000 words being thrown out and my reading taking a new direction with the demand for a more rigorous theoretical framework for the study. Because of my political standpoint that had strengthened over the years since my student days at teachers' college, I found myself moving towards a feminist poststructuralist framework.

My research topic had arisen from the comparisons between my experience of art school in the early 1970s and that of one of my daughters in the 1990s. Despite more than two decades of feminism in Australia, her experiences of discrimination were hardly different from mine. The overwhelming observation of my own learning experiences in the arts was a lack of women as part of art history and as role models for women aspiring to be artists. Upon reflection, I realised that my own teaching did little to redress the imbalance in art history. In other ways my teaching was gender inclusive as in the art room students had equal access to all manner of art media and the expectation was there for all students to achieve regardless of the medium. My daughter's experience of tertiary art training mirrored my own experiences. This prompted me to question what experiences other women who were artists and art educators had had over the twenty-year period since the re-emergence of feminism in the visual arts in Australia in the seventies. As an art educator, I was interested in relating the work experiences in the visual arts of women to their educational experiences. Conclusions drawn from the study should then suggest directions for curriculum innovation in art education.

Importantly, I had read a paper by Janet Woolf (1989), *Women's Knowledge and Women's Art* that became seminal for the writing of my doctoral thesis. It provided a thematic framework for organising the extensive literature review. Woolf also alerted me to a vital point that became central to my thesis. I became sensitised, not only to what the women artists whom I interviewed said about their art practice and careers, but also to what they were unable to say, the silences.

Janet Wolff (1989) recognised the need for feminists to contest the male traditions of art history. She pointed to a new direction in feminist research in the arts to examine and expose “the structural and ideological obstacles to women’s success” (1989, p. 2). She asked, “What is the possibility for women to write [or paint] from their own experience, no longer mediated by the culture and point of view of man?” (Wolff, 1989, p. 2). The assumption that women were excluded from culture and the question of how this occurred both needed to be examined closely before the notion of an *écriture féminine* or feminine aesthetic could be addressed. This direction in feminist theory of examining the role played by women in cultural production, particularly the production of language, arose from the writings of the 1970s French feminists Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva. It was further investigated by Spender (1980). She described how male subjectivity had been the source of meaning in language, and how men had become the dominant group and women the muted group, hence the silences that existed in women’s accounts of their life experiences.

In my research I wanted to explore the educational, social and work experiences of nine women to document their formative life experiences as artists. I intended to examine how they perceived their positions as women negotiating careers in the visual arts in Australia, as well as how they positioned themselves with regard to the subjectivities of art student, artist, teacher, life partner and mother. This led me to consider

discourse analysis as a further lens through which to view the data. The purpose here was to explore how the women engaged with the discourses of the art world and the wider world, and to examine the cultural and discursive constraints on what they said. As a result a widely enhanced view of the women's careers was possible as well as an understanding of their engagement in social struggle through the adoption of emancipatory language practice (Fairclough, 1989). So the research problem required two research methods or approaches. First, I needed to investigate the lives of the women to establish an understanding of the context in which they as artists had negotiated careers in the Australian art world. This fieldwork involved the use of in-depth interviews to elicit the women's life histories. The data was then organised according to the major themes that arose across the women's lives. Second, I needed a means to describe and interpret the participants' perceptions about these contexts of practice and how they positioned themselves according to the dominant discourses of the social and art worlds that they inhabited. The examination of the cultural and discursive constraints on the women's speech required the text of the interview data to be subjected to discourse analysis. A particular kind of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989) was chosen thus providing a perspective about the nature of the constraints and the possibility for individual or collective challenges to those constraints.

The two methods meshed together because the initial analysis provided an understanding of the social conditions and resources that the participant brought to the production of the text (the interview). According to Fairclough (1989), these social conditions could be viewed on three levels of social organisation:

1. The immediate social situation in which the discourse occurred.
2. The social institution that constituted a wider matrix for the discourse.

3. The level of society as a whole.

The discourse analysis was able to explicate the relations of power and domination and the ideologies that were contained within common sense assumptions through which the women produced and interpreted discourse. These relations make ordinary discourse a site of social struggle. Through explanation it was possible to show that the discourse was part of social practice and that it was capable of reproducing social structures or of changing them. To use Fairclough's words, "[e]xplanation is a matter of seeing a discourse as part of processes of social struggle, within a matrix of relations of power" (1989, p. 163).

The resulting rich view of the visual arts careers of the nine women provided insights into the unique life history of each woman and her interpretation of the social and aesthetic context in which she had worked. As well, it was possible to see how she as a subject had been positioned and constituted through the linguistic practices available to her to make sense of her world. It was also possible to discover whether she had engaged in contestation with and restructuring of the discursive structures by which she was originally positioned and constrained, a social struggle instrumental for the establishment of a discursive and creative space for women (a feminine aesthetic or an *écriture féminine*). Thus emancipatory language practice has the potential to provide for women ways forward within the traditional institutions of art reception and production.

So gradually I revised my research questions to take into account the new conceptual framework and the insight that women did not always appear to be aware of discriminatory practices that impacted upon them as artists. The questions were structured to examine what could or could not be said by the women about women's art practice in Australia. How the women understand their careers and lives, how they perceived their

positions in relation to the dominant discourses, and how they arrived at the personal subjectivities which they described, were all questions needed to explicate how women negotiated careers in the visual arts.

I continued to make good progress in my research. My data had been collected through in-depth interviews. I had written the first results chapter and typologies that contextualised the collective yet individual experiences of the three generations of women in the study. The application of discourse analysis to the text of the interview data was demonstrating the value of such an approach. The writing continued steadily.

While I had a reliable income during my full-time study bolstered by occasional sessional work at the university, I was struggling financially. I approached the bank to renegotiate the mortgage repayments on my home. They refused and insisted I put the property on the market. However, it did not sell. I began building a two-room shed on a nearby bush block that I had bought several years earlier. I made mud bricks at home and carted them to the block in the back of my utility. This was a period of great change in my life. All my children had left home and I had found another life partner. When the house eventually sold, everything went into storage and we packed up a little four metre long caravan to drive to the block. The day we moved the electricity and the phone were connected.

I have always had a particular mind set about study. I make it my day's work. So I was spending each day from nine to five at my desk at the university working on the thesis. These were times of change, upheaval and family tragedy but there was always the one constant, the thesis. These were also times of unfolding delight and satisfaction as my partner and I built our new home with our own hands and creativity, planting gardens and sculpting form and structure in mud, stone and recycled timber.

When I speak to prospective doctoral students today I emphasise the need to be passionate about their research question, so that in tough

times they are driven by this passion to continue to seek the answer. My doctorate was completed in three years because I was able to work on it full-time. Part-time research studies must appear endless, more of a life sentence than an *opus*. Some supervisors advise their students that doctoral studies are life changing; some relationships fail, others begin, children grow up and move away, health can suffer. However for me with the changes going on in my life, the thesis gave me focus, a sense of continuity and a steadily growing sense of confidence and achievement. I believe this is even more strongly felt if doctoral students can present their work at conferences and publish along the way. The growing sense of collegiality, of belonging to a community of scholars, is affirming. These were the more memorable times of my candidacy because of the isolation of a regional campus where there were few full-time research students in our school and little opportunity to develop critical friendships.

I was fortunate to have an experienced and highly competent male principal supervisor who was then joined in the last year of my candidacy by a woman co-supervisor. Together they confirmed for me that the story the research was recounting was worthwhile, one that was making a new contribution to understandings about women's lives, and one that should be told more widely. Using an innovative methodology had always carried the risk of failure. In hindsight it had allowed me to access the silences, the unspoken experiences of the women's lives. It justified for me the importance of taking a particular political standpoint in the outset. This dissertation was examined in 1998 and was published with some small amount of rewriting by Edwin Mellen Press in 2004. It is now widely distributed in library research collections around the world.

Importantly also, completing my doctorate ensured that when a position again became available in Art Education at my university I was

in a strong position to be considered. I was re-employed in 2000 as a Lecturer B in Art Education.

In reflecting upon what I would do differently if I could start this journey again, I would have to go back to my early days of teaching after graduating from Deakin University. If I had insisted on work in Geelong rather than accepting a transfer to country Victoria, I would have commenced a higher degree much sooner. Coming so late to academia, to research and to writing has greatly limited that time I have had to achieve what I wish before retirement. Research degrees are important to teachers because they reinvigorate practice. They raise challenges and extend thinking, and contribute not only to practice but also to theory, guiding the field into the future. To have achieved a doctorate much earlier in my teaching career would have allowed me to make a far greater contribution to Art Education.

In conclusion, my doctorate has opened pathways for my career. It has allowed a number of periods of research and study overseas. I have undertaken two major research projects in the last ten years, each a doctorate in itself. One of these has been the research on the history of the FM Courtis Art Collection in our faculty at Bendigo. This is currently being prepared for submission to a publisher in New York. The second is a collection of biographies or life histories of women artists in Wales. This project arose during a six month study leave at University of Wales Institute Cardiff, when an artist learning of my previous work asked me to write about Welsh women artists who were not receiving any critical recognition at that time.

When I commenced at Bendigo, I was employed on the lowest academic level, A. Today I am second highest ranking female member of staff in the unit. It has not been easy to promote in my institution and it has only been made possible through completing my doctorate when I did. Further

progress along the promotion pathway is not considered as this would increase my administration load again and limit my contribution to my field. Having arrived at my destination in the final years of my career, this place allows me to focus on research and writing, and supporting others in this.

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# Authentic assessment in the visual arts

*Max Darby*

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A new approach to assessment in the visual arts at the senior secondary level of schooling © La Trobe University, 2000

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## **Abstract of thesis**

This thesis proposed a new approach to the assessment of the visual arts at the senior level of secondary education in Victoria. The need for a new approach to assessment at this level had risen from the dissatisfaction expressed by art teachers about a number of key issues related to current assessment practices.

A philosophical base for the new approach was developed by considering a variety of opinions about the nature of art and aesthetic value, as well as key ideas and approaches to assessment outlined by philosophers, art educators, art critics and art teachers. Some past and present approaches to assessment of art in Australia were also discussed and evaluated to ensure that the new approach took advantage of their many positive features.

Five guiding principles for assessment were outlined in the new approach to assessment. These included the need for assessment to:

- be based on global judgments about artistic quality rather than on individual criteria
- acknowledge that some artistic qualities cannot (or should not) be predicted in advance and do not emerge until artworks are viewed. A more flexible approach to the establishment of assessment criteria was required. The notion of 'Emerging Criteria' was proposed to meet this need
- place equal emphasis and value on the 'art process' as it does on the 'art product'
- involve the student, teacher and a visiting assessor in the assessment process, and
- be based on dialogue generated during an interview held in front of an exhibition or display of a student's work.

The new approach also set out to establish an assessment process that was consistent with the requirements of Art Education rather than those developed to suit administrative processes.

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I decided on La Trobe University for continuity, since that was where I had undertaken my two earlier degree courses. Interestingly, La Trobe was the only university at the time that would accept my Art qualifications and my Trained Secondary Teachers' Certificate to undertake my Bachelor of Education studies. I knew the location and the staff.

I had a very clear idea what I wanted to do in terms of my thesis topic. I had been thinking about it since completing my Masters. I didn't need to 'look for a topic' I had a burning issue to which I wanted to find a solution or solutions. It was 'needs based'. My work with the VCE (as Chief Examiner and Chief Moderator of Studio work) had provided

me with very clear ideas about issues and problems within the existing assessment processes. I wanted my thesis to be useful to Art Education and its teachers and not just to me for the purposes of completing my Doctorate. The major challenge was to find a supervisor(s) who could help me to achieve what I wanted to do, but also could provide clear advice, direction and encouragement.

That challenge proved to be extremely critical after losing my first two supervisors – one to retirement and one who moved to another State. In a way, although that almost ended my studies (I was depressed about lack of progress), it proved to be a key point in my continuation. Apart from the issue of losing them, they had too many ideas of their own about the topic that, although proposed positively, took me too far away from where I wanted to go. I felt I was writing ‘their’ thesis and not my own and expected to propose their ideas not my own. My new supervisor required the same contact times, was vigorously demanding and needed to be convinced about what I was saying, but he had a background in Evaluation and Assessment (and no specific Art knowledge), hence he was able to challenge my education and philosophical thinking rather than debate my Art and Art Philosophy knowledge. He provided direction for me to follow and strategies for getting work completed that was philosophically sound and that could be defended. In this way, my methodology and content was adjusted and my ideas broadened. But, the major direction remained on the path I initially chose.

My life altered enormously after finding my new supervisor. The major noticeable difference was that I was newly motivated and wanted to complete my work. I found that writing became a really positive experience rather than something I had to find time to do. For two years I made the writing of my thesis (trials and final text) my major interest outside of school work. I worked at school, relaxed for two hours once

I arrived at home, had dinner, and then wrote or researched for about another two hours. It became ‘what I did’ when I wasn’t teaching. When I was teaching that was my sole focus – although my job and my study topic were always directly related. And, because I was now progressing the ‘distance to the end’ seemed so much closer and so much clearer. In a way, it became my life and as such I knew I would miss it enormously when it was completed. While the on-going development of the thesis was still enormously challenging, in thinking as well as in the writing, I cannot remember ever wishing I didn’t have to do it. I did keep my Principal informed and that provided me with a feeling of support from within my organization (a demanding one).

One of the major organisational functions I decided upon was to keep information about each of the chapters of my thesis in separate folders. I found this an easy way to ‘find’ what I had already done, or articles and information related to the topic of the chapter. As I progressed I also kept a separate folder with all of the completed writing in order as it would be finally written. This provided me with a visual record of progress.

From my own experiences I think prospective doctoral candidates need to consider the following points (but they need to find their own ways of working).

- Have a clear understanding of why they want to do doctorate studies.
- Have an idea of what kind of things they might like to address in their work (of course, this can be, and usually needs to be, negotiated or developed progressively).
- Find out about what the requirements are to undertake and complete doctorate studies (for example, contact time, expected completion timeline; word count; academic honesty; legal implications; home and work responsibilities; travel etc.).

- Be sure they really want to do all of that. It's a big undertaking.
- Find out where the doctorate studies can be undertaken.
- Find out about entry requirements and whether there are places available.
- Know how they best work (even time of the day when they work best).
- Decide on a methodology after talking to prospective supervisors and, if possible, past students.
- Enquire about the costs involved with doctorate studies.
- Enquire whether there are concessions, financial assistance, scholarships, available funding etc.
- Enquire about support and resources available within and without the university.
- Enquire about the availability of study rooms and offices.

There are many other things that need to be checked at later stages such as, for example, costs of printing, binding, numbers of copies required, submittal requirements etc.

The most difficult thing about my doctorate journey was the early issue associated with losing my supervisors and needing to start again. Apart from the enormous workload (despite already saying I really enjoyed doing the work), there were no other difficulties. There was sufficient information available for the topics of each chapter; I had a clear idea of what I wanted to address and some ideas about solutions to the problems I raised, I had access to my own computer, printer and photocopier and I had a wealth of experience in the writing process because I had already written six commercial textbooks.

My most memorable things about completing my doctorate studies was just that – completing it. The sense of achievement and success and relief was enormous. And, the pride in my own capacity to undertake and

successfully complete something at this level of challenge. Actually holding the first bound copy in my hand is still quite memorable as I was walking across the stage to receive my certificate from the Vice Chancellor.

But, the most memorable thing was to know I had addressed the critical issues about assessment of Art that I had isolated at the start of the journey, and had provided some very workable directions that might assist to solve them in the future. I doubt I would want to change anything about how I undertook and completed the work other than those issues related to my supervisors.

Of all that I've written here, I feel the most important thing is to answer this question: Why do you want to do your doctorate?

Writing a PhD on artistic thinking:  
Reflections 25 years later

*Lee Emery*

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A study of thinking used by children in artistic making  *La Trobe  
University, 1986*

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**Abstract of thesis**

The thesis was based on a year long arts program conducted with a composite grade 5 and 6 at a Melbourne primary school during 1981. The arts program, called Arts Bath, included art/craft, dance, drama, music and writing craft, one on each afternoon of the week. The teaching of the program was carried out by a team of arts education specialists and was observed by various tertiary students who later wrote MEd theses on various aspects of the arts and cognition. The study was about the childrens' responses across the five arts forms. The thesis basically concluded that when children are asked to make an arts product (e.g., a piece of music, a dance or an art work etc.) they are engaged in a complex process of reconciliation between three areas. They are firstly aware that they are making in a group situation and thus conscious of their own social interaction. Secondly they must represent the idea that was given to them or which they have

imagined – a form of representation. Thirdly they need to make a change or transformation of materials or forms to make a new product. And lastly they need to do this by entering a state of belief (the catalyst); a state in which they are immersed in the capacity of the product to convey some message, idea or feeling. Observations were made of ten case-study children out of the class of thirty five. Patterns of behaviour were documented using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In short there were discernable and very interesting responses by the ten children. The thesis described the common patterns of response and the idiosyncratic responses of the ten case-subjects in relation to the three theoretical areas.

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### **Why did I decide to go to La Trobe?**

I had been a secondary art teacher for seven years and had resigned in 1973 to have children. I had upgraded my original three year Trained Secondary Teaching Certificate (TSTC) qualification (obtained in 1965) to a fourth year of study (BEd) at Melbourne College of Advanced Education (1978-1979). After this I became interested in doing a Masters in Education and I enquired about doing it at The University of Melbourne. However I could find neither staff interested in arts education nor any interest in qualitative inquiry. When I asked at La Trobe University I found an academic staff member keen to supervise in the area of arts education and other academics who showed an interest in qualitative forms of research. However, La Trobe University considered my Bachelor of Education from Melbourne College of Advanced Education (MCAE) to be an undergraduate (rather than graduate) degree so I was forced to enrol in second BEd at La Trobe (1980). The full-time La Trobe BEd course required a pass result in nine units (or subjects), usually over two years. I completed six units (two each term) in

1980 with credit results and gained accelerated entry into the MEd. The six units comprised three research units on the topic of 'creativity' and three units of research methodology. So it was excellent preparation for the writing of an arts related thesis, rather like a MEd preliminary year.

At the same time there was increasing interest in arts education in a number of areas. The most influential was the writing of the National Education and the Arts Study (supported by the Australia Council and Schools Commission, 1977). This study resulted in a publication about arts education in each Australian State as well as a broad National document. In 1978 I was appointed as a part-time Victorian research assistant to help with implementation of the Victorian recommendations. The key academic person for the Victorian chapter of this study was based at La Trobe University and so I was based there while I worked with the study.

Then in 1978 I attended the world InSEA Congress in Adelaide. It was an exciting time that drew together teachers of art, music, drama, media and dance. Previously there had never been any interaction with any other art form! Art teachers never talked to music or drama teachers and many teachers had no concept of 'the arts'! So the bringing together of the various art forms was a new concept. Simultaneously, I had also co-edited an annual journal called *Communicating Arts* in the period 1978-1980. This had documented arts projects around Australia in both arts education (in schools) and community arts (festivals, streets theatre etc). So the 1978 InSEA Congress, the National Education and Arts Study (1977) and *Communicating Arts* (1978-'80) formed three highly influential sources leading to my decision to do further study at the time. The final reason for choosing La Trobe University was that it offered staff members and courses that welcomed arts educators. Added to this was my knowledge of other arts teachers who had already enrolled at La Trobe – so I considered that if they could do it, so could I!

### **The process of deciding on the topic**

During my BEd at La Trobe (1980) my supervisor introduced me to the recent writings of Howard Gardner of Harvard University. I was tremendously inspired by Harvard Project Zero which set out to investigate the links between the arts and cognition. I read all that I could in journals and books written by members of the Harvard Project Zero team. At the same time my supervisor was instigating the Arts Bath project and gathering a team of tertiary students to teach and undertake research using the observations of the year long project in a primary school. While other tertiary students in the team focussed on one of the arts forms offered to the children my own interest was the link between the arts forms and how one child thinks and responds in different arts forms. I had also read a great deal about cognitive aspects of the arts and was interested in the nature of intelligence in the arts. My hunch was that arts making was more than something about feelings but was more a complex process of activating intelligent feeling (as Robert Witkin had written).

### **The methodology**

In the early 1980s qualitative methods were new in educational research. Most research in Education at that time was quantitative in nature. For example, I recall doing Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) research at La Trobe involving recording data on punched cards that were then analysed in the huge computer room at La Trobe. It was an arduous process and seemed irrelevant to the artistic process. However in my PhD research I did employ certain IQ tests (Torrance tests) to simply ascertain how the children performed in visual and verbal tasks. I also recall attending an Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference in Canberra where I listened to a few enthusiastic academics talking about qualitative enquiry in education. It was liberating and to me, highly

relevant, as I began to shape a way of observing and recording children in an arts class, without the use of irrelevant and complex statistical data.

Another factor that influenced my use of qualitative inquiry in arts education was the fact that I received an AARE Research Training Fellowship in the PhD year at La Trobe. This required that I was mentored by a recognised academic for the year of candidature. I chose to visit a key academic in Geelong as I had read his work on qualitative methods in Education. I only visited him a few times but it was highly stimulating to visit him in his office and hear about qualitative theories which could validly be used for my research.

After completing research method studies in my BEd in 1980 I decided to employ case-study methodology in my MEd and write narrative accounts of the processes of ten children over a year long period. I employed a video camera in the classroom and, whereas the children seemed very conscious of the camera in the first week, they soon learned to ignore it. From the battery of IQ tests and from recommendations by the classroom teacher I chose a range of ten children to observe in the class. All children in the class had parental consent to participate in an arts-based research project for the year. So using a narrative style of writing I recorded each of the ten students in each class. When I needed to focus on more than one student at a time the video camera recorded children working in other rooms. I collected graphic notation for music and dance works, stories, poems, media designs, drama scripts and of course art works in all media. By the end of the year I had collected a mountain of data!

### **Organising my life around the thesis**

My two children were at primary school when I did my doctoral studies. I remember leaving my youngest child at kindergarten in Ashburton in the morning and driving very fast to La Trobe. I would chat to my supervisors,

visit the library and then dash back to kindergarten. In this way I would appear like a 'normal' devoted mother. And when I was writing my thesis at home (including the time of house renovations) my children would creep around the house saying, "Shh. Mummy is writing her thesis!" So like many other women I simply multi-tasked and I don't think my children suffered!

### **Advice to prospective doctoral students**

I supervised many tertiary students undertaking both MEd and PhD studies in the 21 years I spent as lecturer in Arts Education at The University of Melbourne. So I have experienced many of the difficulties of thesis writing. My own experience is not a model for future students as I believe each candidate is different and faces different issues. However I have often used the same advice when supervising and these points are applicable to many students.

Firstly I think the topic should be relevant. This means that it should usually be based on the student's work, field of occupation or passionate interest. I also consider that the candidature should not be too long. Many theses lose relevance over time. Ten years (the longest time I supervised one thesis), for example, is too long for completion of a doctoral thesis as ideas change over time. I also advised students to select a methodology appropriate to the length of the thesis. For example, I would never advise students to do what I did. Ten case subjects over a 12 month period resulted in far too much data. Five students would have been ample, and three months would have been plenty! And of course, there is one piece of advice I found useful. I always carried a copy of my thesis or draft in the boot of the car, just in case the house burnt down!

### **Difficult memories of my time as a candidate**

When a teenager I locked myself in my bedroom for three weeks and taught myself to touch-type from a "Teach yourself to type" book. It was

invaluable as I touch-typed from then on. However the most difficult thing about writing my PhD was that it was before computers were available. In 1980 there were computers at La Trobe but these were absolutely huge. Portable computers were really unknown. I typed my own drafts using my trusty electric typewriter (complete with white-out backspace capacity!) but I also employed a typist (and paid her thousands of dollars) to put the final thesis into a format for presentation. A key problem was that any change to spacing required total re-typing. I remember well one of my PhD examiners advising that the plural word “schema” throughout my thesis should be replaced with the singular word “schemata”. I will never forget making this change. I had to go through the whole thesis and stick a newly typed, narrower “schemata” over the old word “schema”. Fortunately this was the only correction!

After finishing my thesis I faced a different problem. I simply couldn't throw anything away. I never completed an Ethics clearance for my thesis but I knew that I should keep the material I had collected as well as my thesis drafts. I had filled a room with children's artworks, drafts, collected articles etc. It was a huge amount of material and I just didn't know how and when to throw it away. Gradually I threw out various notes and some collected treasures. Eventually, I decided I needed to use that room for other things, so a few years after my submission I had a huge bonfire!

### **Most memorable time during the thesis**

I was completely absorbed by my thesis. In 1981 I had enrolled as a full-time student to do the MEd thesis in the area of the arts and cognition. In that early stage the thought of doing a PhD never entered my head. However the MEd thesis became very long and after two years of writing I started to get ready to submit. Having 10 case subjects and collecting data over a 12 month period had resulted in a mass of information. When

it came time to compress it into a 30,000 word MEd I faced the problem of what to leave out. It had never occurred to me that I could up-grade my qualification and write a 100,000 word PhD thesis. The suggestion that I do this by my supervisors was truly memorable. I didn't really know it was possible, but it certainly solved my problem. In fact I nearly had it all together near the end of the two year MEd period. However La Trobe required that I spend at least 12 months extra candidature before submitting for the PhD. So the family went overseas for three months. I went away and forgot about my PhD during that time. However, the main thesis stayed in the back of my mind and I came home ready to write and submit by the 12 month minimum deadline.

Following the completion of my thesis (I finished writing at the end of 1984) I was employed in 1983-84 as co-writer of the National Statement and Profile on The Arts for Australian Schools. It was at this time that my doctoral work paid off. Having undertaken study across the arts I was already familiar with key research in the five key arts forms and I knew that artistic processes involved complex thinking and feeling. So it was extremely satisfying to know that key national curriculum documents included The Arts and that I had the opportunity to provide input into key arts education curricula. My doctoral work had provided thorough grounding in "The Arts" and the documents were implemented with significant funding ensuring the key role of The Arts in Australian schools.

### **What would I do differently?**

If I did my PhD today I would use a computer and the internet. I would learn to use every available form of software which helped to annotate the text, format the thesis and edit drafts. Having access to research material on-line and using email to contact fellow researchers is a huge bonus, far beyond what was available to me in the early 1980s. If I were to do a

thesis now I would definitely make use of the technology available. And of course, I would include visual materials in my thesis. I will never forget reading a thesis on biology and thinking that it was so much more visual than my own. Mine was supposed to be about The Arts yet it was all text. It just wasn't academically acceptable to include visual images!

### **Other issues**

I have often wondered what became of the children I studied. The ten case-study children never knew that they had been singled out for study. It is 28 years since the Arts Bath project and the subjects would be about 40 years old now. Of course, they would interpret the comments on them as being different from the way they experienced the program: I will never know! When tertiary students complete Ethical clearance now there is much greater consideration of the rights of subjects. However, I am happy to keep the identity of my subjects anonymous. That's how it was in the early 1980s.

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# Fourteen cups of coffee along the way

*Adele Flood* ☯ *University of New South Wales*

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Common threads: A discursive text narrating ideas of memory and artistic identity ☯ *Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University), 2003*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

Common Threads is a discursive text exploring ideas of artistic identity and memory contained within the narrated stories of ten textile artists. It reveals how individuals bring a sense of linearity to fragments of memory and create a cohesive sense of self through telling their life's story. Through the investigation of current and relevant literature the thesis engages with the reader in a discussion of ideas of self, identity, memory, figured worlds and the cultural meanings and understandings of the various roles individuals have within communities of experience and practice. The author of the thesis writes from the position of being both a practising artist and an experienced visual arts educator.

Common Threads begins with questions of the place the past holds in the formulation of the present and the future. It identifies the influences upon art education practice and how the delivery of art teaching has impacted upon individuals within the education system. It also identifies

early learning experiences outside the formal sector and the influences those experiences have had on the participants and the author. The thesis investigates the levels of discourse and understanding that are needed when coming to terms with personal identity in particular cultural roles, and in this instance, the role of an artist. With reference to artistic practice, assumptions and boundaries are set regarding the perceived role of artist.

The model “Constructing Personal Narratives”, developed from existing literature in narrative and memory research combined with a social sciences input output was an essential component of the new knowledge created, and is pivotal to understanding how individual construct narratives and is a tangible reflection of the hermeneutic cycle of learning particularly in relation to lifelong learning and the place of both informal and formal learning in an individual’s artistic development.

From that model questions were formulated and these provided the basis of the semi structured interviews conducted with each participant. These transcripts in turn provided the rich data that emerged within dialogues. Included also, within the thesis, are personal writings from the author’s memory and personal journals that provide further examples of the place of memory and the manner in which individuals go about constructing stories across time.

### **The beginning of the research journey**

The ink was barely dry on my Masters Thesis when the questions began “when are you going to enroll in a PhD?” I felt a bit duped because on appointment to the University I had been told I would have to get my Masters degree. It had already been a challenge because I had left my teaching position at a top private school in Melbourne on a Friday afternoon and arrived at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) on the following Monday. In two days I had changed from

teacher to “Academic”. From that moment on I was chasing a qualification. Part of me was recalcitrant. What would another qualification do for me? I already spoke authoritatively on my field and people know me and of me. What could there possibly be left to learn?

I was determined that I would only commence another research journey if it was centred upon something about which I was passionate. A colleague suggested I write the history of Art Education in Australia because they could give me access to the archives of the many meetings and minutes of the formation of the Australian Institute of Art Education. (AIAE) I was at that time President of the Association and heavily involved in re-establishing its reputation in the international arena. However the suggestion left me cold and I knew that even if it were to take some time for me to find the right research pathway to take it was worth the waiting.

I advise all prospective researchers who approach me wanting to undertake a PhD that they should consider it only if they are truly committed to the chosen content. Too many projects founder because there is not enough interest or passion for it to be sustained.

The prescribed research methodology course I had undertaken for my Masters was a comprehensive, if somewhat boring, introduction into the various modes of discovery that were available. The course was run by a man who calmly stated “if it can’t be measured, it doesn’t exist”. I think I argued about that statement every time I attended the class. The course required students to find an example of a particular kind of research then analyse it and declare if it was a good or bad example of the methodology under scrutiny. It took very little time for me to identify myself as a qualitative researcher and I left statistics and number crunching well behind me as I began to pursue the ideas I had.

In my thesis, as it turned out, I investigated many ideas about life journeys and pathways filled with significant events and people.

Interestingly, the idea for my research came to me on a walk I was taking with a significant person, a good friend and fellow art educator one sunny afternoon. She had long left artistic creation alone and had concentrated more on the functionary aspects of enabling art education at both a state and federal level. In comparison I had always continued with my practice and had exhibitions as well as teaching and all the time being a mother. I felt I had a split personality at times and had very little sleep when preparing for an exhibition but the creativity was essential and non negotiable for me.

Talking about this with my friend on that walk led me to question when I had first felt able or confident enough to say that I was an artist. As we walked and talked I realised that here was the burning issue I wanted to explore – just what were the conditions that had allowed me to identify myself as an artist. After all it isn't like other professions in which you work your way through a series of courses and exams in which they ask you what and how questions that result in a piece of paper that announces to the world you have earned the right of passage to provide yourself with a label: I am a doctor, I am a dentist and so on.

I asked myself, could I name myself as an artist and what had made the drive in me so strong that I had to keep making art as well as teaching others about art making and art teaching. This was a significant and essential turning point in my research story and in retrospect provides a clear example of one facet of the model: the significant turning points in life; that alerted me and caused me to take a particular direction in my ongoing academic life.

Such deliberations went on for some time and with the questions from line managers taking on an ever insistent tenor I made the decision to enroll in a PhD. I chose to undertake it at the institution where I was working for a number of reasons, the main one being convenience and a

sense of knowing the territory. Thus began a journey of not only discovery but also a journey punctuated by forms or approval, forms for admission, forms for ethics and forms for faculty and school vetting. I decided to undertake an investigation using a narrative methodology as this was the mode in which I had the most faith and empathy. But first it had to be cleared by the Faculty research coordinator.

The research coordinator was an older academic who had worked in the field of cognitive psychology all his academic life and believed there was a right way to undertake research. Upon reading my first proposal in which I had suggested that the interviewees; ten practising textile artists would be asked to contribute to an exhibition of art works based on ideas of identity and being an “artist” I was summoned to his office and asked to please explain what stitching and needlework had to do with research. He concluded by stating and that the proposal in its current form would never be allowed to proceed because it wasn’t “real research”.

Walking back to my office in a rage I encountered a colleague, a flamboyant music educator who had actively supported my Masters by exhibition and exegesis before such modes were accepted widely. His sound and ever dramatic advice was “take no notice Adele, he doesn’t know anything about arts research. He completed his dissertation in the USA based upon the behaviour of three pigeons”. I only just managed to quell my desire to ring him up and ask if the pigeons had names.

As fate would have it, redundancies and the clean sweep that accompanies new appointments occurred and the research convenor was made an offer he couldn’t refuse and was gone in a matter of days. A new research director from England was appointed and the world changed. He brought with him a new and exciting approach to research – one in which the researcher was encouraged to try new ways of investigating and thinking. He handed me a copy of Paul Ricouer’s book *Time and Narrative*

one evening in Readings Bookshop and from that moment on I found the direction I had needed. It was another significant turning point in my research journey.

Concurrent with reading and understanding existing literature I was aware I needed to consider the form the thesis would take. I concluded that if I was to write about narrative I felt it only appropriate that I write the PhD as a narrative. This is where I met the first problem that was a difficult time in the progress of the research.

### **The question of supervision**

The initial supervisor I had selected was a friend and colleague whom I thought would provide me with organisational structures that I feared I lacked. As time went on her approach and mine began to diverge: when she asked for timelines I spoke about time and linearity and the conceptual ideas with which I was struggling. When she asked about a Literature chapter I spoke about embedding ideas within the story. It became an untenable relationship and eventually it dissolved. I had to find a supervisor with whom I could work in a much more abstract and conceptual manner.

I was fortunate that I found a philosopher who had an intuitive understanding of the journey I sought to take and under his guidance I progressed in a much freer and personally comfortable way. But, I had lost a friend in the process of becoming an independent researcher. The correct selection of a supervisor is crucial to any research journey and should be considered carefully by all parties in the initial stages. It is also essential that the institution can accommodate changes and variations in these formalities to ensure the student's progress continues unhampered.

My chosen form of creating a singular narrative meant embedding the literature throughout the text and not focusing it into a more traditional set of chapters. Alongside those considerations I began exploring ideas

of the philosophers I was encountering. At this point in the research program, into the second year, part time, I had also been maintaining my professional practice as an artist. I had completed two bodies of works which were exhibited in Washington DC at the invitation of the Australian Embassy. It was at that point my supervisor intervened and said “You will have to stop painting until the PhD is completed.” I agreed to his demand but felt very uneasy about my chances of being able to stop the art making.

I was used to working visually and without any overt acknowledgment at first in my journaling I began to place myself within imagery that expressed where I was going and how I was feeling as the research progressed. I had always recorded my ideas in both visual and written forms in the journals that I carried with me consistently.

### **The reflective journal and discussion**

In this section are the images I created and a retrospective discussion into which I entered as the research progressed into its latter stages just prior to my leaving in November for study leave in London. I left Australia with 45,000 words written, a large amount of data in the form of transcripts and I returned with a first draft of 120,000 words completed. I wrote the final chapter on the flight home on Christmas Eve. This period of time away was an essential and invigorating time for me. I had been a part time student for most of my adult life. Now for the first time since completing my initial teacher training in 1969 I had the privilege of immersing myself in fulltime study.

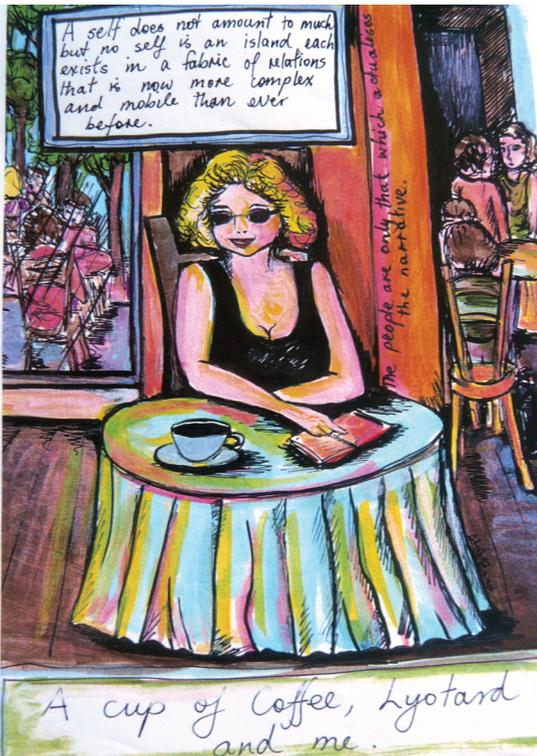
In the investigation of these images I am looking to where I have been and how I engaged with the journey and inevitably such interrogation will lead to the questions of where to next. Images 1-9 were created in the month of October 2002. It was the month prior to the final writing of the thesis *Common Threads*. Images 10-12 were created in the following February, as

the final editing and submission of the thesis was imminent. As I actualised the narratives within the thesis I began creating a new self-narrative and a new and important part of my own life story. This collection of images was another element of the narrative that was emerging.

It is significant that the concluding images were created once the research process was virtually over. Images 13-14 were drawn at the time of writing the reflective passages that follow.

### Image 1 *A Cup of Coffee, Lyotard and Me*

I began with Lyotard as I had done in the thesis *Common Threads*.



The image is of me sitting quite alone within a busy café, staring out from behind dark glasses, a cup of coffee left on the table. At the same time, I am surrounded by others who seem very much engaged with each other.

In retrospect, I realise this is how I felt for much of the time I was undertaking the research; it was an isolated and

isolating time. The books that I was reading were intense and engaging and demanded a high level of concentration and even though I did have coffee with friends, with the usual discussions and arguments, there were times when I still felt quite alone.



### Image 2 *St Augustine and Me*

During this reading about memory and narrative I discovered how much prior knowledge existed that I still needed to explore and I discovered there was a wealth of knowledge that I had not known existed. Within this image, I reflect upon time as an elusive element, with which individuals measure their life stories and add temporality to their world.

I am pictured outside the coffee shop; it is dark and the doors are closed. The banners announce to the world that time is a subjective element of our lives. I must question whether I am truly in control of time. If so, I must ask why the coffee shop closed and why I am left alone to ponder these and other issues. I sit bewildered at the journey that has been and the journey that is to come.

My ongoing reading revealed a basic misconception I had held about research – I had believed that by conducting the investigation I would know the answers to the questions. What I actually discovered as I progressed was that there were more and more questions waiting to be found. The journey became an adventure into a landscape of ideas and text created by others who had taken similar journeys at other points in time and place.

In my research I referred to Alice in Wonderland and her encounter with the Red Queen who asks Alice “where have you been and where are you going?” These are essential questions we must all ask ourselves if we wish to understand our life story. The past informs and provides the memorised space within which the individual can create and recreate a sense of self.

The questions of where we have been and where we are going are also vital to the research process. We must know where we are and where we wish to go. In our research, we spend a great deal of time establishing what we want to discover: the writing of our research proposals and then a long journey through the literature and the data to find where we want to be. The research process is constructed in such a way that we commence as the novice and then progress to a point ultimately to where we must undertake much of the journey alone.

### **Image 3 *Derrida Puppetry and Me***

As the puppeteer in image three, *Derrida Puppetry and Me*, I pull the strings; appearing at first to be in control of the process but under closer scrutiny it becomes apparent that as the strings are pulled I am not in control, I am the puppet, I must follow the directions, I must satisfy the gatekeepers. Just when do the strings fall away so that I am able to create the form and the ideas with confidence and freedom? Questions linger and this image begs: who are the unseen; the unknown observers whom I feel are ever present and ever

observant of this journey. Do I cut the strings myself or do I wait for others to cut me free?

When does the journey end, how do I know when it is finished, when do I cease to be the marionette and become the puppeteer? How do I know that I can trust the strings to hold me fast until I am able to stand alone?

All these issues are ever present but as the data emerges from the methodology I am employing my self confidence grows and my independence as a researcher grows.



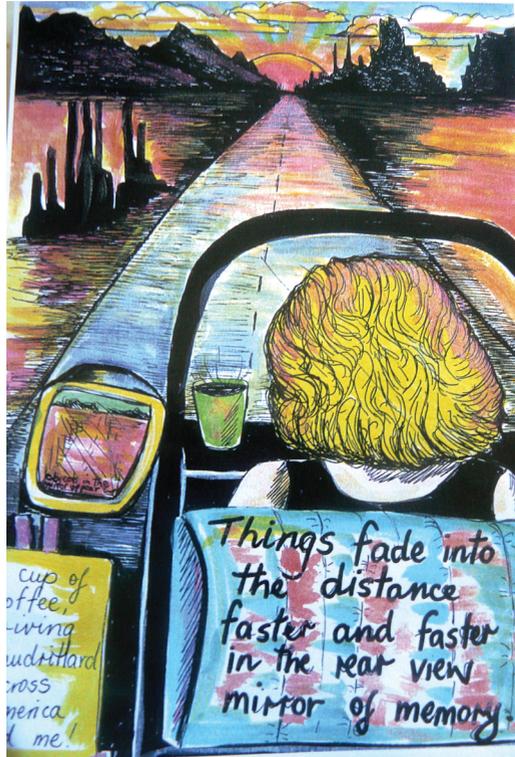
#### **Image 4 *Driving Baudrillard Across America and Me***

In this image I am travelling with the great wordsmith Baudrillard. His words and imagery have taken me across America, across the desert and back. He writes of the desert in terms of the visual: “The silence of the desert is a visual too. A product of the gaze that stares out and finds nothing to reflect it” (1988, p. 6).

As I travel within this image I realise I have depicted the journey that I am taking towards that point over the horizon where the light shines through. This is where I seek to find resolution for questions I ask. The horizon constantly eludes me, remaining steadfastly in the future, out of reach but never completely out of sight, just as the life narrative continues to proceed onward towards an unknown ending.

As I seek the destination that lies beyond the horizon, I realise that I am gathering before me and then leaving behind traces of my life, fragments of time that lay like cast off skins; the discarded and outgrown coverings of another time and place. The memories of childhood lay far away in the distance, fleeting glimpses of the past in life's rear view mirror. They remain static, diminishing in size, but always powerful and insistent as the journey travels relentlessly forward.

With Baudrillard I have grappled with ideas of reality and truth and artistic response. In the image, as I drive this journey, I find the memories of childhood emerge.

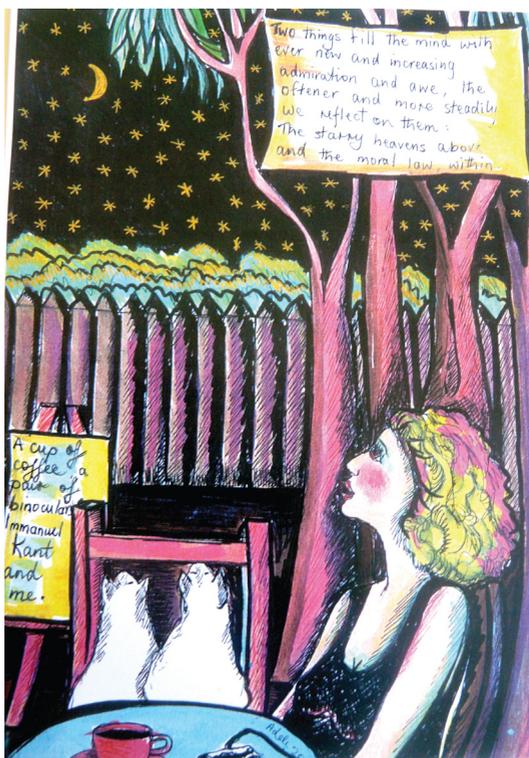


As the research journey progresses I continue to find more questions than answers. The journey itself reveals to me that it is the journey that holds the answers. Now I become the driver of the research, the cup of coffee sits on the dashboard hot and inviting, while outside the landscape is lit up with the luminescent colours of sunset. Another day ends, but the journey continues and I drive towards the light source and into the next darkened night.

### **Image 5 *Emmanuel Kant and Me***

Here I sit with the darkness around me. I ponder the heavens and the vastness of the sky. My two cats sit and share the night. I think about ideas of self and identity and the inner voice of self. This is the inner voice that drives me to create and produce such images of place and time and self. It is the contemplation of such ideas that has led to the interest in philosophical ideas of identity. Next to the cup of coffee I have placed binoculars. They will bring the stars into focus and will provide sharp definition of form and structure.

How does one do the same with the interior



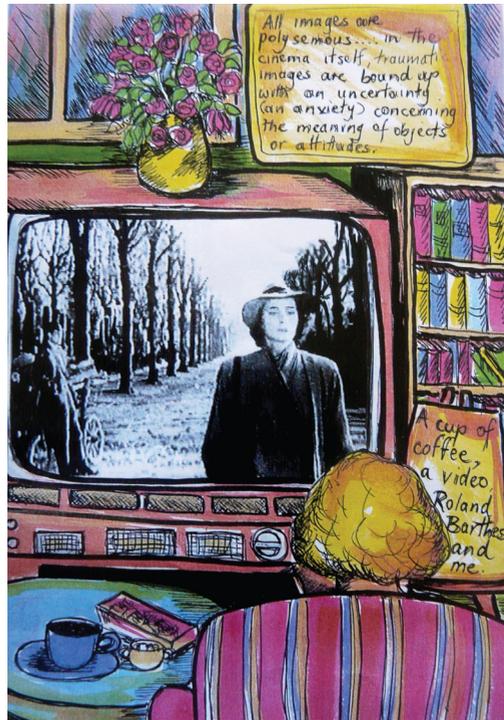
voice? These are the questions I grapple with in this research. How does one find the sharp focus and clarity of understanding of self. My research reveals that inevitably the individual must turn to the stories of others; by reflecting upon the stories of others' lives we can come to understand our own

It is now that I begin to interrogate the stories my participants have shared with me. I have to find the focus, to hone in on the truths and wisdoms I seek within their stories.

### **Image 6 A Video, Roland Barthes and Me**

It is film to which I turn to find another form of narrative. The film, *The Third Man*, contains many powerful messages of the human condition. It contains a triangle of characters forever connected through their experiences of love and pain. It is a narrative of broken trust, of loss and denial and it carries the observer along to an ultimate conclusion of emptiness: the emptiness of two lonely people, and the desolate landscape of a nation and a world that has lost its morality.

What is the significance of this imagery, how does it relate to the way I felt during the research process? I felt abandoned by some whom I had trusted; I was unsure much of the time



whose opinion I should value. Most importantly, I had to begin trusting my own judgements and I had to find my own voice.

In the image I am depicted sitting viewing the final scene in the film. I watch the long slow and measured walk of the female along the bleak wintry path. She is alone, contained within herself and she walks deliberately past the man who waits for her. In my constructed image, I am safely contained within a warm environment, in the comfort of a living room, a cup of coffee on the table beside me. Certainly I have felt anxiety and uncertainty and the research journey has felt as daunting as that wintry walk.

I have however, mostly been able to retreat to the warmth, and have been able to take a step back from the pathway for a period of time. Once on the journey there is inevitability about following the research just as there is an inevitability that the two characters will remain isolated and apart forever. Unlike the video, which can be rewound to view the long walk over and over again, in our own narratives and memories we can only retell the stories over and over as best we can, we can remember them, but there is no pause or replay buttons in our lives. We are propelled forward without the luxury of ever being able to re examine the fragments of time that are the means by which we recount our life stories.

### **Image 7 *Waiting for Ricoeur***

In the image I am waiting while everything else has moved on. The coffee shop is closed, the coffee is finished and I continue to wait – it is a strong characteristic of mine – to persevere, remain constant long after others have moved away. However, despite this, I am impatient and look at my watch, I am eager for the journey to continue. These periods of waiting allow time to review the progress made, to determine whether the direction taken is one with which I can continue. In the research process, time to review and

revisit the ideas and the direction one is taking is an essential part of the reflective process.



Just as each one of these images reflects an individual and discrete time and place with its own narrative content; it is also part of the larger narrative. We tell these incidents as stories; they appear singular in nature however they are representative of many repeated experiences. They become symbolic representations of a state of mind, a form of action or reaction to a concept or idea they are the visual responses to

feelings I felt and experienced as a researcher.

In the intensity of the writing periods, the imperative to write becomes overwhelming. Concentrated time away from distractions and other responsibilities becomes vital if the process of research writing is to be completed. I am given the time to write and I leave my surroundings and fly to another country in which the long nights of a cold winter provide me with an opportunity to become focused.

**Image 8 *A Good Book, A Comfy Bed, Virginia and Me***

I am in bed, reading a book, the intensity of the writing is highlighted. The lighthouse through the window shines a beacon of light that revolves through the night sky.

It points the way to prevent those lost at sea from foundering on the rocks. In my research I have turned to influential writers to help keep my pathway lit and to keep me from colliding with

the landscape. My supervisor provides the light and knows when to shift direction to keep the journeying on track.

From this point, once I have found the right pathway and I have covered the landscape of knowledge, to date, then I feel I can allow myself the freedom to dream. I am comforted by the enclosed spaces – the safety houses of my disciplines of education and visual art are where I turn to find the stories I want to tell and the experiences I wish to relay to the reader. They emerge within the thesis; they are an anchoring point against which I can relay my participants stories to the wider audience



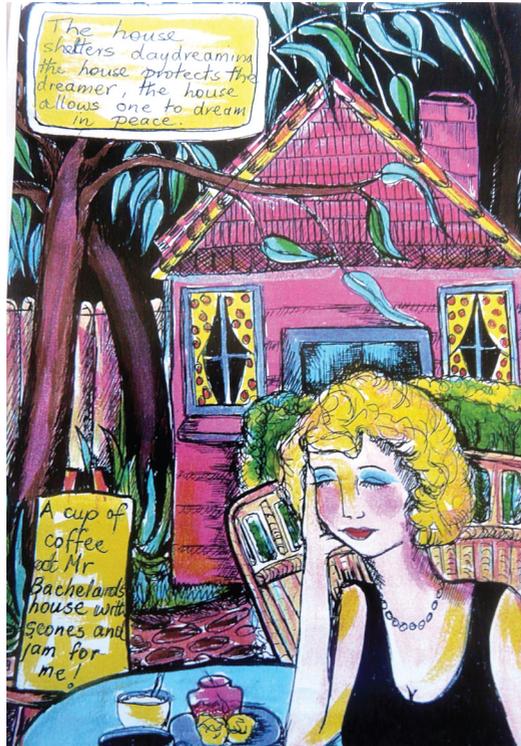
### Image 9 *The Sheltering House*

I am again seated at a table in the evening light, I am outside the house, but I am now dreaming. I can find the space and time to discover and develop ideas and thoughts that are essential to my beliefs as an educator and an artist.

I have returned to childlike representation of the house and I travel in my thoughts to my past so that I can progress to my future. I sit between the past and the future. In my

dreams I hold both the memories and the imagined possibilities. In my writing I also write of this intersection of linear time.

I muse upon how and why I have chosen such images. How do the symbols and cues appear on the page? I do not consciously construct the images, they appear upon the blank white page and I embellish the drawings with colour and line. The quoted words I have chosen are the fragments that inspire the images to appear. What is the objective surprise I am desirous of creating with these images. Baudrillard (1996) tells us that “All situations are inspired by an object; a fragment a present obsession, never by an idea. Ideas come from everywhere but they organise themselves around an objective surprise....a detail” (p. 1).

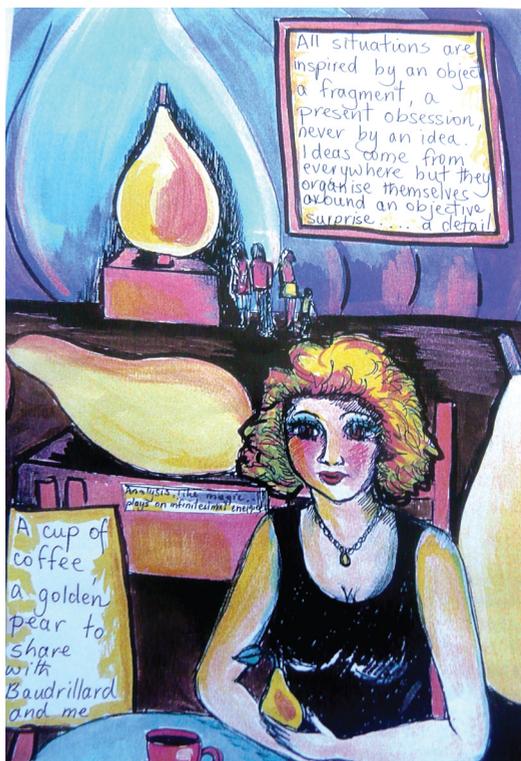


Certainly the research journey becomes one of obsession and the time I spend becomes foremost in my thoughts and needs. The shapes and forms are developed and constructed and changed to meet the construction of ideas. The language used, the ideas ferment and the form begins to become an organised construct of narrative.

### Image 10 *A Golden Pear to Share*

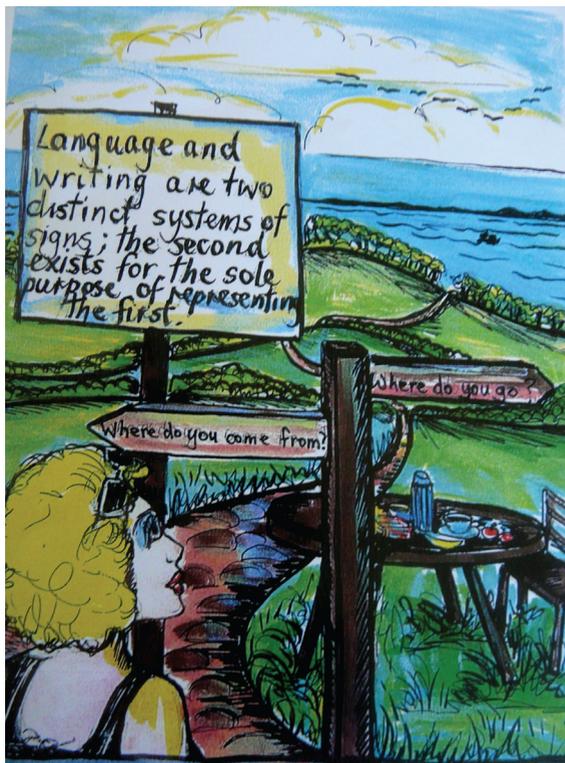
This image, *A Golden Pear to Share*, reflects the artistic construction of the organic form; the artist sits at the centre of the constructions that have been inspired by the most organic of forms, the pear. Each pear shaped sculptural form delineates a perspective of the original object and the artist is the individual responsible for those constructions

The research journey too is a construction of ideas that has been shaped and designed by the researcher in response to the original concept or problem. One must turn the problem around and displace it and replace it in order to both understand and deconstruct the existing knowledge in



order to find the new. We take our own narratives and investigate and interrogate them against a landscape of other's ideas and experiences. In doing so, we will then go on to create the new narratives.

**Image 11** *Walking with Saussure and the Red Queen*



It is here that I have come to a crucial turning point in the journey of research and indeed the journey of self. From this point at the completion of the research I am left to ponder the questions that have been underpinning my writing of narrative. I am confronted by questions of where I have been and where I am going. I am stopped by the realisation that I have been engaged in a

process of coding and developing new ideas of artistic identity and self narrative while recording the narratives of others.

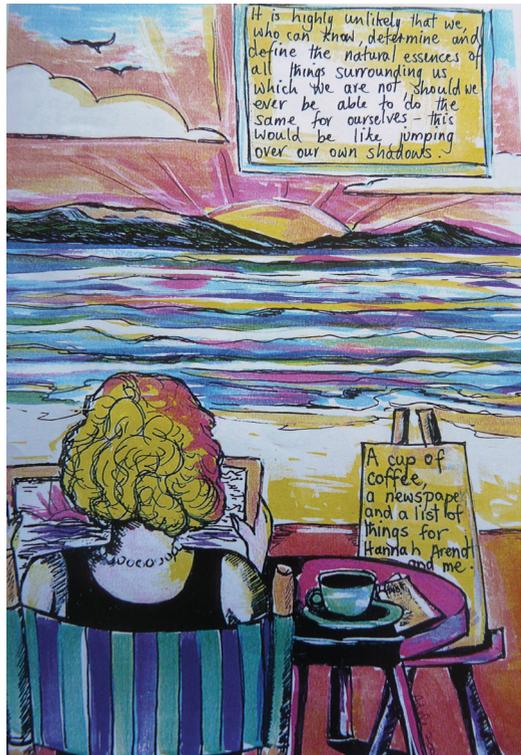
Saussure reminds me that I am part of ongoing constructions of understanding, all such constructions come from the individual and bring with them pre existing ideas of self and identity. I have been walking

through a landscape already dotted with signposts I have chosen to ignore or respond to. These signposts have been essential parts of the journey and have allowed me to progress as far as I have. The research journey is just one part of my life journey and it has led me through new pathways and I now must contemplate where I go from here.

When one undertakes such intense and engaging research over such a great length of time it appears to take on a life of its own. The journey itself becomes the knowledge one seeks to understand and at the end, it is apparent that there is more travelling to do. Both sign posts directions hold knowledge still waiting to be sourced and used. In the narrative journey there is always more to seek and more to find.

**Image 12, *A List of things for Hannah and Me***

And then to the end, and to the point where an individual stops chasing the sunset between the mountains and comes to rest at the water's edge. As the research is bound and sent away for others to examine and comment upon and make judgements about, there is the realisation that this individual journey is completed. This does not mean that all travelling



is over, but it does mean there is time to pause, to decide on the new directions and to reflect upon just how much we have come to understand about ourselves and the world in which we travel.

Hannah Arendt suggests that while we try and define what is about us we cannot ever truly know ourselves so well. She likens such self-knowledge to jumping over our own shadows.

I ask, how can we do that?

### Image 13 *I Have a Little Shadow*

I am now placed outside the coffee shop; the evening sun is intense and casts strong shadows as I engage with the act of changing its shape and size. We are forever attached to our shadows through time and place. We move with them, we can make them grow and change they capture the memories of the pathways and experiences, they are the unwritten fleeting glimpse of ourselves in action.

This research journey has been only one part of my ongoing story. To suggest all that I have experienced and learnt as I have undertaken the



journey can be made explicit would deny further reflective processes that will no doubt occur.

Narration of one's life can only be done from the perspective of knowing or recounting what has occurred to a particular point in time. To ascribe to this journey understanding of future directions and developments be only of a predictive and imagined nature and such directions reflect the desires or wishes of the narrator. However it is hoped that they might reveal some of the intense experiences an individual might encounter within the research process.

At the time of submission I wrote:

One might ask what images would I create now, as I await the concluding phases of the process. This is the unwritten part of the research process in which one waits for the approval or acceptance of the work as worthy of inclusion into the vast body of knowledge. I would suggest that the images begin again: they are a cyclic representation of how we undergo passages of learning and living throughout our lives. So while I am as I was: a self, existing in a fabric of relations, more complex and mobile than ever before.

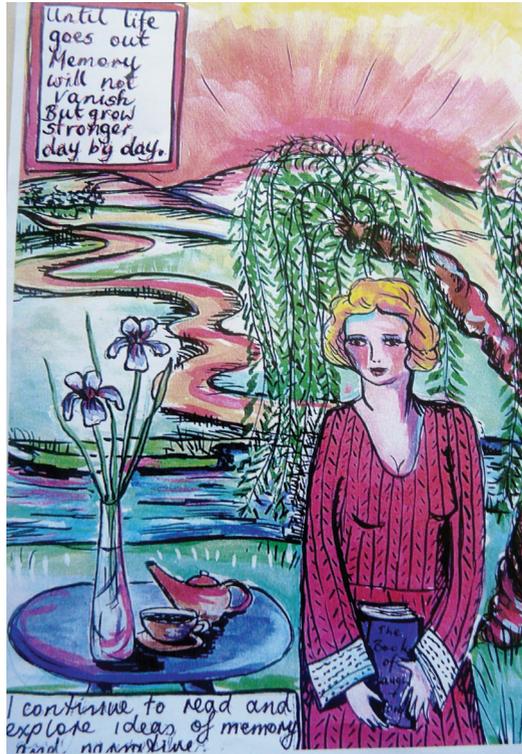
#### **Image 14 *Memory will not Vanish***

It is clear that I continue to read and explore ideas of memory and narrative:

Retrospectively, in revisiting these images it becomes clear that there is a strong interrelationship between both the practice of creating the imagery and undertaking the research. As a visual artist the practice in the first instance instigated the research I was undertaking and I interviewed artists to find commonalities and the individual ways they lived their lives and identified themselves as artists. So my personal interests and experiences were crucial in the beginning. However it then developed further and I took my artistic skills into another realm of expression and recorded visually the research

experience in which I had been engaged. I used the visual representations to explore notions of identity and narrative as I continued through the research journey.

Further to this was the incorporation of texts into the visual images themselves. These texts, the words of philosophers who informed my research, were the triggers for further interrogation of both my own journey and the general observations of narrative research that are evident in this writing.



The double impact of practice upon practice has led to a rich and visually engaging interrogation of the personal journey that I have undertaken during my doctoral research. Through these images I hope the viewer and reader comes to understand the experiences of one person's journey that has been undertaken by many others.

### Journal Entry: February 2003

*Today it has begun to strike me that the intensity of the journey is almost over. I met my supervisor today and when I said "all I've got left to do is tidy up the*

*bibliography, write the abstract and dedications”, he said, “Yes that’s right”. I have felt a bit disoriented and lost ever since I went to Readings searched the shelves for new titles and cue words for identity and memory. I stopped myself and moved to the fiction section. I feel sadness at the loss of intensity – I will no longer be doing a PhD.*

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# Approaching visuality, becoming a researcher

*Althea Francini*

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Analyzing oppositions in the concept of visuality between aesthetics and visual culture in art and education using John R. Searle's realist account of consciousness ↻ *University of New South Wales, 2009*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

In art and education, there is strong argument over the concept of visuality, or how meaning occurs from what we see. This study examines two opposed theoretical perspectives: visual culture and aesthetics. In visual culture, all visual experience is mediated by background cultural discourses, subjectivity is explained as conventional, and the role of the senses in making meaning is strongly diminished or rejected. This approach precludes indeterminate and intuitive aspects of making meaning. Differently, aesthetics explains visuality through direct perceptual and felt aspects of aesthetic experience. But here, subjectivity remains discrete from language and the role of cultural discourse diminishes or is excluded.

Each description is important, but problematic. The study outlines the central explanatory commitments of both approaches, identifying problems

in each with their explanations of subjectivity or self. Both positions maintain from earlier explanations of cognition that separate theoretically and practically the senses, cognitive processes, and context. This separation is currently revising in philosophy and the cognitive sciences.

Employing realist philosopher John R. Searle's explanation of consciousness, the study explores subjectivity as qualitative, unified, and intrinsically social in experience. This way, the study addresses a gap in the theoretical understanding of the two dominant approaches. In this non-reductive account of visuality mental states are ontologically real phenomena, that is, having an objective mode of existence. And there are causal relations between our psychological states and our reasoned actions, a necessity in representing the role of mind in action, as practices. As well, the capacity for mental representation in consciousness provides the key to relations between subjectivity and the world in reasoning. From this capacity, and the rational agency of a self, visuality is unified as qualitative, cognitive, and social. Some account of current work on cognition extends discussion of a reconciliation of visuality on these terms.

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## **Preliminaries**

The brief for this paper is to describe a journey that I have taken, emerging finally as from a tunnel. So, it is a narrative with a birth at the end. To make it simple this narrative will tend to eliminate the tentative and extraordinarily dense contributing variables. But the metaphor and others are apt because they enable making sense of experience as a story. I approach the journey as a birth process as well as a description of research; reflecting, approaching the explanation of a concept formed as a journey of becoming.

I will outline what has been most essential in my journey. But I hope the books and concepts I describe are thought of, by the reader, as

people I meet along the way because they are that to me. The narrative is a conversation about the design of the study more than the method, although they come together. And I treat the supervision for much of the story as background because it is, in the fullest and most embedded sense of background. But it isn't, too. It is the minds and relation within which the research object forms, emerges and is delivered.

### **Choosing and deciding In Utero**

The institutional location for my study provided a balance between the practice and the theory of art. I hadn't resolved a relation between the two in my work. But I didn't know it that clearly, at the time. I think we rationalise significant decisions after the fact. At least, I do. Some of the choosing may have been from the aesthetics of the site, of the trees, the history, and so on. And equally true, I think intuition played a part, as it has to in all journeys. After my undergraduate degree, I was awarded a scholarship, the doctorate proceeding from my honours research.

This early work looked at the emergence of visual culture in art education. For my doctorate, I thought of doing something else and was surprised at my supervisor's suggestion I stay with it, extending the project to a history of visuality in art education. In a way, this was helpful because the requirement entailed in the suggestion was broad enough to confuse me. This confusion became engaging to me. For this reason, I think it was strategic. Teaching me to navigate in open water, first, by using my senses. Why respect the role of confusion? Because it is, I think, one of the most valuable aspects of the research process, for many reasons. I look back on this period as one of the most generative. The uncertainty over the topic and what it should consist in caused me to think, instead of act. Well, relatively speaking. I read a great deal.

The scope of the study eventually interested and, I think, freed me because it resituated my work on visual culture. I began to consider how we

have approached visual meaning across centuries, rather than a couple of decades; and it made me more tolerant. This effort to find answers has left me with continuing respect for the knowledge we have. I will come back to that later. Going over my writing at that time, I am surprised. Everything that emerged then as important remained in the final thesis, completely transformed. This early freedom was critical in the development of a sense of responsibility for the project, the necessity to define it.

After a time the reading drove me nuts, which is a stage beyond confusion. But again, it was helpful because the personality had to kick in and make choices. I began to follow my nose. I like this dispositional metaphor. And it will make sense in what follows. Visuality is about how we make meaning from what we see. After all the reading, I still did not *know* how that really happened. The further I looked into it, the more problematic it became. I had a sense that much of what I read hovered around the concept, without meeting it. The same sense of externality occurred later, in relation to the aesthetic. I am happy to say it could have been my own limits rather than the material, but I think it was both. Now I understand that when you meet the thing, really, it is transformative. And now I am very respectful of the effort it takes to come to the object of interest, in the right way.

The contemporary literature on visuality was unsatisfying. Most of what I read posed the concept in terms of argument, opposing views. Argument between traditional aesthetics and the poststructural discourse of visual culture was largely determining the approaches to visuality at that time. But after a while I found the polemics or argumentativeness uninteresting. There were too many exclusions and the more I listened the more I felt these derived from fear, as if to let in the other view undermines identity. Although I was uncertain of my reasons, I didn't feel that was how visuality worked. Now, I think obtaining visual meaning is more unified and less determined.

I was starting to develop a feel for what was looking back at me. I can only describe it this way. I would look at the knowledge presented; some of the work stood the scrutiny, an awful lot didn't. Of the work that remained, some was interesting, and a lot wasn't. An amount of this uninteresting work was very good, but not right for me, or I was not right for it. This sorting process was critical. It gave me, as I said, a 'feel' for the field. I will come to that later.

### **Intimations Contraction**

Then there were a handful of writings that changed everything. I read Martin Jay's epic work on the visual (1994). Jay provided two reference points that held my attention. First, he turned, or re-turned my awareness to the early Greeks and second, he made reference to Hans Jonas's (1966) philosophical analysis of the senses.

On the first, I became interested in patterns of etymological associations (the origins and developments of word meanings) with the visual experience in the Homeric, or pre-Socratic period. In that time, the words *noûs*, concerning intelligence and its verb *noein*, were concerned with realising or understanding a situation (von Fritz, 1974, p. 23). This Homeric 'intelligence' is very different from the generalised and disembodied meanings we currently attribute to the concept. "Intellect", for instance, now has a very cerebral connotation.

Instead, the early associations of *noûs* and *noein* were closely related to seeing, involving the person's specific character and circumstance, and their capacity for visualisation in terms of dealing with the situation. So, the terms can "acquire the meaning of 'plan' or 'planning'" (p. 23), making a connection between the understanding of a present situation and the visualisation of the future condition (p. 27). In this sense, an element of volition is included in the meaning. The Homeric *noûs* marks the

“difference between uncontrolled and intelligent, purposive consciousness” (Onians, 1988, p. 83); and in a further integration, Onians characterises its early meanings as “dynamic” and “emotional” (p. 83).

This brings me back to the nose. I was learning to sniff for clues. The roots of *noûs* and *noein* are derived from “to sniff” or “to smell,” but are semantically closer related to the sense of vision, especially in situations where the recognition of an object or situation involves “great emotional impact and importance” (von Fritz, 1974, p. 24). The idea of “understanding” or “intelligence” relating to an olfactory sense becomes more interesting, I think, when the Greek relationship between breath and consciousness is understood (see Onians, 1988).

I was captured. Without fully realising the role they would play, I had stumbled, through a lot of effort, into a series of linking concepts that would unfold. It would take some years but they would develop as consciousness, practical reason, and that necessarily felt, qualitative aspect of visual meaning. And the embodiment, the integrated physicality of visuality in these terms was critical. James Gibson says “vision is a whole perceptual system, not a channel of sense” (1986, p. 205). And, “one sees the environment not with the eyes but the eyes-in-the-head-on-the-body-resting-on-the-ground” (p. 205). All these connections would become the study’s approach to visuality through consciousness.

And on the second of Jay’s helpful effects, his reference to Hans Jonas’s work (1966) provided two guides. I became interested in the biological and psychological aspects of visuality. These would develop my interest in explanations from science and turn me to some great art theorists. And I found philosophical analysis. I had my method. I liked analysing concepts. I didn’t even know that, but my supervisor did, probably from the start. And from that point, everything went wrong.

### **The Descent *Zero Station***

Well, everything fell into place, but a different place: a moment of falling down the rabbit hole. I realised the structure of the thesis as I had understood it, and had organised it, was wrong for me. I couldn't do it. Visuality as it stood could go nowhere, except further debate between visual culture and aesthetics over how we make meaning. When I saw this, I understood the limits of the current approaches. Debates that go on too long indicate something else is the problem. So, I was not interested in the arguments. By now I was interested in the way the brain worked.

There was a lot happening. The first year of my doctorate, I was teaching and my sister was dying. After that, I started teaching research at the university. But for a long period, there was also a lot of sadness. I was tired and forgot that people need kindness. I feel apologetic to this day. I think that many people were generous to me and I was not respectful of that.

My focus changed. I became interested in very recent research from the sciences to understand visuality. New non-invasive technologies were enabling the description of brain states during visual experience. And of the researchers who were running with it, there were a number who were interested in consciousness. I saw that a lot of the work most relevant to visuality concerned consciousness. My focus began to shift from perceptual experience and end states of making meaning, to the enabling conditions. After a time, the same research articles and authors kept turning up in bibliographies. It became like bumping into friends of friends, in a narrowing circle, until I went "aha! I know who I am going to meet". There was a sense of celebration because I was enjoying this conversation after feeling a stranger to so many.

### **Method *Flexion***

In art and education, there seems to be an anxiety about committing to the world and its phenomena as real, which is what philosophical realism does,

as though it somehow reduces the capacity to be sensitive. This is not what I found with realism. But I arrived at this view easily, from other's work; the intelligence of the mentor, *causa causans*. The realist Richard Boyd describes the backgrounds of “*relevantly, approximately true*” theoretical traditions, which are also “partly tacit” (Boyd, 1988, pp. 190-193). And, under these terms, methodologies of practices can include such legitimate “tacit’ factors” as “physical intuition(s)” (pp. 191-192, parentheses added). That is, one “intended consequence” of professional training involves the development of a “‘feel’ for the issues and the actual physicals materials which the (discipline) studies” (p. 193, parentheses added).

As well as the development of knowledge of “explicit theory,” intuitions of biological, psychological, and physical kinds function as an “important” part of the epistemic reliability of practices (p. 193). The close relation in a discipline between explicit relevant background theory and the experimental conditions of practices means judgments can “reflect a deeper understanding than that currently captured in explicit theory” (p. 193).

Flexion: While descending through the pelvis, the fetal head flexes so that the fetal chin is touching the fetal chest. This functionally creates a smaller structure to pass through the maternal pelvis. When flexion occurs, the occipital (posterior) fontanel slides into the center of the birth canal and the anterior fontanel becomes more remote and difficult to feel. The fetal position remains occiput transverse. (Hughey, 2009)

The thesis was moving slowly, but taking shape. I knew roughly the requirements of the first chapters. And for the chapters on consciousness, I even mapped out a table of contents that, some years later, corresponded closely with the final one. This was a very interior, or internalised, time of thinking. There was a meeting in which I scribbled a picture of the

connectivity between brain states to explain why it all had to change. I got a yes. I had to write the first chapter and get it right. And I had to stay on task, which meant shedding an awful lot at first. My approach had to invert, from divergent to convergent. There was stress about the knowledge I would still have to acquire.

But also, my capacity for absorbing knowledge became fluid. I started to understand the material I encountered more deeply, because it was helpful, so I was motivated. And of course I was fascinated. This is the period when the research object became, for want of another description, the world. I wanted to know it. Perhaps this was also when the knowledge started to own me, the researcher. That is, there were aspects of the thesis over which another entity, the knowledge itself, exercised the will to create, generating the form. I certainly changed. I listened more closely.

There were many, many serendipities. The most significant of them came in the form of an existential pincer movement. On one side, my interest in consciousness led to John Searle's work through the citations of scientists writing about consciousness. I could see his work was driving the approaches to consciousness, even while he was irritating the science researchers (Koch, 2004; Searle, 1994). I love the testy relation between philosophy and science. There is something very true about the struggle for knowledge in it. Philosophy seems to be about the 'what,' and science seems to be about the 'how.' From Searle's and Thomas Nagel's (1974) and others' works there is now a lot of interest, in the sciences, in understanding the qualitative aspects of conscious experience, that is, the 'what it is like' to experience something. Non-invasive technologies are making extraordinary advances in our knowledge of the brain. When I started, Searle's work on consciousness was citing the same science research I had been reading.

And I saw this work was vindicating the effort in aesthetics to understand and explore the appearances of things. The first-person,

qualitative, or felt aspect of conscious experience, how things appear to us, could not be reduced or explained away in terms of behaviour, or third-person events. The qualitative aspect of experience is the essential feature of consciousness. The role of felt states, or subjectivity is, we could say, a primary cause in relation to visuality. Some theorists in visual culture have spent a lot of time and effort trying to diminish this claim. They have done this for the good reason of working to establish the role of ethics in visuality. But they have also been throwing the baby out with the bathwater, or trying to. Now we know the subjectivity of consciousness is a very healthy baby, in that sense, and just getting its first true voice.

On the other side of the pincer movement, I was teaching Searle's work in the research courses I had been given, so I was grounded in his approach. This both pushed me, and helped me, to go much deeper. Searle's writing was also teaching me the analysis of concepts as an approach to explanation, his way. In this case, the theorist carved out his own requirements on the method. Understanding the reasoning behind this wasn't easy. But, all my life the best teachers have asked a lot. Locally, the idiosyncrasies of supervisor and student were not uncomfortable. And we both forgot the mistakes we each make as human beings. I remember so much patience and goodwill.

### **Renouncing Internal Rotation**

Most of my teaching concerned research, so there was an interaction between my teaching work and my own research, in a generative way. By now, the content of the knowledge was secondary to the method or approach. I became interested in the thesis as an approach to explanation, as much as the representation of my research. From the relation between my teaching role, the expertise of my supervisor and my deepening interest, I began to specialise in the practice of research. I was teaching as much as possible. There was a fit between economic necessity and doing what I love.

Internal Rotation: With further descent, the occiput rotates anteriorly and the fetal head assumes an oblique orientation. In some cases, the head may rotate completely to the occiput anterior position. (Hughey, 2009)

But whatever was forming was uncomfortable, for everyone. If I am asked what was the most difficult aspect of the journey, I would say, finding my strength. I would also say that being me at this time was changing, under pressure. Others would likely say that I was a pain in the neck. So there were frictions. In kindness and helpfully, I was offered work as a research assistant for a substantial project. So I was teaching, researching and trying to write up my own work. Each required much attention. They all merged, developing my capacities to sift, relate, evaluate.

To finish my thesis, I had to let go. My teaching work and assisting the research project were gifts. But I was becoming unwell with the stress. My mortgage required income, the work sustaining this eroded my time for writing. Once I knew I could not do it all, it was easy, although painful. I had been in the same institutional environment for over ten years, and in quite profound ways, it had been a home. To finish the doctorate, I sold my property, stopped teaching, moved to a gentle environment, and wrote.

### **The Work Extension**

I thought that writing the work would take a year, and it took two. But this period allowed me to find my own rhythm as a writer and provided the space I needed as a researcher. Something was emerging from the discipline, as writing. I often worked until late, as I still do. I don't think the best environment for the writer is easy on others. It is essentially selfish. The relation with the work, in my experience, seems to require constant reflection and an internal dialogue.

The basic structure of the thesis remained but I made mistakes. I tried to hurry, because I had never attempted writing this much before. I found it very difficult to feel comfortable with writing so little each day, but I came to understand that the work required this, for precision. There were to be three main sections to the thesis, before I could write up my conclusions. These sections consisted, to begin, in a chapter each on visual culture and aesthetics, and then several chapters on Searle's work. I started on aesthetics and soon got stuck. I didn't have a feel, at that time, for the necessary narrative. There was advice to write the chapters on Searle first.

Extension: The curve of the hollow of the sacrum favors extension of the fetal head as further descent occurs. This means that the fetal chin is no longer touching the fetal chest. (Hughey, 2009)

With that rearrangement, everything made sense. I was familiar with the material but I learned much more as I was writing. Mostly I was learning to be careful. I had to drop any idea of hurrying, because mistakes took so much time to correct or worse, went unnoticed. When I returned to the chapter on aesthetics, it was clear what I needed. This time the work went well.

And then it changed again. The knowledge was pushing back, as it had before. A study of Searle's work on practical reason (2001) was already in the thesis, because it addressed so many of the difficulties confronting the explanation of practices like the visual arts and it made sense of subjectivity. But I had to make wider sense for others, of why the explanation of consciousness and practical reason was so helpful.

I was exploring semiotic theories of representation and perceptual theories of depiction. These theories are the basis of debate between aesthetics and visual culture, over how mind represents objects of

experience, as mental representation. Starting from a couple of pages, a whole chapter on mental representation emerged, out of necessity. This was the hardest part of the thesis, because I was covering so much ground. There was a risk with it, because I had to make a series of judgments about causes relating to the field. And the most significant causal relations, I felt, derived from the “linguistic turn” in the second half of the twentieth century. This turn to language was part of a broader wave in epistemology generally. So the chapter provided a key, to understanding the larger explanatory context in which the field existed.

Post-war, from the 1950s, in the emerging field of cognitive science there was effort to describe all mental operations or processes in terms of language, or languagelike activity. There were reasons for this, of course. Broadly, the concept of mental operations, including perception, as a languagelike activity was extremely helpful in developing computational modeling. All the phenomena could be described in terms of rules, or determined behaviours. David Marr’s work on vision (1983), Jerry Fodor’s computational account of some mental operations (1975), and Noam Chomsky’s work on language acquisition (1980) were each paradigmatic of this direction. It was of interest to me that Nelson Goodman played a significant role in the developing field (Bruner, 1990).

Among the many effects from this development in epistemology, there were difficulties for explanation in practices like art and education during this period. These difficulties continue, but the most recent wave of interest in practical or goal-based reasoning is enabling a different approach. The re-emergence of interest in practical reasoning coincided with the development of technologies to study the brain states of reasoned actions (Chalmers, 2004). There has also been a shift from the 1990s when cognitive psychologists, among others, began questioning the cognitive sciences’ lack of engagement with mind as embodied and situated (Bredo, 1994).

There was some, but not sufficient literature on these problems in the field. The cognitive sciences characterised all mental operations as languagelike and semiotics approached perception as linguistically organised. These influences, I felt, were significantly causal in the field's vulnerability to criticism of aesthetics as non-linguistic, felt experience; it was part of the times. So, it was important that I follow the problem through, to allow those concerns some scrutiny. Now, most in the cognitive sciences are rethinking or have rejected the early commitment to all mental events as the "language of thought" and as unconsciously (and genetically) rule determined. But these and other concerns from this period still affect art education's explanatory terms. I wanted to outline the problems, so that the field could understand some underlying but outdated assumptions, and move on.

No field of practice where the human mind is in action can be understood in terms of rules, neither the mind, nor the practice. Fodor's more recent criticism of computationalist modeling of mind and acknowledgement of the role of the background, including belief systems, from Searle's work, is helpful on this point (Fodor, 2001, pp. 38-64). To attribute determining rules to mind is appealing, for all sorts of reasons. But we don't work that way, literally. The effects of these events in epistemology remain in the field tacitly. I wanted them set out in the literature, so researchers can deal with the problems directly.

There were two core ideas underlying the results of this work. First, non-rule based approaches to mind in the field are appropriate, and consistent with how the brain works. And second, we now understand that the felt aspect of visual experience is critical to how we make meaning.

Science now wants to understand the kinds of things art educators have been interested in for a long time. This convergence led me to those art theorists who sustained commitment to the role of perception in

explanation in the face of much criticism, such as Wollheim (1991). I have enormous respect for the older literature of the field.

### **The Audience External Rotation**

I had developed the research to the point I needed. That is, I could satisfy the aim of the study. There was nothing more to do in the context of a thesis except clean it up, pore over it for mistakes, correct them, and draw the last of my conclusions. The discussion was written in much less time than the other sections because I was very organised by then. But I was still surprised as the results emerged. Towards the end of writing, the wider world started returning, knocking on the door, requiring that I give more attention to the people in my life.

By the time the thesis was submitted for examination, I had moved on from it. The final work extends a little on the immediate field of art education, spanning some concepts that are more familiar in other fields. But the concerns, as I have said, are relevant to the field. And the work is slightly austere. It is only chatty, if that is the word, on technical matters. That way, there is a balance between the narrative element in the main body of text and the more technical material in the footnotes, which are there for future research. The work is a means to approach visibility differently. So, I knew it needed to be an effective, that is, a reliable and plausible framework for others interested in using the explanation.

External Rotation: The shoulders rotate into an oblique or frankly anterior-posterior orientation with further descent. This encourages the fetal head to return to its transverse position. This is also known as restitution. (Hughey, 2009)

The examiners' reports came back, appreciatively, and I was awarded the doctorate. In the span of the work, I had changed so much that the

event changed little. It still feels the reward was the process. But the effects are still coming. I am immensely grateful, to everyone.

### **The Field *Epigenesis***

From the events of this story, my relation to research is different to other aspects of my identity. Researcher has a different mode even to, say, artist. I would not have said that when I started. It's possible that for me, they are both just necessary aspects of my mode of being. They require each other. But the researcher is, if you like, the way I breathe. That could not have happened without the education and supervision in research that I had: apprenticeship to journeyman in a practice. From this, in retrospect, I would do very little differently. But, as I have said, it wasn't easy.

My initial difficulty was compounded, I think, by looking for answers in already established terms. But I found these terms are usually part of the problem. Eventually I understood the explanatory means of epistemology, or knowledge, are changing anyway. These changes support innovation, which is a requirement on research in the field. It is certainly harder to rethink something through, to bring the new into being. And there are always challenges. But I think we are made for it, especially now.

### **Causing Knowledge *Palamê***

When I began my doctorate and teaching research, the anxiety I witnessed towards research constraints in the arts had a profound effect on all my work. I understood that a lot of the anxiety concerned the requirements of language on artists whose expertise largely concerns non-linguistic means of representation. Indirectly, my thesis sought to address the problem. Research is the generation of new knowledge, as explanation. The constraints therefore tend to reward strong concepts, effectively communicated. So, language is critical. From my work and the approach

my thesis took, I now know research constraints are not opposed to artistic, and non-linguistic, concerns. There are ways of representing these well. So, in the end, I think that part of enabling research enterprise lies in understanding and learning to play the game of language, my apologies to Wittgenstein.

Except in drama, language has been seen as intrinsically reductive to the practical arts. Particularly in the visual arts, this view is part of the history of the field. I am not interested in supporting the field to become more language based, as some researchers have argued for. I am more interested in sustaining, developing, and immersing students in the practical activities of art, especially when they are learning theory. All learning is an embodied activity. And, so is language.

To digress, sort of, for a moment, the contemporary distinctions we make between sight and touch have changed from the early Greeks' interrelating of sensory experience. Fragments from Empedocles describe "narrow *palamai*," or hands "spread all over the body," conveying "the idea that the senses somehow *grasp* their object" (von Fritz, 1974, p. 58). There is an activity or movement towards something. And the "two expressions which Empedocles uses to designate sensual perception in general are borrowed from the sense of vision and the sense of touch" (pp. 58-59). So, *palamê* functions as a "general designation of all organs of sensual perception" (p. 58). I think the early Greeks were onto something: a hands on approach to visuality, so to speak.

At present, among other things, I watch babies and children learning to talk. It is a whole of state experience as these babies attune their bodies to the words. In this story, I have been one myself, going through that experience. And in my experience, there is no necessary opposition between language and feeling in research and explanation. I believe, or at

the very least, hope there will be a further attuning in the relation, as our knowledge of consciousness develops.

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Thoughts on a doctorate:  
Another mountain to climb

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The politics of knowledge: A poststructuralist approach to visual arts education in tertiary sites ✎ *The University of Auckland, New Zealand, 2001*

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**Abstract of thesis**

This thesis investigates visual arts education at tertiary level in New Zealand. I examine practices which constitute the object of art education, historically and in the present. I ask to what extent are the constructed objects produced and legitimated via a 'politics of knowledge', and to what extent can the political dynamics be unearthed?

The philosophy, politics and pedagogy of visual arts are examined as cultural and political discourses through congeries of institutionalised practices, both local and global. I focus attention on constituted discourses of the *Bachelor of Visual Arts* degree programme at three related institutional sites: ASA School of Art, Auckland Institute of Technology and Auckland University of Technology. But the issues raised extend beyond one specific programme in one location.

With concern to investigate the subject 'art' as a set of discourses, ideologically, historically and politically conditioned, I advance ways of opening modes of practice in art education, to explore the characteristics of disciplinary processes and discern the capacity for legitimation. Out of this, Nietzsche's 'critical history' of the defining character and genealogy of art education is produced within the matrix of liberalism, neoliberalism, and globalisation.

Through poststructuralist tenets of Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida, my thesis enlarges current conflicts over the status of knowledge, reverberating today within educational policy, practices and procedures. How do discourses of power operate to normalise social practices and silence difference in institutional practices of art education? To elucidate the politics in questions both of knowledge and difference, I render a critical method and discourse, endeavouring to interrogate the exploitation of political idealism endemic to institutional practices in the arts.

Chapters are designed as sites in order to construct an anatomy of discourses of art education, adhering to Foucault's archaeological and genealogical methods. Throughout the thesis, the research is grounded in my experience as an art educator in the practices under examination. This research process tests assumptions, asks questions, and uncovers identifiable grounds of dispute in the archives of art's educational practices, as I work towards a critical and relational pedagogy.

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You can define a net in one of two ways, depending on your point of view. Normally, you would say that it is a meshed instrument designed to catch fish. But you could, with no great injury to logic, reverse the image and

define a net as ... a collection of holes tied together with string (Julian Barnes Flaubert's Parrot, cited in Grierson, 2000a, p. 54).

### **Thoughts on a Doctorate: Before the beginning**

On my bookshelf are three bound books with gold lettering. The two with matching covers are Volume One and Volume Two of *The Politics of Knowledge: A Poststructuralist Approach to Visual Arts Education in Tertiary Sites*, my Doctor of Philosophy thesis dated 2000. The third volume sitting alongside with the title, *Thoughts on a Doctorate 1992-1996*, was collated and bound by my partner to capture the four-year process he had witnessed since 1992, before the beginning of the PhD. It is a collection of papers, proposals, letters and sundry writings as I was trying to find a focus and locale for my doctorate studies. There were many false starts, many captivating themes and possible directions, some paths leading nowhere and others rich with potential.

In 1990 I had completed my Master of Arts (First Class Honours), the first major research undertaken on the French-born artist, Dame Louise Henderson, her training in Paris and art career in New Zealand from 1925 to 1990, and was invited to continue the research into a doctorate. It was a temptation to slide easily and quickly into a PhD in art history by extending the Louise Henderson research, but my professional life was taking me in the direction of developing degrees in art education and grappling with the challenges of bringing art history and studio arts together in some sort of creative alliance. The challenge of unearthing the politics of knowledge in the art disciplines was quite compelling as I felt it would apply not only to art and art education as fields of knowledge, but to the overriding belief in Western thinking that rationality is the basis of cultural authority. This project would be a way of identifying the net of knowledge politics in liberal education, with its privileging

of personal autonomy and progressive development. Further, it would be a way of revealing the many “holes tied together with string” in our ways of knowing, as stated in my introductory quote, and the many ways power is exercised in our epistemological and ontological frameworks and legitimations. I wanted to unearth political dynamics of power in liberal and neo-liberal modes of art discourses and practices, and to understand the tenets of modernism and postmodernism as applied to art education and cultural knowledge in general. These thoughts were arising out of my experiences at that time in higher education. In 1993 I was co-author of the Bachelor of Visual Arts degree at Auckland Society of Arts (ASA) School of Art, the first degree nominated as “visual arts” in New Zealand (there were two existing fine arts degree programmes at Elam and Ilam); and in 1994 was appointed as Head of School of ASA School of Art and so began the challenges of art education management.

The philosophical and practical challenges presented by the development and writing of the Bachelor of Visual Arts degree opened up a space for me to put assumed knowledge of art to the test. I had started my career as an English and Drama teacher, with some experience in theatre, and retrained as an art teacher in the mid-1970s. Since then I had been immersed in the professional world of art, negotiating the professional complexities of being an artist, writer, art educator and higher education manager. I had been a studio art and art history teacher in secondary schools, and lecturer in art and art history in tertiary institutions and art galleries, had devised numerous programmes and courses in art and art history, curated exhibitions, published and spoken widely about art, and was also a practising artist exhibiting in galleries in New Zealand.

Out of all this, I found there was little advanced research done on art education, little was understood or discussed about the relationships of theory and practice, and there appeared to be little willingness to open the

boundaries of the disciplines of fine arts, art history, philosophy, literature et al., to new forms of knowledge production in institutional settings. I was aware that in myself there lived the artist and the art historian. Those two interrelated facets of practice and theory cohabited quite happily in my own experiential archive, yet in the institutional world of knowledge production they were kept separate through inherited practices and power relations. As an art history student I used to sit in art history classes at the University of Auckland, alongside students of fine arts from Elam School of Art, and I would wonder why those art students were finding the study of art history so removed from their practice, while the study of art in history was, so patently, informing their practice. I realised the distancing occurred through the way art history was being framed and taught, with its inherent methodologies emphasising progressive development and stylistic influence, and also by the way studio art reinforced its own lineages of fine art practice through privileging expressive practice over theoretical contestation, thus separating itself from theoretical pursuits and struggles for agreement. I was keen to open up these spaces of knowledge production to find out more about why the knowledge of art was framed one way via historical studies and another way via practice-based models. I felt there was a political condition at work here and resolved to find out more. Drawing from my diverse and long experiences in fine art and art history, I was able to identify some crucial questions, which ultimately led me to my doctorate subject.

### **Selecting a university, a department and a supervisor**

In 1992 I had approached the University of Warwick in the UK to undertake a doctorate on the politics of knowledge at the intersection of aesthetics and ethics. I was attracted to the scholars in twentieth century continental philosophy at the Philosophy Department there, and received

a positive response to my enquiries. However Auckland was my home and place of work, and practical concerns of work and family life were nudging me back to The University of Auckland as the location for my doctorate studies. This was where I had undertaken the Bachelor of Arts many years before and had completed the Master of Arts in 1990, so it was familiar territory. What was not so familiar was the department I finally enrolled in: Education. It had been a long trail from department to department as I sought to focus my topic and find the appropriate supervisor. I had tried the Department of English (when I was thinking of doing the PhD in film theory and gender politics), Department of Art History (when the focus was Louise Henderson or otherwise the female nude in art as a political site of aesthetics), Philosophy Department (when my focus was being honed to more philosophical questions of art and aesthetics), and finally Education where I found a home for my interests in the politics and practices of art education. Most importantly there was a willing engagement with poststructuralist approaches to knowledge production and the politics of difference in art discourses in the group of scholars comprising the Cultural and Policy Studies Department.

Much depends on the selection of a supervisor for the success of a doctorate. What I was looking for was a supervisor who was well versed in poststructuralism as a basis for my methodological approach. I had to secure this approach if I was to unearth the historical and political conditioning of art and its discourses. In each of the departments so named above I was meeting potential supervisors, but none of them was really attuned to my ways of questioning the foundations of knowledge upon which the disciplines were founded, framed and formed. In fact, unsurprisingly, they were heavily invested in the lineages of practice comprising their own disciplines in which their careers were invested. Although I did not have the scholarly language then, I was questioning such lineages and seeking

to unearth the reasons for, or processes of, propositional ways of thinking, knowing and being through the production of knowledge in the subjects called art and art history and their application in education. In fact, I was seeking to discern the capacity for legitimation in the institutionalising of knowledge in and of art.

Later my studies of the writings of philosopher Martin Heidegger revealed to me that I had been searching for a supervisor who was attuned to my way of working through the subject as a search for “disclosure of the matter”, and that here was a critical pedagogy in action. As I was aware that language serves to disclose and conceal at one and the same time, and that dominant discourses of art and art history were entrenched in certain language styles or “language games” (the term developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein and later used by J-F. Lyotard in terms of authority and legitimation), it was essential that I find the right supervisor to lead me to the appropriate theoretical and philosophical tenets to prise open these discourses for interrogation. The potential supervisors in Art History were, I felt, too Hegelian for my poststructuralist leanings, art history itself being based in dialectical methodologies and teleological accounts of stylistic development. The scholars I met in Philosophy were advancing Aristotle rather than Nietzsche and I found no home for me there as I was seeking a way of questioning to reveal a critical history of the present. By deconstructing dominant propositional logic in the way art works as a meaning-making strategy, I was seeking to construct a Nietzschean “critical history of the defining character and genealogy of art education” (Grierson, 2000a, p. vi). There was absolutely no possibility of doing the project at Elam School of Fine Art as they had neither doctorate programmes nor interest in the subject, and in English I could not settle on a scholarly match for my intellectual concerns. Finally, and quite by chance, the name of my eventual supervisor was mentioned to me in conversation with a

colleague in Philosophy – “Why don’t you try...” and in 1996 my four year quest for a topic and a supervisor found a safe harbour in Education. It was such a relief, but it was just the beginning.

## **Methodology and structure**

Research is a vast terrain. When standing on the ground of my research, starting the trek across the detritus of unrelated data, how do I stay on track? There are many luring side paths. Without a clear idea of the methodology we can stumble or lose the way, fail to recognise signals and signposts, or worse perish during the journey and never reach the destination. (Grierson, 2009, p. 20)

These words start a section on methodology in a chapter of a recent book I have co-written on creative arts research (Grierson & Brearley, 2009a). The book grew out of teaching research methodology for postgraduate candidates undertaking creative arts-based projects. It was my own realisation of the fundamental importance of methodology during my PhD candidature, and indeed my eventual passion for its shaping powers, that led to my involvement in devising the creative research methodology course at RMIT and subsequently collating the book drawing from these experiences. It was clear to me that the methodology is the political framing device to ensure a critical outcome:

The use of methodology is not an idea in itself, but a contextual framework, to which the project can adhere and through which it builds. The selection of methodology will dictate the kinds of questions to ask and therefore the kinds of answers and outcomes. (Grierson & Brearley, 2009b, p. 5)

It was the selection of methodology that gave my doctorate shape and allowed me to work in a totally focused way with the political orientation of poststructuralist thinking in respect of my subject. French philosopher and cultural theorist, Michel Foucault showed me how dominant and marginalised practices can identify the way knowledge is made relevant or legitimate in any given epoch, and how the productive site of power works in and through the discursive processes of knowledge production. My interest in finding or disclosing what Michel Foucault calls “the modes of existence of this discourse” (Foucault, 1977, p. 138) led me to understand how knowledge can be excavated in discourse practices of art education. This in turn led me to my major shaping device.

The methodology is like the compass when in the mountains; it indicates orientation. As I stand and look across the chasm it is the compass that can give the bearings on presence as well as absence of foothold. The challenge is to find the methodology appropriate to the particulars of a project, to question constantly, and to recognise overt or covert appeal to a taken for granted worldview and problematise obvious answers. (Grierson, 2009, p. 20)

I pictured myself on this vast terrain of my project and, as I walked across the mountains and planes, I would stop and plant a pole firmly into the ground. There I would dig into the terrain of my knowledge field and unearth the bits of data, information and knowledge that made up that archaeological site. This gave me the thematic of *Sites* as the way to scaffold the thesis. It was such an important device that I included *Sites* in the thesis title and made it explicit in the Abstract: “Chapters are designed as sites in order to construct an anatomy of discourses of art education, adhering to Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical methods” (Grierson, 2000a, p. vi). Thus my methodology was declared.

Whenever I attended a supervisory session I would table my structure, chapter headings and brief summaries and so the anatomy would take shape. With care right from the start to ensure my language was appropriate to the methodologies of poststructuralism, I wrote, “As the thesis develops, each chapter focuses on local and historically contingent practices underpinned by a continuous attempt to excavate defining processes in the discourses under analysis” (Grierson, 2000a, p. 55). The “Introduction” raised key questions and laid out the terrain for the subsequent interrogation of discursive practices of art education. Sub-sections include, The Questions; Review of Literature; Poststructuralism; Locating Meanings; Historical Terrain; Discourses of the Visual; Discourses of Education; Discourses of the Future; and Outline of Chapters. Through this process I was disclosing the shaping discourses to be interrogated in the search for foregrounded meanings and assumptions.

The next chapter is “Narrative Sites” including sub-sections, Researcher’s Narrative, where I acknowledge my space of enunciation by reflecting poststructurally on my experiential archive from which this thesis would be drawn; and Notion of Sites in a Poststructuralist Field: Contexts and Questions. Three is “Theoretical Sites”, with sub-sections, Stedelijk and Salle: A Narrative about Method, arising from a research trip to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; followed by Methodology and Interpretive Procedures, later developed as a conference paper in Auckland (Grierson, 2003); Poststructuralism: a Useable Tool, presented at a Dunedin conference on art education (Grierson, 1996); Theoretical Substrata; Michel Foucault: Discourses and Discursive Practices; Jean-François Lyotard and Legitimation; Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction; and A Critical Approach. Clearly, in these sections, I was travelling through the explanations of methodology by introducing my key theorists and working through their theoretical positions with care to maintain the

centrality of a critical discourse. Always the focus was to elucidate the politics in questions of both knowledge and difference in institutional practices of art education.

Chapter Four was “Institutional Sites” in which I worked through Michel Foucault to trace a genealogy of three key institutes as political shaping contexts of art and art education, with four sub-sections, Foucault and the Institution; Auckland Society of Arts: An Archaeology; Auckland Institute of Technology: Locating a History; and Auckland University of Technology: Seizing the Future. This section enabled an excavation of “cultural and political discourses through congeries of institutional practices, both local and global”, as stated in the Abstract (Grierson, 2000a, p. vi). Chapter Five, “Historical Sites” gave the broader perspective of the art educational landscape through, *Art Education in New Zealand: Historical Contexts*; and, *Bachelor of Visual Arts Degree: Philosophy and Contexts*.

Following this I knew I needed to come in from the macro political and historical view to a more micro view of the politics of knowledge in pedagogy and curriculum of art in higher education sites. So Chapter Six was devised as “Curriculum Sites”, addressing the political ramifications of knowledge in action. It included, *Canons and Practices Imprinting Art Education*; *Relations of Theory and Practice*; *Spaces of Indeterminacy: Towards a Theory of Praxis in Visual Arts Pedagogy*, published as a journal article (Grierson, 1999a); and concluded with *Interfaces in the Disciplines: Standards Assessment and Questions of Legitimation of Difference within Visual Arts Degree Education*, presented as a conference paper (Grierson, 2000b), and later published as a journal article (Grierson, 2002a). This analysis took me into the question of difference more thoroughly in Chapter Seven, “Sites of Culture and Identity”, which included, *Identity, Art and the Politics of Difference*; and *Visual Arts, Genealogy and the Neoliberal Marketplace*, presented also as a conference paper in Glasgow (Grierson, 1997).

Having interrogated the politics of difference in context of neoliberalism and market economies, it was time to consider the effects of globalisation on art and the creative subject in context of difference, so in Chapter Eight, “Global Sites”, there are two sub-sections, Navigations: Visual Identities and the Pacific Cultural Subject; and Cultural Identity and Global Flows; both of which were presented as conference papers (Grierson, 1999b, 1999c). Finally the brief Postscript was a place to make a few final comments of what was intended and what achieved. Throughout I had interrogated the liberal humanist tendencies in art education policy and practice, interrogated the politics of neo-liberalism, and built an argument for a post-liberal education based on difference. There the small narratives would be heard and would not be resolved into one dominating meta-narrative of progress and transcendence.

In the conclusion I had arrived at a place where “the appraisal of difference is an appraisal of justice” (Grierson, 2000a, p. 551), reiterating the contention “that there is an urgent need to underwrite and underpin the praxis of art education with a workable politic of difference. Rigorous scrutiny is required” (Grierson, 2000a, p. 551). Unwilling to let the contention drop I delivered a conference paper on this final statement on the requirement for rigorous scrutiny (Grierson, 2000c), and have continued to speak out for the need to bring questions of justice into the political frameworks of art education through the will to power rather than any Enlightenment guarantee of truth, freedom and autonomy.

Over the four years of researching and writing I had drawn constantly from experience and interrogated every assumption along the way. As had been stated in the Abstract, “the research is grounded in my experience as an art educator in the practices under examination. ... [It] tests assumptions, asks questions, and uncovers identifiable grounds of dispute in the archives of art’s educational practices, as I work towards a critical

and relational pedagogy” (Grierson, 2000a, p. vi). By the end I finally understood what I was writing and I could truly celebrate Bill Reading’s claim regarding the aim of pedagogy:

[It] should not be to produce autonomous subjects who are supposedly made free by the information they learn, which is the Enlightenment narrative. Rather, by relinquishing the claim to join authority and autonomy, the scene of teaching can be better understood as a network of obligations ... a question of justice not a search for truth (Readings, 1996, cited in Grierson, 2000a, p. 550).

### **Life and death: In the shadow of Aoraki**

As I narrate the scaffolding of my thesis and the way it took shape over the four years of study it seems so easy and organised, with chapters turning into conference papers and publications, as though a plan was unfolding on cue. The account belies the struggle of scholarly intention and failed outcomes, of confused focus and re-scripted aims, of grandiose ideas and simple solutions, of personal uncertainty and eureka moments. However, and most significantly, in a discussion of methodology there is no way of disclosing the life traumas I was living through at the time. These I will mention, not to acclaim tragedy, but to reveal something of the archives of this researcher’s struggle to achieve a doctorate in the hope that it will act as some sort of way forward for others who face personal loss or trauma during their doctorate candidature and falter in their will to achieve their goal.

It was January 1996. I had located my doctorate supervisor and subject at the end of the previous year and was working on my proposal for candidature. My partner and I were taking two months in Britain and Europe for some research time. We felt optimistic about the challenges ahead when we arrived back in New Zealand on 27 January. It was good

to be home and we sat on the front deck as we unpacked gifts for my three sons and daughter. A mere hour had passed when a police officer came up the front steps and said she needed to speak with me. The words she spoke changed my life forever. They were words I wanted to rewind, not hear, start again with another story. It was my son, Campbell. He had been killed in a climbing accident on Mt Cook, Aoraki, New Zealand's highest mountain, his body found deep in a crevasse roped together with his climbing partner.

How does one make sense of something so big? Language fails. And where do doctorates and professional work lie in the face of this? To die would be preferable but to go on is a necessity. One must find a way. So on I went, one day at a time. I talked with my mountain climbing son constantly, in the privacy of my mind, telling him I had taught him over his 27 years and now it was time for him to teach me. I had a big mountain to climb and I could not do it on my own. Come with me, I said. Show me the way.

A colleague from the Maori tribe of Tainui wrote a dedication to Campbell as a gift, a *taonga*, to strengthen me when I went to a 1997 conference in Glasgow and visited Holy Island in Scotland where a cousin had sponsored the planting of a native tree in my son's name. I printed the dedication and placed it beside my computer so it was waiting there when I ventured back into the doctorate world, and eventually it became the dedication for my thesis. It kept me anchored to the rocky terrain:

*Dedicated to Campbell*

*24 November 1968 to 25 January 1996*

*Ra te haeata takina te ripa te taranui ki Aoraki*

*Aue kau atu au te ao*

*Ka riro ia koe ra, te taonga ngakau kahurangi.  
Aue e tama haere koe ki te rangi tuuhaha  
E tama, moe mai i raro te marumaru i te tumu korero a Io matua kore.  
Aue taukiri e*

*See the dawn glowing across the land striking the majestic peak of Aoraki.  
As I lament alone in this world,  
you have departed with your precious qualities and treasures.  
Alas my son, depart to the most sacred of all the heavens so my spirit  
can be at rest.  
Sleep my son, beneath the shadow of the sacred tree of life to Io,  
the most Holy One.  
Alas my Loved One*

### **Getting away – a research fellowship**

In 1998 I was awarded a Research Fellowship to the University of Brighton, Faculty of Art and Architecture, in Sussex, England. It was for two semesters. This was my chance to get away from the rawness of grief that haunts the mind, crawls through the tissues of the throat to implode inside the cavities of your body, away from the constant demands of management, lecturing, preparation and marking, away from difficult people who would never or could never understand, away from everyone and everything, and take my doctorate and my most supportive partner with me.

From our small apartment at No 1 Atlingworth Street, beside the sea at Brighton, I would walk along St James Street everyday with the seagulls wheeling in the wind, to my little office in SHACS, School of Historical and Critical Studies opposite the Royal Palace Pavilion in Grand Parade. There I could immerse myself in my thoughts, devour books, frequenting

the Faculty Library with its vast collections on art, art history, art theory, philosophy, cultural studies, architecture and design, and catching the bus to the University of Sussex to buy philosophy books at the well-stocked bookshop there. As well we would make frequent trips by train to London to the British Library for those more obscure texts of historical or highly specialist significance. Everything I did fed my research. I participated in postgraduate seminars and a Masters Program on Philosophy at the University of Brighton, and a marvellous symposium at Tate Britain on “Loaded Canons”, addressing the politics of knowledge in art and art history – exactly my subject.

In the previous discussion of Methodology I have shown that one of my strategies during the compilation of the doctorate was to present papers at conferences, as and when a suitable conference arose, and incorporate those papers into the text of the thesis and sometimes publish them in journals or books. That way I could imagine the sub-sections as works of art and I was curating the chapters as a curator of an exhibition, one who cares for collections. I found it was a strategy that kept me on task while allowing me room to be creative and expansive. In 1999 I presented one such paper, “Navigations: Visual Identities and the Pacific Cultural Subject” (Grierson, 1999b) at *Globalization and Identities*, the First International Conference of The Research Unit for Global Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University. There I met a new group of academic colleagues and heard challenging speakers from leading universities in Britain who gave me such insight into current thinking on the politics of globalisation. I was enthused by this line of research and was happy to extend my involvement by accepting election onto the committee of the newly formed Global Studies Association in UK. My paper at this conference became a sub-section of my final chapter, “Global Sites” and eventually found its way into a book, *Communities Across Borders: New immigrants and transnational*

*cultures*, published by Routledge (Grierson, 2002b). I was finding academic communities and international perspectives that were missing in New Zealand, and was enriched by the experience.

It was also a time of personal satisfaction, being with my father's family who lived in England, attending their Christmas and a family wedding there; and also taking part in the challenges of my partner's family research in Ireland, where we visited his family's stately home, *Glencairn*, now the British Consulate residence, and celebrated his award of a Royal Honour with the British Ambassador, also a recent recipient of an Honour from the Queen. We could not have been happier. We loved Brighton and weekends to Amsterdam or Dublin or London, were meeting many new people and enjoying our explorations, I was coping with the grief, and the doctorate research was going well.

## **Two dedications**

They say lightening does not strike twice. Well, it does. We had been away at a wedding in Devon, a lovely time in the country. Back in the office in Brighton I was expecting a phone call from my eldest son, Hugh, also a mountaineer, who I knew was arriving in England about this time following three months climbing in the Swiss Alps. He was coming back to London to work. Sure enough there was a message for me to phone him at Atkinson Morley. Assuming it was his new place of work I called the number and asked for him. They wanted more details and I said he must be working there; perhaps he was doing the software programming. Not so. He was, they informed me, in intensive care, and this was a hospital in London. They took the phone to his bed and he told me he had been trying to contact me and had just come out of a five-hour operation on his brain to remove a tumour on the cerebellum. He didn't know if it was malignant and was optimistic as he always was about everything. But it was malignant, a medullablastoma. I was devastated.

It was hard to concentrate on a doctorate about art education in the face of this. I was finding out about medullablastoma and visiting Hugh. Eighteen months, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and three operations later, Hugh lost his battle with medullablastoma. He had returned to New Zealand where we all spent our final time with him. With enormous courage he died at little Dunstan Hospital, in Clyde, Central Otago, and we buried his body in the stony ground of Wanaka Cemetery near to his house that he so wanted to live in. We looked through the trees to Lake Wanaka and the mountains beyond. I felt myself disappearing beneath the surface of glacial waters. Another native tree was planted on Holy Island in Scotland, but I had no energies left to see it.

I suppose my doctorate is my testimony to survival. The last page has a second dedication, book-ending the thesis. In late December 2000, I told Hugh I would do a final dedication and that my PhD was for Campbell and for him. He was pleased and said he would be at my graduation in September 2001, but he wasn't. He died in January. I cried all the way through the graduation ceremony at the Auckland Town Hall.

*My eldest son Hugh  
died of a brain tumour on 12 January 2001  
while my PhD thesis was in the examination process.  
Now Hugh joins his brother Campbell in my dedication.*

*Hugh Maxwell Grierson  
4 April 1967 – 12 January 2001  
and  
Campbell Ian Grierson  
24 November 1968 – 25 January 1996  
Aue taukiri e*

And so I became a Doctor of Philosophy.

### **Advice to prospective doctoral candidates**

There is very little left to say, except that the path is not easy. I kept to it only by incorporating my life's experience into the process of scholarship, finding metaphors and keeping to the task of climbing the mountain with my sons beside me. The PhD will always be for my two sons. Their courage gave me the will to scale the heights.

Perhaps in my own scholarly archive of poststructuralism I also found a way to bring my philosophical readings into the realities of my life. Martin Heidegger wrote, "Questioning builds a way. We would be advised, therefore, above all to pay heed to the way, and not to fix our attention on isolated sentences and topics. The way is a way of thinking" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 3). So I always adopted a questioning way, and still do, in everything I do. It keeps me alert to the need to unconceal what others are concealing and to seek justice through activating the will to power. Through my interrogations of the politics of knowledge in art education I saw how much is concealed in the lineages of practice that so inform the disciplines, and how much is concealed in the authorising practices of art, art education, language, social institutions, families, colleagues, strangers. "Working through a questioning way, we can move the research into new thought and new modes of practice ... as a way of revealing ... The researcher's task is to find the way" (Grierson, 2009, p. 20).

Finding the way is the only advice I can give other doctorate candidates. But this means finding an authentic way, not someone else's way. Frederic Nietzsche calls this the eternal recurrence; it is the creative will to power. It is the way we can achieve the satisfaction of a doctorate and make it meaningful in our lives. It is not something we do on a Sunday afternoon. It becomes the way we think and act and be; it becomes us. Some people

think they will do a doctorate for this reason or that reason, but if the creative will to power, the passion for creation and disclosure, is not in them, then they will fall too easily by the wayside.

Doing a doctorate requires stamina and a will to succeed; it calls for focus and determination, even a terrible obstinacy to stay on track and not deviate down those many alluring side paths that take you away from the main thrust. It requires a measure of toughness and agonistic spirit to withstand the criticisms of your ideas from supervisors, colleagues, or worse, from public audiences when you give seminars and are attacked publicly for your position. This happened to me once and I phoned my supervisor the next morning to ask if this is what academic life was about, and was the attack from this one person in the audience warranted. He said the art of surviving academic scholarly work was to know your material so well that you wear it like an invisible suit of armour. They cannot see how well protected you are, and you can withstand any criticisms and intellectual attacks because you can argue with authority and debate with ease. This I can now do.

### **The most difficult memory during the process**

Personally all of it was difficult. However, perhaps one of the most difficult scholarly challenges was finding the subject focus in the first place, and the right supervisor. Another major difficulty was fitting in the research while working fulltime in educational management and lecturing, and coping with imploding grief.

Academically poststructuralism is difficult. Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Heidegger, Nietzsche are not easy philosophers to grapple with; and I was applying these ways of thinking to art education, which had not been done before in New Zealand. It was original; it was cutting edge; it was new. I was showing a way of opening art in education as a set of discourses that

operate in the spaces between modernity and postmodernity, liberalism and neoliberalism, localism and globalism, and how crucial it is that art educators understand their obligations for the politics of difference to ensure a workable justice in operation. Grappling with epistemology, ontology and genealogy, philosophies of aesthetics and continental thought, left little time for social life. Many invitations were turned down, and only those friends and family who were willing to share my journey stayed around. There is a lot of hurt in life and doing a doctorate can be a lonely experience. We need our friends, families and scholarly communities.

### **The most memorable time**

There is one stand out memory worth the telling here. It is the final and perhaps the most unusual memorable moment. It was the long weekend in October, Labour Weekend in New Zealand, in 2000. Hugh was still in London coping with medullablastoma. The chemotherapy had not made any difference other than making him sick, and I thought the tumour was returning when I visited him a couple of months before. I instinctively knew that I needed to get rid of this doctorate by finishing it this particular weekend. It could not go on another week. I knew that if Hugh took ill again I would need all my mental, physical and emotional energies to be with him. This is where the kindness of one of my friends, also completing her doctorate, sustained me. My weekend's task was the final formatting and checking of the Bibliography. I also wanted to go through the thesis and edit some of it out. It was clearly too long. She kept saying to me, on the other end of the email, CYL, Cut Your Losses, and just finish the thing and hand it in after the weekend. Don't worry about shortening it; if it's too long the examiners will tell you and you can shorten it later; just do the Bibliography and say, it's done.

I gave up on the editing idea and took her advice to focus on the Bibliography. I worked day and night. It was lonely in the corridors of E Block. I stayed with it, with her responses coming instantly on the email in answer to my many questions. She formatted and checked dates and details, then put it through the spell-check. Finally at about midnight on the last night the final version of the very lengthy Bibliography arrived. I printed it and walked down the corridor reading it for a final time. I scanned the alphabetical listings, A... B... and got to S. It was late; my eyes were tired. One of my sources was Roger Scruton, the British writer on philosophy. Scruton... Scrotum, I read. Scrotum! *Mon Dieu!* The spell-check had done its worst and poor Roger Scruton and his philosophy of aesthetics had been reassigned. And so ended the writing of my PhD thesis.

Ultimately, one of the greatest and most memorable challenges was the Viva, a requirement for PhD completion in New Zealand universities. One must appear before an examination panel and defend the research for a good two hours of interrogation. It was held only two months after Hugh had died. My whole being was so tired and I could recall little of what I had researched. Had I really written a doctorate? I scanned it the night before and it seemed a foreign territory. Again I asked Hugh and Campbell to be with me through that whole process. They were and it went well. Congratulations Dr Grierson, I heard a voice say. And it was over. That was a memorable moment.

### **What would I do differently?**

During the four years of my candidature I was working full time, studying fulltime, coping with grief fulltime. In retrospect I could have been kinder on myself by taking more breaks away from work. I could have insisted on this instead of being so stoical. But I was reporting to a manager who did not see the sensitive side of life as having any merit at all, nor did he show

any interest in having a Doctor on his staff, so I was inclined to put my head down and just keep going.

The Research Fellowship in Brighton really saved me. It showed me how vital it is to have thinking time and “a room of one’s own” in the words of Virginia Woolf (1929). However I should have negotiated a stronger financial arrangement with my university of employment in Auckland and also with the host university in Brighton. Indeed both those universities were advantaged by my position as an international Research Fellow. Brighton needed international scholars for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and Auckland eventually for Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF). I had to pay dearly to afford to live in UK for a year; a meager academic salary in New Zealand is insufficient when the NZ dollar is worth only 33 pence in Britain.

However it is easy to say these things in retrospect. At the time one does what one does and hopes for the best.

### **Concluding thoughts**

I started this chapter with the story of *Thoughts on a Doctorate*, and wondered where this writing would go. It has been a valuable assignment in that it has provided me with space for deep reflection. It has been ten years since I completed the doctorate and nine years since graduation. The doctorate research has continued to ignite conference papers, books, book chapters and articles on the philosophy, politics and practices of art education. I am world councillor for International Society of Education through Art (InSEA), and participating in the World Creativity Summits for the arts in education to develop advice for UNESCO, was national president of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators (ANZAAE) for two terms, on the board of Art Education Australia (AEA), and in 2009 appointed to the Arts Reference Group for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting

Authority (ACARA) for the new national arts curriculum in Australia, and in 2010, as the visual arts expert for developing the Arts Shape Paper. I am pleased to be giving back something of the value of my research into furthering art education in Australia, New Zealand and internationally. I am yet to write ‘the book’ from the doctorate, but this intention is in a special file called “mission in process”.

When I had completed the PhD I was very tired and needed a break. Then came the offer of a position at RMIT University in Melbourne and my life took another turn. I well recall the first day I walked down La Trobe Street to the university. As I had talked with Campbell in my mind when I was starting the doctorate, and with Hugh and Campbell when entering the room for the Viva, so I was talking to Hugh and Campbell again. I was asking them to walk beside me once more. This they did; and here I am five years later reflecting on the shapes of mountains and dark caves that comprise the doctorate journey, and living daily with the politics of knowledge in art education as a way of being.

*we stream into the unfinished  
the unbegun  
the possible...*

*Adrienne Rich*

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Knowing in, through and about:  
The PhD journey

*Rob Haysom* ✎ *Deakin University*

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Factors leading to the establishment and development of three public art spaces concerned with contemporary art in the 1980s in Melbourne ✎ *LaTrobe University, 1996*

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**Abstract of thesis**

This study involves an account of the factors leading to the development and evolution of three public art spaces concerned with contemporary art in the 1980s in Melbourne. The three spaces – Heide Park and Art Gallery, 200 Gertrude Street, and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art developed programs that promoted and presented contemporary art throughout the eighties. Prior to the 1980s the National Gallery of Victoria was the major public institution concerned with the promotion and presentation of contemporary art in Melbourne.

The study describes and analyses events leading to the establishment of each new space and investigates the formations and groups who played leading roles. A case study approach has been used which explores the networks and groupings that developed in setting up and maintaining each

space. Theoretical perspectives drawn from Bourdieu, Williams and Wolff are employed in order to explore the social and cultural meanings of the networks and groups responsible for developing the three art spaces. These perspectives are used to help account for the motives and ideology employed by individuals and groups, such as artists, academics and politicians.

Each of the three spaces mainly developed from different clusters and groups, although some individuals had involvement in more than one of the spaces. The study concludes with a cultural analysis that identifies several key factors, such as forms of patronage, government policy direction and the power and influence of various sectors and formations. Government funding for art is a complex area of activity that draws upon a wide constituency of individuals and agents that include artists, wealthy business people, collectors, and so on. The study reveals much about government intervention and cultural and social formations promoting art in Melbourne during the 1980s.

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### **Specific background to the PhD topic selected**

In 1975 I was an art student who was caught up in a protest staged at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). The little known incident followed an artists meeting at the George Paton Gallery, Melbourne University where prominent contemporary artists rallied in support of Domenico De Clario. The National Gallery of Victoria had organised a series of peer sponsored exhibitions called *Artists' Artists* and De Clario's installation had been packed up and placed in a storage cupboard on the instructions of the director, without the artist being consulted or informed beforehand.

The installation near the Australian art collection was deemed by the director as harmful to the works nearby, but this aspect had not been

discussed with the artist. The event angered many contemporary artists leading to the protest staged at the NGV. The protest extended beyond De Clario and his work to raise a more significant and underlying concern. Namely, the NGV was seen as being unsupportive and out of touch with contemporary art.

Calls for a dedicated public space for contemporary art was promoted by the artists. An artists' representative group was established and they liaised with the NGV senior staff. In the short term a curator was appointed in 1976 to the NGV and he set about staging a series of exhibitions that sought to inform and educate audiences to the work of practising contemporary artists. This appointment went some way to soothing the anger directed at the NGV, however there was still a core of artists concerned to establish a separate public institution devoted to contemporary art.

In the 1980s three, not just one, new, publicly funded art institutions interested in promoting contemporary art came into existence – Heide Park and Art Gallery, Bulleen (1981); the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, South Yarra (1984); and, 200 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (1985). The shift in emphasis intrigued me; why should such spaces come into existence in the eighties, when in the seventies one space could not happen? This fundamental question, driven by my understanding of events in the seventies, became the basis of my PhD research.

### **Selection of university**

Armed with this question I considered which University to approach. Having completed a Masters degree at LaTrobe I was attracted to one of my principal supervisors who I found informed, challenging and passionate about the arts. Further, he was particularly knowledgeable in cultural theory, which enriched my interest in the role and operation of contemporary art practice in society. The choice of supervisor proved to be a good one as

he continually probed and pushed my assumptions and assertions, always ensuring that connecting points were pursued rigorously.

### **Importance of the supervisor/s**

The choice of supervisor is critical in higher degree research, particularly at PhD level. Firstly, as the research is concentrated and you are living with it constantly, you need a good supervisor who is genuinely interested in your topic and findings along the way. You build up a strong rapport with your supervisor as research becomes a lonely exercise. Your supervisor is the one who rides the bumps with you as they guide your journey. Secondly, you need a good critical voice that ensures that you are focussed, stick to the topic and condense your approach, rather than becoming too broad in following every side issue that crosses your path. Thirdly, you need a supervisor that reads your work quickly, but diligently, so that you are not left in limbo too long, and can quickly address any shortcomings.

Fourth, the supervisor should be accessible so that when you initiate contact you are not left in the lurch or put off too long. My supervisor was always available, except when he took extended leave at one critical point in the research. Fifth, you need someone who challenges your findings so that you maintain a critical perspective and grow through the process. I had a researcher who always generated questions and forced me to continually reassess my findings and assumptions. Sixth, a well informed supervisor can suggest additional readings or theoretical perspectives that help frame and locate your material more cogently. Whilst the candidate becomes the expert in the topic a strong supervisor can provide a more objective voice to the writing. It was suggested by my supervisor that I discuss my material with an acknowledged expert on Australian art. This I did, and the assistance proved most valuable in reassessing one of my cultural theoreticians in the context of my findings.

Seventh, you need a sympathetic person who has been through the troughs and lows of higher degree research and can keep the flame alive. PhD research can be exhilarating and affirming, but as the journey is unchartered and lengthy, it is inevitable that enthusiasm can sometimes wane or one can feel overwhelmed by the task. Family members can be sympathetic to a point, but without having been through the process they cannot fully appreciate your frustrations.

Eighth, a good supervisor can suggest conferences where you can present findings, test assumptions and network with other higher degree candidates and academics. Presenting your research to people unfamiliar with your work means that you are forced to think clearly and concisely about your material, and be open to criticism and scrutiny. Whilst daunting the experience can assist in advancing your research as you seek to refine your material. Questions such as, Have you thought about....? Or, have you read...? can widen your options. We are all limited by our experiences, so that additional insights viewed critically can be valuable. Not all advice is necessarily good but at least it throws up some areas for consideration. Attendance at conferences proved valuable as I quickly realised that you are not alone in the trials and tribulations faced in the research process. Similarly, writing up findings and then submitting to a scholarly, refereed journal in the field, can open up some valuable criticism and points for reflection and refinement.

Originally I had two supervisors. The second supervisor proved to be problematic as she had a very senior appointment in a tertiary institution and was often too busy to be attentive to my research. Drafts written would be unread, and when meetings were set I would end up discussing the material and not the writing. I ultimately took the decision to go with one supervisor, not a sound strategy but one that ultimately worked in my case, despite the significant mistakes made by forging on alone when my supervisor was on leave.

As a post-script aside, I am a supervisor of higher degree candidates myself. All candidates in the institution where I teach must have a supervisory panel of three for a PhD. This arrangement means that candidates can work off the strengths of each supervisor, and be guaranteed of a continuity of supervision if one or two supervisors are on leave. The principal supervisor takes the main role in the panel and addresses the difficulty, if it arises, of the candidate receiving conflicting information. Different people will notice different things which can open up areas within the research for consideration.

### **The research question**

Returning to my PhD experience, the fundamental question framed by my research topic did not change significantly. At one level the study was a historical overview documenting the development and establishment of three new art spaces. That overview meant sourcing primary documents, identifying and interviewing key personnel, and sourcing secondary articles, interpretations and newspaper material. At another level, various cultural theories and sociological perspectives were necessary in order to culturally map and account for the form of the institutional structures, and the positions taken by individual stakeholders. The chosen methodology was that of a case study approach, with cultural theory providing an overlay and link between the three separate institutions.

In the initial stages I set about researching each institution separately. I systematically established contact with an institution discussing my project, interviewing key people, such as directors and curators, requesting papers, letters and documents, which in turn opened up further avenues to explore. As I was studying part time the process was lengthy. A trap that one can fall into is imagining that the hard work is the data and information collection, with the writing falling into place. The writing needs to be addressed carefully as it demands rigour and direction.

## **The trials and tribulations of research**

Into the fourth year of my research my supervisor went on extended leave. Up to this point I had regularly discussed my findings outlining the details of each institution. In his absence I began refining my material culminating in writing over 230,000 words. On his return, much to my dismay, he noted that I had material sufficient for developing two PhDs. Not through quantity and volume of words, but through the range of ideas that I had foregrounded in the writing. Needless to say quality rather than quantity needs to be carefully addressed in the research. In addition, the problem was that the material I had written was interwoven throughout the 230,000 words, so that I needed to tease out and locate a core theoretical perspective so as to better contextualise my findings. It was not a case of halving the writing and submitting two PhDs. In short, in my supervisor's absence I had blindly steamed forward, writing furiously, while being too broad in intent.

I had been over zealous in the writing and detailing of each institution, and needed to revisit the material to reclaim the primary focus; easier said than done. Having arrived at this point was the nadir of my experience in doing the PhD. Thoughts of giving it away crept into my mind. However, more objectively I reflected on the fact that I had invested so much time and energy to the project. I was determined not to throw it all away.

Research by its very nature takes one into uncharted territory; that is part of its attraction. You interview someone or read an article about something and it suggests another angle or insight or possible direction to take next. That becomes the energising aspect of research, as opposed to the necessary drudge work that can sometimes become overwhelming. A PhD, amongst many things, is a degree achieved through effort, determination and persistence.

To refocus I went back to my visual background and developed a concept map that plotted the structure and form of each space, fleshed

out the broader matrix of art world players within a sociology of culture – artists, bureaucrats, politicians, academics, curators, critics, gallery directors, writers, teachers, and then explored points of intersection, such as individuals who had involvement in more than one of the institutions. This meant taking an overview of contemporary art practice in the 1980s and locating the institutions within that frame. The material was contextualised through backgrounding the initiatives in the seventies that led to the final establishment of each institution, although Heide Park and Art Gallery was an evolution of much earlier activity leading back to the Reed circle and their involvement in Melbourne's first Museum of Modern Art from 1958 to 1965. Cultural theory provided a conceptual overlay that assisted in accounting for various positions taken and adopted by proponents for each institution.

A valuable means of refocussing was assisted by two aspects. One was the presentation of a colloquium to a panel which included the supervisor and two outsiders who were not directly familiar with my work. The other was the use of a critical friend who had completed a PhD in the arts and read my material, critically and purposefully.

The colloquium was a daunting but extremely valuable exercise. It meant that I had to focus quickly and purposefully, organise my material cogently and clearly, and express my ideas with clarity. I had to demonstrate my knowledge of the field, and locate my material in a manner that allowed people not familiar with my research to comprehend the nature, form and purpose of my project. It was also important to fully comprehend that a discernable shift in focus from some dependence on the supervisor, to being more responsible and independent in the direction of the research, was occurring. Obviously as a candidate I would initiate the times of meeting with my supervisor but the material I was amassing meant that I was becoming the expert on the topic.

## **Working practices**

The working pattern and procedure adopted was important in maintaining momentum and focus in the PhD research. Random grabs of time were only effective when engaging in interviews or reading primary and secondary documents. A regular routine is essential in the writing process so that it becomes habitual. It is also valuable to set aside a dedicated space for writing, with documents and articles accessible and carefully labelled, whether in a filing cabinet or pamphlet box. Habit forming behaviour means that the writing becomes second nature. Mental purpose is also critical so that when you do sit down to work, you actually work, and not try and avoid or put off the process. Being organised and focussed through habitual practice potentially guards against procrastination and avoidance strategies. Immersion in the writing process is important in maintaining a consistent voice. I set aside a dedicated day for writing, or if possible, two consecutive days, as it was easier in maintaining some momentum and not spending time trying to recapture where I last left off. Studying part-time meant that I could not always guarantee continuity. A frustrating aspect was after gathering some momentum in the writing I would have to put things on hold due to work commitments. Study leave for a semester enabled me to write consecutively and consistently; immersion in the writing proved invaluable I would also ensure that I had a break every two hours or so, get up, move around, have a cup of coffee or tea so as to avoid fatigue, and come back to the writing with a fresher perspective.

Research can be daunting as you have a rudimentary road map that starts at one point and finishes at another. How long you take the journey, how many stops and side trips you take, or different routes you may try out, there are always startling and unexpected vistas presented. In my research the most memorable occasions occurred when conducting interviews; someone would tell you something that had not

been divulged previously, or a letter not publicly seen before provided new insights and information. The other point of exhilaration was when the end of the writing was in sight. Throughout the research process it seemed like approaching absolute zero; the closer you got the further away it seemed. However, when the conceptual and case study material began to gel, and the concluding chapter was being written, the end was definitely in sight.

### **The writing**

An annoying question often asked over the journey is – How long before you finish? Or, Are you almost there? When you are embedded in the research the completion is unknown. You work towards an administrative deadline, but as you are working in uncharted waters, the final finishing line shimmers like a mirage – you see it but then you don't. At this point one also needs to be pragmatic and avoid trying to read new material, unless compelling and critical to your fundamental argument.

Fundamental to the PhD is not the data and information gathering but rather how you make sense of the material in the writing up of the thesis. Two problems can arise – overestimating what constitutes a PhD, or the opposite, underestimation. In my case I had overestimated what was required and had so much material and wrote so much, that two potential PhDs were possible. The writing process can take longer than you think as you agonise over every sentence, re-evaluate your structure, and ensure that the citation and bibliographic material is consistently maintained and appropriate. Computer programs such as Endnote were unavailable when I was undertaking my research. The Endnote program is an excellent aid in organising and collating data entries, thus reducing some of the less glamorous facets of research. Whilst computers are valuable it is essential to back up any writing, and to clearly mark the particular version of each

draft. If nothing else a PhD demands that you are organised and systematic in the way that you collect and organise your material.

### **Post–PhD from candidate to supervisor**

After completion of my PhD I have been involved in several successful PhD supervisions of a conventional, and practice/exegesis form. The practice/exegesis model has proved an attractive option for visual arts practitioners. The studio practice work and the exegesis taken together constitute the thesis. I will now suggest aspects relating to the practice/exegesis model based on supervisory experiences, at the same time defining the form.

### **The practice/exegesis model**

The practice/exegesis model presents unique challenges as practising artists balance producing art works with writing; two distinct modes of presentation. In addition, practising artists may read broadly rather than in depth; the difference between an artists statement in an exhibition, and a sustained, critical, in-depth study constituting a thesis, can be immense. Most of the following focuses on the exegesis, as this aspect often proves to be the most problematic to visual arts researchers.

An exegesis is a written submission that supports the creative practice, which is an exhibition/performance/screening of work. It provides the reader/examiner with an insight into the study and its intellectual/theoretical location within the discipline, how it proceeded, what distinguishes the study from allied practitioners and exponents (who need to be identified) in a related field, and an understanding of the totality of the research. In short, an articulation of the journey which places your work in the context of others in the field, such as practitioners, theorists and academics, and demonstrates the unique contribution to knowledge made through your research.

The exhibition/performance/screening is the culmination of the research whilst the exegesis supports and provides an insight into the journey and processes involved. The exegesis must develop a sustained and coherent argument that illuminates upon, and supports, the artwork. Artworks, including performances, can convey ambiguity and allow interpretation. The exegesis is important as it includes documentation of the practical work from the examination, so that other scholars, researchers and interested people can learn from the candidate's work, thereby making a contribution to the field.

The exegesis therefore should contextualise and ground the exhibition/performance/screening and should not be examined separately. It should be transparent in approach. If it is confusing or obtuse it is offering inadequate support. A good exegesis provides an accessible record for others of the practical and theoretical trajectory of the research.

Progression on a thesis should be sustained as time goes faster than one thinks. Be purposeful from the beginning. Start with some key background reading and then prepare a preliminary outline. This should be followed by more focussed reading as preparation for the exegesis. As soon as possible a first draft should be attempted, which could lead to further reading. It is critical that you don't proceed on your research without being attentive to the preparatory work in order to avoid facing the challenge of writing.

The research develops from a question/s, which forms the basis for investigation and resolution through the production of a body of artwork with the support of the exegesis. The area of investigation must be manageable and focussed so that the topic is treated in depth. It should not be a diffuse topic, which is developed superficially.

Writing is a way of ordering and structuring your thoughts in a palpable form. Thus, writing of the exegesis should not be a last minute afterthought but an integral document that informs on and complements

the artwork, which is produced for the thesis. Documenting works in progress through photographs and a diary/journal (visual and anecdotal) are also valuable processes in informing upon the research.

A diary/journal is useful in assisting in the writing and documenting of the exegesis. It could also be used in its own right. Ensure however, that including a diary/journal and/or further supportive material is contextualised and not just loosely tacked on. Coherence is essential in both documenting and providing insight into the research approach. The reward for producing a thesis can should be that you have significantly advanced in your understanding of the topic and have grown in your critical and research skills. Whilst the qualification recognises your research and expertise as judged by your peers (qualified examiners) it also places you within a research culture. The completion of the thesis concludes one significant journey and establishes the base for further research within a university environment.

### **What is in the exegesis?**

The exegesis should direct the candidate and examiner on how to read/ approach the work. At an early stage of the exegesis it is important to make clear what main assumptions are being made in the treatment of the topic. As in a conventional thesis, don't assume that the reader/examiner is tuned into your wavelength; clarity and clear definitions aimed at the uninitiated are crucial in outlining your research thinking and approach. Avoid using key terms in distinctive ways without indicating early in your writing what you mean. Avoid jargon and glib phrases – a problem faced by many art practitioners used to gleaning material from various sources for exhibition statements.

Whilst the exegesis will contain some descriptive material, such as, what the project is about, this must be controlled and managed. What is

submitted should be subject to analysis and have a clear relationship to the issues advanced in the thesis. In writing the exegesis some restraint in the use of direct quotations should be exercised. In most instances quotations should be reflected on and analysed, or used as effective summaries of your own discussion. It is imperative that the exegesis shows the development of your own ideas.

As the exegesis unfolds it is important to demonstrate a familiarity with the relevant established theories and current debates in the field(s) of systematic inquiry that make up the conceptual context of your thesis. In addition, informed knowledge of the field, which relates to discussion about significant practitioners, is important.

At the same time candidates should acknowledge areas related but outside the parameters that you have established their research. Be attentive to accurately representing views that may run counter to your own position. Distortion or ignoring counter arguments and positions or not identifying appropriate and related practitioners demonstrates a weakness in one's research. Indicate clearly how you developed the project, explaining the techniques employed and their success.

Be attentive to the mechanics of writing, such as, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Despite the pervasiveness of computer programs that help in dealing with mechanical aspects don't take anything for granted. Quietly reading aloud can sometimes assist in determining where to place a comma or full stop.

The following references are proffered as valuable resources to consult further. Some are of general application whilst others are particularly relevant to the practice/exegesis model.

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- \* Particularly useful for the practice/exegesis model.

# A life-changing journey

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The arts in the New Zealand curriculum from policy to practice ✨  
*University of Auckland, 2001*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

Through histories of New Zealand art and music education, the forms knowledge production took and their curriculum discourses, connections with what Lyotard (1984) names ‘grand narratives’ are revealed. We can then comprehend how legitimate knowledge claims and practices occurred at certain historical moments locally, in ‘progress’ of European civilisation.

In a more contemporary context, the thesis examines curriculum and its “reform” within a market project of “enterprise and competition” (Peters, 1995, p. 52). It exposes the politics of knowledge embedded in the generic notions of “The Arts”. This neo-liberal policy environment is one that nurtures transnational capital’s freedom of movement as it assaults the Welfare state.

The thesis scrutinises critically the birth of the “Arts” in the New Zealand Arts Curriculum to the production of the first draft of the proposed policy presented by the Ministry of Education (1999). I will

show by analysis that there has been a fashioning of a new container for the isolation of artistic knowledge and a diminishing of possible space for each of the arts areas despite a fantasised increased and flourishing space.

The Draft Arts (1999) document disguises and rehashes the “master narrative” of universal rationality and artistic canons and is unlikely to revitalise local cultural identities. Lyotard’s notion of “performativity” (1984) is used to critique “skills” and their “development” while conflation works to enforce cultural homogeneity. The dangers of mere “functional literacy” serving the dominant culture’s discourses of power and knowledge – the art-as-commodity idea – are very real. The theoretical and epistemological construction by the Ministry of Education of “The Arts” as one learning area is unsound and represents the tightening of modernism’s hierarchical notion of culture.

New Zealand, now post colonial or post-imperialist, both bi-cultural and multicultural, necessitates aesthetic practices which, far from promoting a set of universal standards for appreciating art, recognise and reflect cultural difference. Adopting a criticality towards ethno-centric assumptions of modernism, its selective traditions ... its universalising aesthetics of beauty, formal relations, individuality, authenticity or originality, and self-expression, of “negativity and alienation, and abstraction” (Huysens, 1986, p. 209), we can begin to understand the theoretical task of articulating difference with regard to aesthetics.

The modernity/postmodernity debates, within which the development of the New Zealand Arts curriculum is placed are forcing us to re-examine the assumptions of modernism. Aesthetic modernism, mostly within the twentieth century, identifies with consumer capitalism and its major assumptions are rationalist, individualist, and focus upon the autonomy of both the “work of art” and the artist at the expense of the artwork, its reception and audience within its localised cultural context.

The ideological features of humanism/liberalism - its privileging of the individual subject, the moral, epistemological and aesthetic privileging of the author/artist - are examined as forces contributing to modernism's major values (or aesthetic). Such approaches, it is argued, were limited for dealing with difference.

Thinking within the postmodern turn destabilises the certainty and reproductive nature of modernistic approaches to curriculum in the arts. Basic epistemological and metaphysical assumptions in disciplinary fields including the art, literature and architecture, philosophy and political theory are registered here within the field of education in and through the arts. J-F. Lyotard's (1984, p. xxiv) seminal report on knowledge defines postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives". Postmodernism, he argues, is "undoubtedly part of the modern", "not modernism at its end but in its nascent state and that state is constant" (1984, p. 79). After Lyotard, postmodernism might be seen, therefore, not just as a mode or manner or attitude towards the past, but also as a materialising discourse comprising a dynamic reassessment and re-examination of modernism and modernity's culture. The thinking subject (the cogito) seen as the fount of all knowledge, its autonomy, and transparency, its consideration as the centre of artistic and aesthetic virtuosity and moral action, is subjected to intellectual scrutiny and suspicion.

The need for an aesthetics of difference is contextualised through an examination of western hierarchies of art and the aesthetics of marginalised groups. Poststructuralist, Jacques Derrida's and Jean-François Lyotard's inspirational theories are used to examine the concept of difference and as methodological tools for offsetting the privileging of the liberal individual and individualism. Establishing the principle of an aesthetics of difference, rather than merely the principle of difference into curriculum and pedagogy, involves the politics of representation as well as the politics

of difference. Art education in all its manifestations can no longer avoid the deeper implications of involvement with representation, including forms of gender, ethnicity and class representation as well as colonial representation.

The Western canon's notion of 'artists' and their 'art', often based upon white bourgeois male representations and used in many primary school classrooms, are part and parcel of "social and political investments in canonicity", a powerful "element in the hegemony of dominant social groups and interests" (Pollock, 1999, p. 9). Difference is not appreciated in this context. School classrooms can become sites for the postmodern questioning of representation of "the other", where there is a questioning of images supporting hegemonic discourses, images which have filled the spaces in the "chinks and cracks of the power/knowledge-apparati" (Teresa de Lauretis, 1987 cited in Pollock, 1999, pp. 7-8). I hope to reveal through an "eccentric re-reading" (see Pollock, 1999, pp. 7-8) the entanglements of the cultural dynamics of power through an examination of the traditions of Truth and Beauty in imagery, which are to be disrupted by inserting into the canon the principle of the aesthetics of difference.

Art education as a politics of representation embraces art's constitutive role in ideology. This is to be exposed as we seek to unravel and acknowledge which kinds of knowledges are legitimised and privileged by which kinds of representations. Which kinds of narratives, historical or otherwise, have resulted in which kinds of depictions through image? A recognition of the increasing specification of the subject demands also the careful investigation of colonial representation, the construction of dubious narratives about our history created through visual imaging and its provision of complex historical references. How have art, music, dance, drama been used in the service of particular political and economic narratives?

Through revisioning the curriculum from a postmodern perspective, suggestions are made for an alternative pedagogy, which offsets the ideological features of humanism/liberalism, one in which an aesthetics of difference might pervade cultural practices – “systems of signification”, “practices of representation” (Rizvi, 1994). I draw upon Lyotard’s notion of “small narratives” (1984), and present an investigation of what the democratic manifestation of “the differend”, and multiple meaning systems, might indicate in terms of “differencing” music education as a site in which heterogenous value systems and expression may find form.

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### **Choice of university**

I decided on the particular university (University of Auckland) to pursue my doctoral studies as this was the university at which I had completed my Masters, and this was the institution in which I had experienced the kind of supervision that suited me and the kind that stimulated me intellectually. I enjoyed my supervisors. In addition, Auckland was the city in which I had lived for most of my life and in which my husband’s practice was situated, as were my aging and increasingly dependent parents.

### **Process of deciding on the topic**

Because music and visual art education are areas in which I have a personal interest and strength, I have paid particular attention to these, articulating and establishing an *aesthetics of difference* which might inform pedagogy. It became increasingly evident that, while I wanted to analyse the *politics of curriculum* and the positioning of the arts within the present policy, I could not launch wholesale into the issues of curriculum ‘reform’ at any sophisticated level without examining the context – historically,

philosophically and politically. How did we arrive at the situation we found ourselves in with the arts in education as they were now being represented within curriculum policy?

In the first section, I examine the history of music education in New Zealand from 1877 (Chapter One) and the history of art education from 1877 (Chapter Two). Within this context, I examine the forms knowledge production took. The discourses within which they were embedded reveal a connection with what Lyotard (1984) has described as “grand narratives”, used to legitimate knowledge claims and arrangements of practices at various moments in history. Without a sense of the past we know not who we are or where we are going. The aim of these historical chapters was, therefore, to uncover the historical rationale behind the present state of both music and art education in the New Zealand curriculum. In seeking to tell the stories of music and art education, an attempt is made to picture the movements, changes, activities and suggestions that have appeared in each period of its development. What were the philosophical antecedents of current practices in education in the visual arts? A brief analysis of a selection of writings of early theorists and practitioners identifies the influence of such writers in practice (in the 1940s).

Two chapters on the *histories of art and music education* followed from this awareness. I examined the histories of music and art education in New Zealand to the present day, looking at the major movements influencing education in this field as a backdrop to providing an understanding for the present curriculum policy as an “aesthetic text” (Pinar, *et al*, 1996, p. 567). The move in terminology has been from “art” to “arts” education, and “art” within a broader view of cultural production and cultural narrative. It had become clear to me during this investigation that the notion of cultural narrative revitalises cultural difference and this positive model of difference springs from a critique of negation.

As a teacher initially at primary school level, and then at tertiary level, I was interested in and aware of the consequences for teachers and children of the changes in policy for the arts. I wished to further the research completed at the Masters level, which concerned the marginalisation of the arts in state education policy. Drawing on this academic background, I wished to deepen the understanding of the policy process and to use a theoretical perspective to inform this understanding. My purpose in embarking upon a doctoral thesis was to research how these changes would be experienced in curriculum in the arts at the level of policy. I therefore proposed to follow the birth of the new arts curriculum from the policy to the practice stage. This was essentially a study of the politics of curriculum.

My focus in section two is contemporary curriculum reform. Chapter Three provides a brief examination of the educational ‘reforms’ as part of the wider restructuring of the state sector, insofar as these set the political policy context for curriculum reforms in general, and the context within which the music and art curriculum policy in particular, were to undergo change. Chapter Four deals with curriculum development in the arts, within the ‘reforms’. 1989 music and art syllabus documents are examined for the inheritances they will provide for the development of the new policy document. The rationale underpinning the construction of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) is a focus, as is the policy implications of a conflation of the artistic and the aesthetic. Chapter Five examines critically, and within the wider economics of power and privilege, the policy process and development of the new arts curriculum (Ministry of Education, *Draft Arts*, 1999), which was to be implemented in the year 2002. This document was probed and analysed in terms of the role it ought to have had in the intervention and resistance to unequal power relations in times of increasing cultural differentiation. The ‘generic’ framework was scrutinised in more detail

as were the “Background Papers” (see Foley, Hong & Thwaites, 1999) written to inform the writing of the *Draft Arts* (1999). The notions of disciplinarity and “arts literacies” were interrogated within the overall conceptual framework. Notions of *functional literacy* and *critical literacy* are examined for what they contribute to an understanding of the effects of “arts literacies”.

I have contextualised present curriculum policy for the arts within some understanding of modernism and modernist theories of the arts in education. If I was going to rethink what is said and done in education in the arts, I needed to question the adoption of foundational approaches which are based on assumed “firm foundations with fixed standards” (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 12). How are the ‘true’ and the ‘valid’ in education in the arts challenged by postmodern and poststructuralist thinking? What is it about the “normative commitments of established practice” (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 5) that requires challenging in the light of postmodern and poststructuralist thinking? How have we as art educators been blinded and constrained by this practice? The political production of beliefs regarding the ‘truth’ concerning art/music education is up for questioning. Poststructuralism (poststructuralist analysis) asks of transcendental signifieds: Where do they come from? How were they produced? Why did they originate? (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 33). What meanings in art education have become elevated to the status of the transcendental signified? Which social ideologies have made certain words and meanings “the centre around which other meanings are forced to turn?” (Eagleton, cited in Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 32).

Through this process it emerged that I needed to examine the *postmodern turn* as a prelude to discussing the philosophy of difference. But what was postmodernism a response to? What were modernism and postmodernism and how were they related? Using postmodern and

poststructuralist theory, the research is a response to modernist theories of art and provides a theoretical basis for a contribution to the understanding of the *philosophy of difference*. How would this implicate and provide new directions for pedagogy? I wanted the arena of the arts in education to contribute to provision of a new poststructuralist idea of community, which escapes the dualisms of many past practices. Derrida's and Lyotard's theories of difference have involved a move away from the Hegelian definition which was one of 'self' and 'other'. The poststructuralist critique of the Hegelian definition of 'self' and 'other' shows it always involves an identity defined through a process of negation of the other.

In section three, the focus was theory. While some of the origins of discussions of the arts were in the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, and involved eighteenth century faith in progress, reason, and individual autonomy, the focus in Chapter Six, was on aesthetic modernism as a twentieth century phenomenon. Modernism's major values (or its aesthetic) within both the visual arts and music are discerned. Modernism as a prolonged moment of history rather than as a specific aesthetic stance is examined. Different issues of aesthetics develop in contrapuntally complex ways with the emergence of modern culture. A discussion of liberalism/humanism crystalised certain 'buried' assumptions concerning modernism. I show that the Enlightenment, modernism, its major assumptions and capitalist culture created conditions for the moral, epistemological and aesthetic privileging of the individual author/artist. Importantly, modernism's capacity for dealing with difference was questioned. The analysis of twentieth century modernism was used as a basis for discussing art education in New Zealand. In this vein, the discussion of modernism helped to establish a basis from which past representation of art education could be subjected to postmodern scrutiny, exposing its ideological nature. Together, these sections form part of an examination of the powerful

discourses or ‘grand narratives’ that have controlled education in the arts within art-historical models and hierarchical models of culture.

Various interpretations of *postmodernism*, as a basis from which to examine its effect in the artworld, were the focus of Chapter Seven. *The deconstruction of the artist as bearer of meaning* along with *modern and postmodern art* were particular interests. *Intertextuality as critical dialogue* was discussed. It posed the question of what the postmodern recognition of epistemologies, languages and aesthetics that are different from our own might bring to curriculum policy in the arts. This research was, in some ways, a response to what Peters suggests are postmodernism’s acknowledged different ethical perspectives and the multiplicity of value systems embedded within processes of hastening cultural differentiation (Peters, 1996a). Peters argues that Western liberal states have commenced processes of compensation for historical injustices (1996a). I wanted to argue that ethics *is* possible for the individual arts. Taking account of the ‘crisis of reason’, and foundational understandings of knowledge and morality, this curriculum policy research acknowledged the effects of the fragility of borders between knowledge, morality, and politics.

Murkily, it emerged also that if I wanted to eventually focus upon difference, and philosophise an *aesthetics of difference* which I saw as my contribution to ‘new knowledge’, I would first need some understanding of what the philosophy of difference involved, and what the *politics of difference* might mean in terms of the way it was played out politically in curriculum policy. To contextualise some of the present day hegemonic understandings of what art education meant to teachers, I needed to understand the inheritances of *modernism*. What was modernism in relation to *postmodernism*? And what was *structuralism* in relation to *poststructuralism*? The whole argument of the thesis was becoming increasingly complex and wide-ranging. If I was to use the poststructuralist

philosophers to help me articulate my *aesthetics of difference*, I needed to map some understanding of how they all related to each other. Following the chapter on *pedagogy*, embracing and theorising the *aesthetics of difference* emerged as the final chapter. This was what the whole thesis was working towards.

In section four, I examined the notion of the *aesthetics of difference*. Chapter Eight focuses on the philosophy of difference and argued that education in the arts ought to withdraw from an education that continues the ‘purity’ of modern aesthetics, to promote a new vision. The chapter, acknowledging the co-existence, collision and interpenetration of profoundly different realities (Harvey, 1991), attempts to insert culture into aesthetics, and to energise cultural differentiation insofar as schools might nurture these processes. It poises education in the arts to question, on the basis of difference, the totalising framework of neo-liberal state education in New Zealand. The concept of ‘difference’ is theorised using the theories of poststructuralists, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard.

Drawing on the previous discussions of postmodernism and poststructural theory, Chapter Nine is the concluding chapter and the pedagogical embodiment of the accumulated understandings from throughout the thesis. It is the site of suggestions for some of the forms an ethical education in the arts might take. It suggests the possibility of education in the arts offsetting the ideological features of humanism/liberalism (and its privileging of the individual subject). Marshall (1997, pp. 32-33) has argued that French poststructural philosophy “problematizes the ‘individual’ as the last vestige of a rational liberalism, which has not only privileged a Cartesian cogito as the self-identical, rationally autonomous and fully transparent thinking subject, but also as *the* universal subject, subject to Kantian forms of rationality” (emphasis in original). The chapters in this

section attempt to respond to these suggestions. Suggestions are made for disrupting the hegemony of modernist theories or practices and how these might be the basis for an alternative curriculum and pedagogy in education in the arts. Fresh contributions to the field are made through the heralding into the field of the arts in education, insights from postmodern, postcolonial and poststructuralist theory and philosophy, as they might be articulated within pedagogy. That is, I am trying to engage with the issues raised by these theorists in terms of what they might mean for the arts in education.

### **The process to decide on the methodology for the research**

Initially, I had thought I might interview teachers in much the same way as I had done at Masters level. However, my supervisors suggested that if I wanted to go down this track, I would need to do another paper in qualitative research methodology, and this would mean they could not supervise me. I particularly wanted these supervisors as their knowledge and philosophy excited me, and I have always believed that teachers needed to be ‘romanced’ in this way to keep inspired about the difficult, complex and immensely important job they undertake when they enter the teaching profession. These particular supervisors, I knew, would help me keep my passion alive, and they have to this day. I decided to take their advice and follow a philosophical hermeneutic path. This meant engaging in philosophy, curriculum policy and theory as methodological tools, along with other documentary material including professional associations’ newsletters and submissions from such associations, unpublished sources such as Masters and PhD theses, archival material, public policy documents, journals and conference papers, and attending workshops and lectures by visiting academics. I have analysed policy documents, in particular the *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum: Draft* (Ministry of Education,

1999), hereafter referred to as the *Draft Arts* (1999). Drawing together the strands for the various sources was the theoretical and epistemological task. I sought to image the state of the education in the arts in the past and what it might become in the future.

I had been inspired by what I believe is art educators' need to examine how, precisely, art education has been confused by art's "unconscious participation" in what Levin (cited in Gablik, 1991, p. 126) terms "the collective historical pathology' of our vision – the observing spectator consciousness in which the subject exists independently of the objects around it". The belief in the need to recontextualise the study of the arts in education in relation to cultural understanding for teacher education has also been underlined throughout the process of the research. Rethinking of art education underpinned by a philosophy of difference will involve a new participation ethic, and derives from the challenge of poststructural and postmodern insights and arguments. A form of poststructuralist criticism examines "the effect of history and power on what we claim to know and how we organise our discourse-practices" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 14). According to this criticism,

we are captives of our discourse-practices and furthermore, ... they are not rationally designed. They control us, not the other way round. Together, these bodies of thought question the liberal faith in rationality, control and progress that are repeatedly expressed in educational texts and discourse-practices. (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 14)

### **Organising life and work around the thesis**

To the question "How did you go about organising your life and work around the thesis?", my very astute daughter answered for me: the PhD "was a continuation of the previous chaos, Mum". She was referring

to the Masters. She could hardly remember a life before this. For six months of the time, my daughter was finishing her Masters degree in English and her boyfriend, who also seemed to be living with us, was also completing his Masters. The house was bulging with academia and attendant pressures, which were enormous and manifested themselves in various ways.

The ‘playcentre mothers’ – friends who had been solid and steadfastly present since the early days of motherhood, decided to ‘take the mickey’ out of me at my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party with a song which began:

Now we may just be,  
A bunch of old tarts,  
But we know about the  
Marginalisation of the arts...etc.

In retrospect, I probably drove them to drink with my slightly manic enthusiasm for my topic. However, it was this passion, as well as the support from husband and friends, which saw me through. Strong support for prospective PhD candidates is quintessentially imperative to the project of a doctoral thesis.

Encouraged by my supervisors and capable colleagues also involved in various projects related to the arts areas, I undertook, during the process of the doctoral research, some publishing of academic work around the Arts Curriculum, the subject of my thesis and convened a conference *The Inaugural Arts Forum in 2000*, followed two years later by *Vision 2000: Arts Forum*, on a similar topic. This was well attended by teachers and Ministry representatives and colleagues from the Colleges of Education, indicating a need for the dissemination of such research in the arts, and in curriculum, in particular.

### **Methodological difficulties have revolved around the extremely wide-ranging nature of the thesis**

Tracking both music *and* art areas of curriculum, in terms of history, curriculum policy, and pedagogy, has meant that I have had to rely on secondary sources in parts. I am not specifically a philosophy scholar or an ethnomusicologist. In order to understand curriculum in the arts, I have attempted to interpret or ‘read’ discourses generated by the field. Pinar and his colleagues argue that “‘practice’ itself is a text in this sense”, and they summarise “those discourses which define themselves as ‘practical’” including curriculum policy, curriculum implementation “as communicating an understanding of curriculum as institutional text” (Pinar et al., 1996, p. 50). The thought of making a contribution that would inform curriculum policy and help salvage education in and through the arts from “the political and moral sterility” to which education generally has succumbed in the “sway of instrumental reason” (Smart, 1996, p. 399) and of establishing a weaving of the modern and postmodern into a new vision of curriculum that includes the art curriculum as a form of resistance, was somewhat seducing.

Arts curriculum policy, which ‘elbows its way’ into the new millennium has the responsibility to show the way towards the “polyphonous ‘oppositional consciousness’” (Lippard, 1990, p. 14). Art education’s identification with the ability to “read and write culture on multiple levels, ‘to look from the outside in, and from the inside out’”, in the words of bell hooks (cited in Lippard, 1990, p. 14) becomes part of the epistemological task. It needs to register its involvement in the reconfiguring of the modern paradigm and has both a deconstructive and reconstructive dimension. Lippard’s double statements that “it is fashionable for art world insiders to celebrate meaninglessness” (Lippard, 1990, p. 14) and “the last thing we need is another ‘universalist’ concept that refuses once again to come to grips

with difference” (Lippard, 1990, p. 17), I felt bound to regard as a challenge for this project. I have been inspired also by the possibilities for schools and teachers to set the scene for an education in and through the arts, which reinvigorates conventional mediums with alternative meanings drawn from identities constructed and developed from differing gender, class and ethnic backgrounds. Certainly, the ‘entertainment’, merely ‘pleasurable’ and ‘therapeutic’ mould of past art education policy needed to be rethought.

### **Advice to prospective doctoral candidates**

Be well prepared for supervision sessions, for there may be many questions and confusions to be clarified during the precious times one has access to supervisors. Be ready and purposeful and constantly ask yourself, at these times, but also throughout the writing process, “But how does this (these questions, this content I’m dealing with now) relate to my overall argument in this thesis?”. Do not just rely on memory for this may fail at times. Keep a journal of the process of supervision so that you may see how the structure changes over time with your increasing knowledge. It would be very helpful too, to have some organised system of finding easily articles you have read and need to revisit. Numbering articles as you read and file them in ring-binder folders, which are, again ordered in some way is very helpful. I once saw a very efficient student do this and wished I had been like her, as I felt my own head was in a muddle for much of the time throughout the long and complicated journey I had undertaken into educational theory, philosophy, sociology, history, music and musicology, art theory, and aesthetics. Menopause did not help either and I can remember sitting at the computer in the nude in desperate attempts to counteract the effects of the hot flushes which often crept from toes to top, to be correct. A sight to behold no doubt! Keep your clothes dryer free of lint to avoid house fires and neighbours coming to the rescue and seeing

you, as they peer over the stone wall, again clothesless and skating around in “water with a hose trying to put out the fire. “Mrs Mansfield ...is there anything we can do to help?” they asked.

Keep your bibliography up to date as you proceed keeping a reference section at the end of each chapter, and do this laboriously detailed task when you feel you should be doing at least *something* towards your project but are in fact too tired to engage in actual heavy-headed writing. Be neurotically fussy and rigorous with this task, which can become a nightmare at the end, if you do not. Keeping a bibliography for each chapter is a great help for use in publishing articles along the way, if this what you intend. I would advise prospective doctoral candidates to learn to use ‘endnote’ at the outset as this would facilitate the whole process, save hours of laboured searching for notes and references. Learn to use all the library facilities on offer and to *practice them* before you forget the instructions. Younger students doubtless can learn to use these props more easily than older students as they have grown up in the era of advanced technology. Keeping up attendance at concerts, orchestra, exhibitions, and anything else arts related cannot go amiss, as well as reading the prologues and commentaries written about these shows, performances, etc. Watching the newspaper for related leads for one’s research can be helpful to bring one back down to earth and means one is not completely isolated and studying the arts in a mere academic vacuum. Reading tangentially, that is, reading well beyond your particular project, is helpful too. Do not undertake a major house alteration while engaged in such major research as you may well end up with the wrong toilet and hand-basin which will be a continuing source of annoyance long after the doctorate is completed.

### **The most difficult memory of the time as a candidate**

Not being able to have supervisors ‘on tap’ when I needed them complicated the process of supervision. Waiting for them to return from

conferences overseas etc, was frustrating as well and resulted in some parts of the required supervision being almost overlooked and left until the very end when energy levels were low and I was longing to finish. However, this is the nature of the academic game and common to most candidates, I would wager. There was as well, an awareness of the dependent nature of the relationship with supervisors though this was also very rewarding and exciting as well, but I was well and truly ready to forego this by completion of the thesis.

Given my subject specialty (the arts, philosophy of education within a critical policy studies framework or paradigm), and given my age (around 46 years at the time of commencement), and my understanding of the commodification of education, of instrumental rationality and the way this operates within a market culture, I could see, increasingly, that my 'exchange value' or saleability in an age of economic rationalism, would not be too great upon completion. In this era of the late 1990s "[A]cademics with expertise in philosophy of education and related fields such as sociology ... were often not replaced and few new positions were created in these areas" (Roberts, 2009, p. 812). The political and economic context surrounding the research and knowledge of clearly diminishing employment opportunities did intrude in the writing process, but it never made me lose my passion for the subject or my belief in its importance. Looming too, was the realisation that I was the only family member around to care for the emotional and other needs of both my increasingly dependent, frail parents. How would I be able to combine this with 'work'? As Anne Manne explains: "Both liberal feminism and the new capitalism shared an insistence on employment as having a moral significance, and places it at the very centre of their grand narrative of progress" (2008, p. 17). How was I to 'progress' when the imperative 'caring' role is abstracted from the economic equation of capitalist societies? (see Manne, 2008).

Apart from this, the most difficult memory of my time as a candidate was my enmeshment in the politics of the department through my teaching role for the arts in the curriculum within the university where a rather 'quick-fix' attempt at developing teacher education was being insisted upon by government – a short, 'one year' teacher diploma course would 'remedy' a looming shortage of teachers (primary and secondary). *The Arts* (Music, Art, Dance and Drama) were to be 'delivered' in four two-hour sessions, and this, in a dry and barren Law lecture theatre. Such an impossible project was bound to fail. I was caught in the crossfire at the intersection of a shift in the norms of the department in which I taught. This shift was from philosophy/sociology/critical policy studies-based norms to that of positivist psychology-based norms. This resulted in changed dynamics and tensions, power relations and convoluted webs of authority, and, excluding my supervisors, a lack of appreciation of gender inequalities, something my 'education' by its very nature was making me increasingly cognisant of. In addition, academic staff members were subjected to quite unjust and oppressive pressures with rigid accountability practices being enacted. 'Performativity' reigned (see Lyotard, 1984). These intersections were outside my control, but nevertheless impacted heavily in personal relationships. This was deeply disturbing to the process of writing the thesis and a point at which I came close to wanting to 'throw in the sponge'. I understand that similar experiences for PhD candidates are not uncommon. Many do just this. The process of a PhD is utterly politically infused.

The whole encounter was one that highlighted for me the university setting as the site of contradiction, contestation and conflict, between theory and practice. It was one in which I found myself working 'against the grain' in a New Right, neo-liberal policy environment. It threw into relief differences over beliefs about the 'truth' of what visual art education

meant and its newly legitimated status as a marginalised and reduced subject. As lecturer from a strong primary school background, and the one assigned the task of writing the university course for the arts, I wanted to situate issues related to research or inquiry in art education more broadly in the “amorphous socio-political context of academe” (May, 1992, p. 226), which included a postmodern context.

Under the confusing cloud of hegemony, there was an attempt to muzzle the voices of critical educators, my own included, and an attempt by those in control to merely reproduce uncritically, present and past approaches to pedagogy. This uncritical approach was something to which the very department that had nurtured me had hitherto been opposed. This flew in the face of my whole thesis and ongoing research towards the doctorate. An attempt was made to ‘shape’ my understanding of what my role ought to be in teaching prospective teachers about art education and the curriculum. There was a negative reaction to my view that as prospective teachers, our major task might *not* be to reproduce just the ‘art gallery’ and Western art historical approach.<sup>1</sup> The issue of art education, I was told, by the primary principal programme leader, was not to be identified with the social-political context or with cultural politics but with teaching students how to make ‘works of art’. This was, apart from being impossible in a law amphitheatre-type setting, difficult to swallow, given that I was representing, on the teacher education programme, the knowledge of the Cultural and Policy Studies Department, a department that was radical and which I admired. A politics of knowledge intruded upon pedagogy as the departmental paradigm changed.

What was happening within this conservative ‘art-for-art-gallery’ discourse was a return to binary methods of conceptualising art education, its purpose and practice. This attitude leads to such comments as “Art education means we teach children to say, ‘I like that painting, isn’t it

beautiful', or ... 'I don't like it'". For me, so deeply involved in research into this very field, this attitude and level of knowledge, was simplistic and outdated and did not account for difference. It was, rather like being on a battlefield ... the soldiers of battle fighting, on one side, for the art gallery tradition, and on the other side, those fighting for the need to be critical towards the sites of knowledge represented through the art. Clearly, I was being perceived as leading the critical army. Professional horns clashed. This anxiety that there was 'too much criticality' seemed to reflect that something greater was at stake than mere talk about criticality and difference. Interventions on the basis of difference require or demand acknowledgement of power relations, they demand visibilising the mechanisms of masculine power, and they demand an understanding of sexual difference as socially constructed (see also Pollock, 1988). They require too, an understanding of the role of cultural representation in that construction. I wanted the students in my course to understand cultural representation's role in such constructions and to appreciate the possibilities of their own professional role in interventions.

Incidents such as the ones described above give evidence of a need for art educators to analyse and critically examine their own sites of production and any retreat from theory. This 'experienced' contestation and contradiction over curriculum content, between theory and practice (the very politics of curriculum being played out) served to harden my resolve to complete this work and reaffirmed my belief in its importance, and underlined the necessity for such a project to move beyond the authority of school principals' views of knowledge constitution for visual art and music education. It reminded me of a phrase in a book that had discussed how paints, pots and promotion do not go together and why it seemed that so many school principals are neither arty nor musical, and therefore, seem to be able, in so few cases to offer inspired leadership in these fields.

In retrospect, this experience probably assumed disproportionate importance, but submerged beneath all this was the knowledge that in the present climate, work following the thesis, would be difficult to obtain given my lack of mobility and age. Part-time work at university was very valuable to me, for with the sole responsibility of both my aging parents who lived to near their nineties, I needed to organise my work around these caring roles. The process of the PhD was very difficult for me as my parents were in their mid-eighties, with crippling arthritis, both with dementia though my mother's was more advanced. She, still alive at the time of writing, was also quite deaf and half blind and had a dizziness syndrome, which meant she often fell over. This caring role proved to make it extremely difficult for me to remain in paid work, and I was increasingly aware of the meaning of the "selfish capitalist" (Oliver James, 2008), a society that fails to include the "care penalty" (Ann Manne, 2008) suffered by mostly women, in its economic equations. Connell (1988, cited in Blackmore 2008, p. 99) describes the academic context well: "These mobile global networks are a new space of play for transnational masculinities who are rewarded for their mobility and flexibility". Further, privatised or "consultancy-based research, usually in science and technology, provide greater career opportunities for mobile academic and scientific and technical masculinities than women researchers..." (see Blackmore, 2008, p. 99). The privileging of male entrepreneurial privilege proliferates, and multiplies into research empires as it crosses international borders. Women, and I was no exception, "tend to be bound by localized/national/domestic responsibilities, by social relationships and researching the social" (Deem & Johnson, 2003; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2006, see Blackmore, 2008, p. 99). I was able to remain writing and publishing but this is unpaid work as is the thesis supervision work I undertook at both Doctoral and Masters level (my own fault, the institution would

say if challenged). I could feel my access to a career slipping away during my doctorate. I have since found out from the International Care-giving Association, that 10 out of 300 people in care-giving roles of many types are able to remain in full-time work. And I had thought my difficulties were my fault alone! This knowledge was comforting but stirred my feminist hackles. This opportunity to reflect on such issues is valuable and may help alert others to the hazards along the way. I have learned how entrenched male privilege is, and the reasons why the status quo is often met with little criticality by men, for such criticality would interrupt it.

### **The most memorable time during the thesis**

Finishing to the satisfaction of the supervisors, a chapter that had been well argued and researched and was beginning to 'sparkle'. Particularly memorable were conferences, and the excitement of learning how to write, structure, and present papers well. Hearing top educational philosophers, whose work in the field I had admired, was a bonus. Sharing one's work with them and other colleagues and knowing that they were a genuinely interested audience who would not be bored with one's microcosmic knowledge in the field. This was always a risk with friends, whose eyes might glaze over at times, reminding me to change the subject. The process of writing a doctorate is extremely rigorous and can be lonely, for much of the time, because even though there are colleagues going through a similar process, the journey is essentially an individual one. Graduation day was definitely an unforgettable high point.

### **In retrospect what I would I have done differently in my journey**

As stated earlier, methodological problems revolved around the extremely wide-ranging nature of the thesis. I may not have experienced the difficulties of pulling the whole thesis together (experienced in the final chapter), where I needed to think about history, pedagogy, curriculum policy, aesthetic theory,

had I chosen just one arts area, (music or art education). This would have allowed more use of primary sources.

At times, I wished I had begun my doctorate at a much younger age for career advantages that would probably resulted from it. However, my ‘maturity’ and experience of the policies, and philosophy examined meant that had I been younger and less experienced, I may not have been able to tackle such a thesis. Finishing it has been the most rewarding experience of my life so far and it has given me the confidence to publish many articles and know that they are worthy. I believe that art education has not been and is not now living up to its potential. Looking back on the course of this mammoth investigation, what is now more than ever clear to me is the immensely political nature of my task, for professionals are peers who work in a similar context to mine. My research and its claims have not always been received happily by the more compliant colleagues, those with privileged political interests in the whole process. Some have taken personal offense at my philosophical and theoretical claims. However, I am still researching and publishing to my heart’s content, painting more, making and teaching more music, as well as preparing to be a grandmother.

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## Notes

- 1 I had understood that my role as course lecturer, was to use the knowledge and understandings generated from both my experience as a primary school teacher and present doctoral research, to present to the students a broad range of alternatives which would enable them, as prospective teachers, to make judgements in the light of their growing professionalism. I presented them with discussions of 1) a socially critical approach, 2) a 'cultural investigations' approach, and 3) the Western Modernist approach that privileges the 'how-to-make-works-of-art' notion. These were described and placed in theoretical and ideological critical contexts.

Playing the game through:  
Making a thesis in art education a 'real'

*Karen Maras* ✨ *Australian Catholic University*

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Mapping children's theory of critical meaning in visual arts ✨  
*College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, 2008*

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**Abstract of thesis**

Through the lens of a realist conception of artworks as artefacts, this research investigates the underlying ontological constraints governing children's aesthetic understanding in art. Challenging structural conventions of research into aesthetic development in art, a realist philosophical framework provides a neutral space within which the ontological basis for children's aesthetic concepts of pictorial meaning and value can be analysed, and developmental differences mapped. The study employs an analytical schema which brings together analytical tools borrowed from Feldman's 'ontic dumping' and Wollheim's twofolded 'seeing-in.' This schema is used to classify qualitative changes in concepts of pictorial value and meaning in three groups of children aged 6, 9, and 12, and two teachers, as employed in the experimental curation of an exhibition of portrait paintings. The curatorial policy developed by children from each group, in justification of

their choice of eight pictures and accompanying exhibitions, is interpreted using quantitative and qualitative methods. Characteristic-to-defining shifts from naïve accounts to more autonomous aesthetic judgements of value are identified relative to the ontological stance children adopted in their critical reasoning about the portraits they chose. Findings include differences in the level of conceptual integration in justification of portraits chosen, differences in the breadth and autonomy of identity brought to bear in choices of portraits, but few differences in the representational abstraction of the images chosen by different age groups. The authenticity of the experimental tasks, as well as the rich characterisation of the developmental differences described in the study have significance for pedagogical explanations of critical practice in art education.

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### **From the ideal to the real: Reflections on a doctoral journey in art education**

This paper is probably something like the background chapter of my PhD thesis I should have written. It tracks retrospective reflections in my doctoral journey. In writing about this I have adopted the theme of experience, largely drawn from John Dewey's notions of art as experience (1934). Quotes from Dewey (1934) focus each part of the discussion.

The journey tracks shifts in my beliefs about art as a field of knowledge from idealist to realist conceptions. This journey was not realised in a linear progression but rather through the cyclic revisiting of relations within my experience as a beginning academic. It involves formative experiences and profound revelatory moments. Understanding the nature of knowledge development, which is essentially the outcome of doctoral study, is reflexive, not always comfortable, sometimes procedural, involves instrumentalities

and serendipity. What I hope to demonstrate is how a doctoral journey concerns more than a regulatory institutional hurdle, but is rather a form of becoming. This becoming is both the recognition of how events, collaborations and interests coalesce and emerge in our lives, and the nature of theory building as learning and knowledge acquisition. In particular, my journey concerns questions about what constitutes aesthetic knowing and how it relates to teaching students to think in the art classroom.

**...in the raw... (p. 4)**

My future was decided in advance by family traditions in academia and education. With a long list beginning with my great grandfather, great aunts, paternal grandfather, aunts and uncles, and parents who were variously principals, teachers and academics, my choice to become a teacher and academic was not a surprise. My grandfather's roles as an artist, teacher and teacher educator at Armidale Teachers College undoubtedly set in train some of the directions I have taken in art education. His influence, along with formative experiences travelling the world's art galleries with my teacher mother and academic father lead me to a love of art. This was affirmed during school years with the attention and encouragement of a particularly significant art teacher during year 11, and the frequent sets of coloured pencils and paints from Pop each Christmas.

My school study of art was mainly focused on a chronological study of architecture and the formulation of explanations using a formalist structure. I liked making art, but really relished interpretation and critical issues. This involved compiling long lists of buildings, each archived as to their form, floor plan, symbolic function and cultural context. And then I met painting. The universal interpretative structure I had applied to architectural forms no longer made sense when studying modern painting. Interpreting paintings was a very different prospect. My assumptions were

revised through a love of reading about paintings, examining the ways other writers explained their meaning. I remember the release of Robert Hughes' *The Shock of the New* (1981) and realised there had to be more to it than the elements and principles of design or notions of form follows function.

**...moments in the past which reinforces the present... (p. 18)**

A fourth year unit of study in the Bachelor of Art Education was perhaps the most memorable of any unit I had studied at undergraduate level. *Theory of Aesthetics in Art Education* introduced a diverse array of ways of conceiving aesthetics as a field of study. The lecturer's reputation as a somewhat esoteric and removed teacher of a difficult subject preceded him, but I was fascinated by the ideas he explained. At the time I was not altogether sure of exactly how aesthetics made sense for teaching, but I was intrigued by the set readings. Later, during the literature review stage of my doctorate, I was to find a rusty old folder of photocopied readings I had collected and annotated in detail. The contents showed I had been drawn to idealist theory and nature of aesthetic experience. To my great surprise I had examined theories of aesthetic experience, including Beardsley's notion of the aesthetic fallacy (1958). This was also a preoccupation of the lecturer who later became my mentor in aesthetic knowing and doctoral supervisor. I had forgotten that experience, but somewhere in my subconscious was still the abiding preoccupation with how aesthetic experience connected to knowledge in art and this was a factor in my teaching and curriculum design which continued to intrigue me.

**...the future is a quickening of what is now... (p. 18)**

As a secondary Visual Arts teacher I was curious about how art criticism should be taught. The Visual Arts syllabus in play in New South Wales promoted a version of aesthetic immediacy that played out in the

examination as a form of critical analysis of ‘unseen’ images (Board of Studies, 1987). Criticism was essentially a form of visual literacy. Students were encouraged to give accounts of images of artworks using a formalist approach of interpretive analysis. Working with a colleague who had been trained in North America (Illinois) and whose approach to this was to look to textbooks about art analysis and chronologies of art history, I earnestly and naively followed suit. The seminal text was E. B. Feldman’s *Varieties of Visual Experience* (1987). This provided a process-based formula for developing a judgment about artworks. Thinking I had found the solution to the art criticism problem, I fervently became an acolyte of E. B. Feldman (1987), stringently insisting students adopt the process and describe, analyse, interpret and judge artworks.

I realised the use of universalising formulae for critical interpretation were problematic. But I was not sure why. Not all artworks could be examined this way. Different artworks made different demands on viewers. Dealing with Christo was not the same as dealing with a painting by Picasso for example. Students disobeyed the constraints assumed in the process, confusing description with interpretation and judgment. Nor was this what art critics did. My understanding of aesthetic experience was that to intervene was to disrupt the immediacy of students’ own spontaneous interpretations. I was constantly asking: When do you actually teach content in the process of developing students’ knowledge and understanding of critical interpretation?

**...heightened vitality... (p. 19)**

A watershed moment for me, and the beginnings of the answer to this abiding conundrum came in the form of an art education seminar held at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales (COFA UNSW) in 1993. *Occasional Seminar in Art Education 5: Reconciling art and objectivity in art*

*education* represented a reconnection with my eventual doctoral supervisor's scholarship in forging a realist agenda in art education and aesthetic theory. The seminar focussed on the problems of defining critical interpretation and knowing in art educational research. It was my first introduction to objectivity and the theories of Wollheim (1980, 1987), as well as re-introduction to idealism and notions of aesthetic immediacy as ideas that could be disputed (Brown, 1993). Attendance at this seminar prompted me to complete a Master of Art Education at COFA UNSW. I had been teaching for eight years in an independent school, remaining somewhat isolated from curriculum support, and this reintroduction to aesthetic theories caused me to realise I needed new stimuli and professional re-charge.

**The urge to action becomes the urge to *that* kind of action (p. 50)**

Through the Master of Art Education (MArtEd) at the College of Fine Arts I was able to revisit and extend my grasp of aesthetic theories and their connection to ways of knowing in art education. With units forged from the research of eminent scholars in art education, I pursued my interest in aesthetics. The subject *Theoretical Frameworks in Art Education* again provided options for exploring further idealism and pragmatism. Investigations of post-structuralism, neo-marxism, semiotics and phenomenology provided conceptual counter points that assisted in clarifying different ways of thinking about art educational policy, pedagogy and research. Significantly, how theories can be used to frame questions and investigations in art education was the point of view asserted within the design of the MArtEd. I later realised this was central to developing the realist position in the field, one that has yet to be truly understood as a means for substantial renovation and revision of practice in art education. Framing investigations using different theories was a revelation, but most clear were my interests in relationships between mind and aesthetic

experience. *Theories of Knowing in Art Education*, another unit of study, provided opportunities to further distil and appreciate this interest. Links between aesthetic theories and theories of cognition and reasoning began to be recognised as significant for my own trajectory into scholarship as well as for the curriculum itself in New South Wales.

Concomitant developments complimenting my interests in aesthetic understanding came in the form of seminal work in Michael Parsons' *How we Understand Art* (1987), studies by Norman Freeman (1991a, 1991b; Freeman & Sanger, 1995) and his collaborations with Neil Brown (Brown & Freeman, 1993). These studies linked cognitive development with artworks and aesthetic considerations. As visiting scholars at COFA UNSW they participated in the *Occasional Seminar in Art Education* series during the 1990s. This was a fertile period of exchange between Australian and international art educational research. I was introduced to the workings of a research community in which ideas were debated, wrestled with and shared. I was lucky to have opportunity to meet with many of these visiting scholars, but naively I did not always appreciate these exchanges for what they may have been.

**...the relation between what is done and what is undergone... (p. 50)**

Further postgraduate study extended my horizons in many ways. Not only did it put me in touch with similarly disposed teachers, many of whom became close friends, further study also introduced me to the broader curriculum context. Key scholars involved in developing curriculum at state level were also lecturers in the program. It was a most fertile curriculum environment with research in art education driving curriculum directions in New South Wales. Several of the MArtEd cohort and other colleagues were seconded to work on writing projects realised through the extensive advocacy of the then Inspector of Creative Arts with the support of key academics involved in syllabus committees. Whilst enabling me to

rehearse application of some of the theories I had been investigating in the development of curriculum resources, involvement in these projects was a kind of apprenticeship in curriculum development. I recognised these opportunities were highly significant and a great honour.

**...the connection between what [s]he has done and what [s]he is to do next... (p. 45)**

Having completed the MArtEd, I embarked on a Masters Honours project. At the time a formal PhD program had yet to be developed at COFA UNSW. Whilst I found the isolation of this kind of research a very great challenge, it was a formative stage in the development of the thesis. My supervisor made a radical suggestion to shift the focus from idealist to a realist aesthetic theory as a means for explaining the structure of experience and its relationship to thought.

Wollheim's (1987) objective account of pictorial interpretation and attendant ontological conditions presented a new conceptual challenge, one that I grappled with for some time. A few years later my supervisor and I had the opportunity to hear Wollheim speak this theory at a symposium at the University of Sydney (Wollheim, 2001). It was another of those clarifying experiences in this journey and also represented a link to my supervisor's broader project in forging a realist paradigm for art education in which the cognitive dimensions are recognised as an essential aspect of art as practice (Brown, 1989, 1993). The Honours Project was eventually converted to a doctoral study with the generous support of several key mentors from the School of Art Education at COFA UNSW.

**...doings and undergoings, outgoing and incoming energy... (p. 48)**

Competing opportunities also merged in the form of new job options, professional risks and uncertainties. While teaching full time, and doing

doctoral work I worked on the *Subject Evaluation of Visual Arts* as part of the HSC reforms during the late 1990s. I assisted in developing a literature review for the *Subject Evaluation Report* (Board of Studies, 1998), supporting the work of others in forging a curriculum design that was eventually accepted and remains in place today (Board of Studies, 1999). This work was a working example of how and why aesthetic approaches embedded in curricula based on qualitative problem solving and formalism were inappropriate to descriptions of knowing and knowledge acquisition in art education. It was another watershed moment, both for myself and other colleagues who had also begun pursuing their own doctoral study along similar trajectories.

**...there is distraction and dispersion... (p. 35)**

During the development of the thesis I juggled many personal and work related experiences that variously impeded and enriched progress on the doctorate. My partner changed jobs several times. I left the school context to work at the NSW Board of Studies on a short-term contract. Then came part-time contracts as a lecturer at COFA UNSW followed by a continuing position at the Australian Catholic University. I learned to juggle academic work with doctoral study. Simultaneously, a very significant mentor retired due to Parkinson's Disease. Her commitment to encouraging my career and doctoral work was remarkable and much appreciated. I hope I returned the favour.

I had also become friends with another doctoral candidate dealing with the same conditions. Luckily, as peers, we were able to support one another in times of celebration and adversity. And there was the need to 'go out', see the world as clean breaks from the intensity of the research, returning refreshed and refocused. The garden was neatly pruned. I also cooked a lot of soup. Although these events and habits added time to my completion rate, they also added to my understanding of how to manage research

focus, life and art education. I was lucky to have a maverick supervisor whose interests were in the research not the regulations and rules. And I was also very aware that I was charged with a particular responsibility to work on a part of the bigger project he had developed as part of his scholarship and research. In retrospect, this unspoken arrangement was a kind of quid pro quo, but formal relations were always maintained. It was not easy, but I had begun see myself in a different role with quite different horizons yet to encounter.

**...oftentimes, however, the experience is inchoate... (p. 35)**

Figuring out the research design was the most difficult, yet most creative, part of the process. At this stage my supervisor always seemed to be several steps ahead of me, providing coordinates within a whole map but without the directions on how to get to these theoretical places. I understood my role was to make links myself and test the thesis proposed. Supervisory meeting notes and drafts of writings shows these definitive shifts in thinking and slow but nevertheless substantial progress in clarifying research questions and directions.

Shifts are also evident in my supervisor's thinking, especially the focus on Searle's theories of intentionality (Searle, 1983). Searle's explanation of the nature of social reality provided a framework within which all the other parts of the thesis fitted (1995, 1999). The relationships within and distinctions between my work and my supervisor's own scholarship became clearer. I was closer to linking the theory with an experiment and what was needed was a system to enable the analysis of the data.

**...a game is played through... (p. 35)**

Developing the schema for classifying the kinds of reasons children give about portraits in art was one of the hardest parts of the project. This

was because there were no precedents to follow for guidance. Through auditing a subject called *Practices of Research* delivered by my supervisor at COFA UNSW, I came to understand that research was a form of amendment. Research design was about bringing together aspects of previous research to create something new in a novel form. Sounds great, but the task of forging such a structure on theoretical terms proved difficult. Steadily, and after many iterations I worked it out. I now had a schema that described the dimensions of kinds of critical reasoning representing shifts in cognitive demand and complexity in terms of pictorial experience. Following Searle (1983), the nexus of relations between mind, language and art was represented in a realist aesthetics (Maras, 2008).

**...we say of an experience of thinking that we reach, or draw, a conclusion... (p. 35)**

This progress in learning to harness and ‘crack’ ideas was also represented in my early publications (Maras, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2007a). During my candidacy I was encouraged by academic mentors to publish and present at conferences locally and internationally. Part of the process was to air ideas in forums beyond the familiar and seek exchange from peers. This was a rewarding and well-supported initiative, with the School of Art Education COFA providing grant writing and abstract development workshops for doctoral candidates. I look at these papers now and clearly I was not yet at the stage of writing with the looseness of one who is across her theory or is yet to attain clarity as to the significance of this work to the field. Earlier papers are very earnest in tone, dense, detailed and over-written. Yet it was part of the journey in refining and coming to understand the content.

**...we undergo sensations as mechanical stimuli or as irritated stimulations... (p. 21)**

Ethics applications take time and are finicky. I wrote two different ethics applications. One was for the University Ethics Committee. The other was for the school system governing the schools in which I hoped to arrange my interviews with students. The timing of these two entities in giving clearance did not coincide and delays occurred. Happily, I was eventually well supported by two very generous school principals who provided access to students of the ages groups I needed to interview. I spent money on cameras, recording devices, much of which I continue using in postdoctoral research.

**...a sense of growing meaning... (p. 39)**

I realised I probably needed to rehearse the experimental conditions with a few trials, but, eventually found momentum in encouraging participants to talk about their ideas about pictures in art. Intense, yet very enjoyable days of pushing children's reasoning are most the memorable times in this journey. I employed a transcriber to type up each recording. Picture talk was aligned with video footage of the work participants did with selecting portraits. Each curatorial performance was about an hour long, and mapping which pictures they chose and which they talked about was time consuming, surprising and proved a very rich way of understanding how they conceived the meaning of portrait paintings.

**Recognition is...the focal culmination of long. Slow processes of maturation... (p. 23)**

To settle the issue of working out the results and findings I took leave from work in order to acquire a block of uninterrupted time for this stage. I was under pressure to complete, and this helped focus my thinking to a large extent. The best thing was to start somewhere. Patterns emerged, trends

appeared and things started to ‘click’ into place. A sense of excitement was pervasive as the results started to confirm what we had thought would occur. What was surprising was the richness of the data – any one interview with individuals offered so much to be examined and reported. It was hard to keep from delving into the detail and remain objective about what the representative nature of the results from each age group meant for the study. Eventually I was able to conceptualise the significance of what the thesis meant for art education. I had reached the stage where I could set this work against that of others in the field, drawing comparisons as I worked. It was hugely liberating to feel confidence in this discussion of the results.

**Life is a thing of histories each with its own past... (p. 35)**

The ‘doings and undergoings’ are meant to be there and need to be valued as part of the process. In hindsight I would do things differently. Writing up as you go would help avoid a last minute backlog of complexity and provide more options for refining and clarifying the focus and questions. To exchange ideas with a supervisor through drafts of chapters and sections throughout the process would perhaps have helped me understand how to structure some parts of the thesis. I was concerned to ‘get it right’, but now realise this was a naïve assumption. A learner driver will not master gear changing on the first go.

Another issue is the scope of the project, the longer it takes, the broader the scope becomes. This was a dicey balance for me and contributed to the length of the thesis. With the gift of hindsight I would approach this differently. Rather than trying to do it all, I would revise the extent of the literature review to be more focussed. But it is hard to confine things when dealing with the intersections of philosophy, psychology and art within the domain of art education.

Blocks of time are important, but so are spaces for letting ideas germinate, fester and emerge in light of other and different experiences.

Fora such as conferences and seminars provide such spaces. Similarly, teaching provides opportunities for rehearsals of ideas, even when you have not anticipated it. This was an exciting and deeply intuitive habit I have formed as a lecturer. In teaching and taking risks in this I know when I am across ideas. The sharing and debate of ideas with others requires you to think reflexively and you come to know when understanding occurs.

**To see, to perceive, is more than to recognise (p. 24)**

The more I continue to write about it, the more I continue to understand what I now know, what I need to know better and the significance of this work to others (Maras, 2007b, 2009 in press). I have also realised that writing is the means for thinking through and generating ideas. Giving form to words is a form of theory building and it is during the experience of writing that this occurs. This is essentially what recursions to beliefs are all about (C. F. Feldman, 1987). recognising how new perceptions fit with or transform existing beliefs about the topic at hand. It is a process for building on and into theories of what we encounter in the world. Essential in this process is reasoning (C. F. Feldman, 1987). Through ongoing critical exchanges with valued and highly qualified colleagues from art education and other fields, I have come to value the need to continue explaining and clarifying this work. The project is never really finished and new questions reveal themselves as the journey continues.

Research is another form of artefact production (Brown, 2000, 2003). It is necessarily a social practice we build and enact as we come to know how others of like-mindedness know as well (Searle, 1999). The thesis is the artefact – we theorise about what it means as an intentional object. Within communities of scholars we grant meaning to these artefacts in our linguistic exchanges because they mean so much to the field we are passionate about. This is what makes a doctoral journey not merely an experience, but a part of a social reality and an induction into scholarly practice.

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# Academic reflection and mid-life crisis

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The significance of diaspora politics in the visual arts ✨ *Australian Centre, The University of Melbourne, 2007*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

This thesis, *The Significance of Diaspora Politics in the Visual Arts*, is an exegesis that sets out the social, cultural and political frameworks formative to my intellectual development and positioning as a diasporic artist. The thesis examines diaspora aesthetics, which are wrought from exile and displacement. The diaspora view claims to present a multi-viewpoint perspective and its critique of an adopted country enables a “counterdiscourse to modernity” (Clifford, 1997 p. 265). Findings gathered from research into artists who operate from this perspective provide the basis with which I evaluate my own diasporic experiences as a painter.

The thesis will demonstrate that there is a ‘diasporic sensibility’ that is particular to the visual arts, and which links seemingly disparate artists. I will argue that aside from artists belonging to a diaspora, the diasporic sensibility is evidenced in ‘bad painting’. Bad painting operates through the vernacular mode and is characterised by a certain ‘awkwardness’ that is manifest in its selection of subject as well as an ambiguity in the painting process.

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### **Choice of university**

As a mature-aged artist and educator my reasons for embarking on a PhD were two-fold. Firstly, I wanted to examine the ideas I worked with deeply and to critically reflect on my studio practice. Secondly, I thought somewhat optimistically perhaps, that a PhD might help me find work in the higher education sector as I felt that my teaching position at TAFE was becoming increasingly demanding and less satisfying.

I was convinced that I needed the PhD experience of intense study as it appeared to me that a deeper understanding of art history and theory could both inform and invigorate my studio practice. This realization prompted me to apply for funded places at two Queensland universities, since the idea of working and studying part-time appealed to me. These attempts proved unsuccessful since I was hopelessly under-prepared in all aspects of the application process, perhaps unsurprising since I had last studied formally in 1984 and possessed little or no understanding of research methods. Tellingly, I did not receive any advice or support from the staff at these institutions as to how I might improve my application.

I shifted my attention to Melbourne as a place to study as my strategy was now focused on finding a supervisor who was interested enough in my work to agree to supervise me. After a few speculative phone calls, I head-hunted a prominent Melbourne painter and earmarked him and another academic to provide me with supervision. Whilst the painter was helpful, he directed me towards the academic who was moving from the Victorian College of Arts to the Australian Centre at The University of Melbourne.

After a couple of phone calls and a visit to the Australian Centre to discuss my application I was accepted as a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. My supervisor had worked in the UK and was familiar with

the same artists and writers as myself. His research on migration, diaspora and cultural hybridity made him a good catch and match for me and in addition, he liked my paintings.

### **Process of deciding on the topic**

I was first asked to write about the artists and ideas that interested me and I produced some writing concerning the relationship between art, politics and multiculturalism. Whilst my supervisor was encouraging and remarked that my writing suggested various possibilities I struggled nonetheless.

In a parked car waiting for my son to get ready for soccer training, I chatted to my supervisor about Jewish/ British painter, David Bomberg who was excluded by an anti-semitic art establishment. The conversation then turned to the 1980s Black art movement of which I was involved as an educator/advocate and artist. Along the way, the connection was made between Bomberg and 1980s Black artists since they were both excluded from belonging to British modernism. Thus this conversation proved to be a turning point in the development of my ideas as the kernel of the thesis was identified. From this point the structure of the following chapters flowed.

The thesis argued that the harnessing of vernacular culture by artists and social movements provided the platforms for resistance and created new ways and representations of protest. Thus the process of self-reflexivity in my thinking and writing enabled a contextualization of my work. An example of this occurred in the discussion of 'high' and 'low' art forms. Despite my interest in vernacular forms of culture i.e. football and rock music, I still held onto high art notions in the visual arts despite the intervention of *Rock Against Racism*, a response to racism that mobilised youth to counter racism. Therefore, I can credit Hansonism not only for the political nature of the response but, my approach to painting that changed to embrace the vernacular mode of 'bad painting' and its attendant awkwardness.

This meta-cognition through theory also occurred in a discussion of the embodied painting of De Kooning and explains to me why I love to paint.

[De Kooning] crams his pictures with the infantile experiences of sucking, touching, biting, excreting, retaining, smearing, sniffing, swallowing, gurgling, stroking, wetting (Wollheim, 1987, p. 348).

Exactly what significance my painting has in terms of conveying a message is best explained by discussing the messy business of the studio. Sometimes I tried too hard, to force a particular point or message in painting and quite often the paint just wouldn't stand up. This might be for many reasons including the surface not being receptive, or too receptive and so on. The painting would then have to be scraped and sanded down or often discarded. Thus the end result could never be simply imposed since there are many practical and confounding variables. It is perhaps in the space between the embodied messy-ness of the process and the intent or purpose of the painting, that an image comes to fruition, or doesn't. This 'hit' or 'miss' approach is a feature of my work and paradoxically occurs regardless of the level of planning.

A moment of serendipity occurred when I discovered an original copy of Herbert Read's *Contemporary British Art*, published in 1951 in a second-hand store at just the right moment. In it Read failed to mention Bomberg's contribution to British Art and this was a significant omission that confirmed my thesis. It often unexpected things like this that occur on the research journey that make you smile and keep you going.

### **The process to decide on the methodology for the research**

The thesis aimed at developing a theory of diaspora sensibility in the visual arts and the most challenging aspect of this process was how to weave

my personal story and art practice through this *mélange* of art history, British and Australian politics, cultural theory and social movements. This was practically achieved in the many re-writes. It seemed that the creative process of writing was somewhat akin to the act of painting in that they both involved immense struggle and many iterations.

The context and background of British post-war racism was derived from speeches of the leading actors at the time, as well as through readers' letters to the *Times* newspaper. I found the digital archive a brilliant resource for British history and politics.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's writing on identity, a *bricolage* of semiotic, psychoanalytic, postmodern and postcolonial ideas provided the key texts on diasporisation and the construction of new identities. Hall's work was extended and complemented by Paul Gilroy and Kobena Mercer. This work was especially relevant to me since many of the references were from the British migrant experience.

The Queensland material was achieved through the study of speeches by Pauline Hanson. *The Courier Mail* newspaper featured her everyday during the years of her political ascendancy and decline. Her contribution to politics (the One Nation party), white Australian subjectivity (bigotry and intolerance) and culture (Pauline Pantsdown) was the encouragement I needed to develop my ideas and painting in the face of this new Australian racism. The theory concerning the race, politics and the affective nature of racism came from prominent Australian cultural theorists (Hage, 1998; Stratton, 1998; Ang, 1999). Having lived in Queensland for ten years and worked in Ipswich, Hanson's backyard I was well qualified to write this chapter.

Art history texts (Cork, 1987; Araeen, 1989; Danto, 2005) were utilised to outline the background to Bomberg, Black Art and American painters, Guston and Golub.

### **Organising life and work around the thesis**

As I had elected to complete a PhD by studio and thesis, I was able to justify being away from Melbourne since my studio work was my fieldwork. I maintained my teaching job in Brisbane so contact with my supervisor was mainly by email and phone. I also attended some seminars and conferences in Melbourne and Sydney as a way of developing and maintaining a good working relationship with my supervisor. Nevertheless, it was a lonely road and the writing faltered since my work lacked direction and it was during this period that I felt like quitting. I was required to learn academic style and form so I sought the help and advice of an editor and friend who supported me in my challenge.

For the first two years I taught in the day and wrote in the evening and the thesis unsurprisingly morphed into the course readings of my art theory class, that took on a decidedly art and cultural studies bent. On the weekends, school holidays and at other times, I worked in the studio. In the Queensland summer, after a morning in the studio I would retreat to a shopping mall or library with my computer and notes in search of air conditioning to drink coffee and write.

In my third year I took six months long-service leave to work closely with my supervisor and, somewhat optimistically planned to complete the thesis in Melbourne. This shift coincided with a separation from my long term partner so, whilst the PhD was not the cause of our relationship breakdown, it nonetheless underlined its demise. So from the start of 2006 I took up a corner spot in the postgraduate room of the Australian Centre and devoted myself to writing. My examination date was set in mid-September and aligned with the accompanying exhibition at a Melbourne gallery.

I arranged to meet my supervisor once a month and whilst a working draft of my first chapter was completed in Brisbane, the draft of second chapter, the most challenging was close to 20,000 words. The completion of this huge

chapter was a turning point in my thesis and I approached the following chapter 'Please Explain' with delight and some relief as I was now convinced I could do it. I argued in the thesis that the experience of Hanson had some parallels with my experience in Britain in the aftermath of far-right politician Enoch Powell's 'River of blood' speech. After almost three decades I was once again cast as Paki on-a-bike, this time in sunny Queensland.

The presence of other students and staff, the seminars and the morning teas (and delicious cakes from Brunetti's) at the Australian Centre was encouragement to keep going. By the end of it, after a bout of flu and a dependence on sleeping tablets, I was literally hunched over in pain in front of my computer, a complete wreck. To compound matters, my long-service leave was over so I began teaching full-time at a northern suburbs school, avoiding pieces of clay thrown at me by Year 9 and generally dealing badly with other people including a new partner (it didn't last, how could it?), staff and students.

### **Advice to prospective doctoral candidates**

- It's such a huge commitment and three years out of your life so, if you hold any reservations, don't do it.
- Find a supervisor who is an expert in your chosen field and who will support you.
- Read other theses in your field.
- Finance is crucial to complete.

### **The most difficult memory of the time as a candidate**

In truth the whole experience was a tortuous one and the PhD journey provided a form and space for disconnection, denial and distraction from the reality of a failed relationship. Also hard was starting a new life in Melbourne without the support structures of family and friends. A

distressing memory is a photograph of me taken towards the end of my journey- I looked so bad I didn't recognize myself.

### **The most memorable time during the thesis**

I enjoyed the seminars with other students and staff, the feeling of collegiality and the intellectual rigour. I loved going to the footy to watch the Saints, having lunch with a friend at Nasi Lemak House on Grattan Street and listen to him talk about Deleuze and Guattari. Near the end, my supervisor took me for lunch and confirmed that it was done. I remember a feeling of intense relief. I enjoyed the opening night of my PhD exhibition and the graduation ceremony in Wilson Hall watched by my mum and partner – these were all really memorable experiences for me.

### **In retrospect what I would I have done differently in my journey**

Whilst I started a PhD in mid-career, it arrived at a time when I needed to evaluate my position as an artist so served me well. However, I used my long service leave (a great surprise to my mother since she never thought I had a proper job anyway) to complete my studies. When my leave was completed and I still had much to do, I resigned my permanent TAFE job in Queensland, which was a huge personal decision. I obtained a short-term contract teaching art, somewhat luckily as it turned out since I was the only applicant, and spent my nights and weekends on my thesis. So in retrospect, having the security of a steady income flow would have helped to ease the journey and helped me maintain a sense of well being during this most stressful time.

### **Other issues**

Having emerged from the PhD zone in 2006, I endured a short spell of unemployment, before falling into educational research. This turned out to

be a good move since I now combine my interests in art and education as a Learning & Teaching coordinator in a higher education. Tellingly, I am now able to re-engage with the ideas that consumed me from 2003-6. I now describe myself, as a trans-disciplinary artist and scholar whereas previously I was an artist and lecturer. So my journey is one of transformation and reconstruction of identity- a phenomenon that I theorized extensively in light of the migrant trajectory.

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# Visual art and cultural difference

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Primary school art education: A comparative case study of visual *habitus*  
in China and Australia ✎ *The University of Melbourne, 2004*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

Childhood is a significant period of time in the development of *habitus*. *Habitus* was described by Aristotle as an inner quality or stable deep-rooted disposition that gives the individual strength. *Habitus* is described by Pierre Bourdieu as sets of internal dispositions of the child, formed in childhood and carried throughout life.

Visual *habitus* pertains to the symbol systems associated with the domain of the arts. This research examines the concept of visual *habitus* and associated dimensions of art education educators inculcate in the early years of education.

The study was conducted over a period of four years. A preliminary study was designed to enable teachers and art experts to comment on Chinese and Australian children's artworks in an exchange exhibition. Data were gathered and examined to elicit their perceptions about cultural aesthetics. These responses and the literature review, highlighted

key dimensions which I saw as important to the field of art education; *creativity, aesthetics and emotional and cognitive intelligence.*

The main research study then focused on the cultural and educational context where the children's artworks originated. Thus, this thesis consists of two case studies in primary school art classrooms in China and Australia. Two specialist art teachers' practice, were selected for closer analysis in order to determine what pedagogical issues were relevant for postmodern art education in a culturally diverse world.

The case studies suggest that despite divisions that exist in the field of art education, a *cultural* approach to artistic symbolization has to be acknowledged whereby art education is seen as a significant contributor to symbolic and cultural capital. Visual *habitus* is viewed as multi-dimensional, as the child will often retain similar orientations to the power agents who play an important role in developing the perceptions children are able to employ when they critically analyse and solve problems during life.

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I chose to study at The University of Melbourne because of my supervisors. These supervisors were specialist visual art educators and had written the national curriculum framework for *The Arts*. I had been taught curriculum design by one of my PhD supervisors at Melbourne State College where I had completed a specialist Secondary Art Craft teacher training degree. We are known as SACs, a very prestigious nomenclature, and we boast of many famous art educators including Captain Matchbox of the Whoopee band. The course at Melbourne State College was eventually delivered at The University of Melbourne after amalgamations in the tertiary sector it was this same institution I chose to return to for my PhD in art education.

It is apt that I describe my PhD journey both before and during because I planned my course of study according to my philosophy which had developed during my time in the classroom and as a lecturer in Art Education at La Trobe University. It developed as research into praxis, the balance of the theory of art and the practice of art with the accompanying educational pedagogy and curriculum expertise relevant to art education.

My SAC course at Melbourne State College was a full-time four year course which combined studies in Visual Art and Craft now called Visual Art, Design and Technology. We studied for 36 hours per week, quite a different way of life from that of students these days but we also had part time jobs. Our jobs gave us money to survive, while we dedicated our lives to the studies we loved. Most of us felt very privileged to be at university in those days only ten percent of graduating year 12 students were accepted into university. The SAC course offered us the luxury of training as artists and art historians with the associated education subjects of curriculum design, psychology, sociology, professional experience and literacy included. We were extremely well prepared as art teachers, however, I personally never felt confident enough to say that I was a professional artist upon my graduation.

I chose to teach for a few years and then travelled overseas for a year. When I returned from my travels I began to study sculpture at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). I loved this time and was excited to have been taught by some pre-eminent Australian sculptors such as Inge King, Vincent Jomantas, Kevin Mortenson, Geoff Bartlett and the late Tony Prior.

After completing my studies at RMIT I taught again for a time and then became a Lecturer in Art Education at La Trobe University. Again my pathway brought me good fortune as I worked with some outstanding educators and during this time I published three books with a colleague. I

thoroughly enjoyed preparing primary and secondary teachers in training for the classroom. I felt the experiences I had had in the classroom, at RMIT and Melbourne State College, had prepared me well for this role to teach art practice and theory as well as educational curriculum and pedagogy. It was during this time that I became very involved with our professional associations, the Australian Institute of Art Education now Art Education Australia and the Art Craft Teachers' Association now Art Education Victoria. We are a small group, but we have all worked hard together over the years to assure the place of visual art education in the Australian national curriculum. We are a passionate, well educated and powerful collective voice.

As a university lecturer I chose to follow a practical path for my Masters' preparation and I enrolled in a Master of Arts by research at La Trobe University. I completed this degree with a 10,000 word exegesis which researched the sublime in relation to landscape painting accompanied by an exhibition of 40 paintings and drawings. It was this two year degree which finally gave me the confidence to call myself a professional artist, and I have continued since to make art and exhibit.

It became a natural progression to be challenged by the 100,000 word thesis which encompassed my doctoral study in art education. It is important to realise from the beginning that a PhD is training in the discipline of research, it does not give you qualifications in the discipline you might chose to research. Your undergraduate degrees train you in the subject discipline, and my undergraduate qualifications had given me the specialist training in Visual Art needed to be a legitimate researcher in art education. Some people are under the misapprehension that if you do a generalist degree in education and chose to research art education in a PhD you become qualified in art education and this is incorrect. A PhD trains you as a researcher not in the subject discipline. Therefore the pathway

you choose before a PhD is important and many choose a Masters in Visual Art or Visual Art Education first to prepare them adequately for a PhD study in Art Education.

The ability to write is essential for a PhD. I enjoy writing and never felt this task to be at all daunting; in fact I possibly wrote three theses before my completion. The topic I chose was also a natural progression, it grew out of my job as an art education lecturer and a pilot study I completed at La Trobe University. I had organised an exchange exhibition of primary children's art work with China and Australia. When the Chinese work arrived in Australia viewers of the work were very sceptical that it was not the work of children but the work of adults. This, and the fact that viewers also said the work was not creative, drove me to want to study the cultural context in which the Chinese children's work was produced.

I then chose to research the Chinese school and use the art teacher as a case study and compare this to another case study of an Australian primary art teacher. My study was an ethnographic cross cultural comparison of two case studies. I used a classical qualitative methodology which was most suitable for the educational environment. The research methodology literature backed my study up beautifully. I used Eisner, Yin, Guba and Lincoln, Stake and Glaser and many more as I've included my reference list below.

I suggest strongly that before anyone attempts a genuine PhD study, they acknowledge that most of the work will be in the reading and writing. I have met many students over the years who do not possess a love of learning and who are not prepared to put in the reading time. There is no way you can fudge reading. Reading empowers you and is the most essential skill for a PhD study. That is why the blue chip universities across the world appoint Readers.

Some people think that art education is a small field but it is not, it is huge. Perhaps it is the huge nature of the discipline of art which is the

most challenging aspect of a PhD study in this domain. It was certainly my greatest challenge as I spent many delightful months in some magnificent libraries of the world, from the Baillieu Library at The University of Melbourne to the Radford Camera at Oxford University, to the library at the Institute of Education (University of London) in Russell Square, where I lived for a year during my final days of completion.

Keeping your research focused is hard for everyone, as it is very tempting to get broader and broader. I think this was the main problem with my study all the way through. In the end I tackled some great areas including creativity and aesthetics. The final outcome of my in depth readings in these areas was a very thorough preparation for my job as a university lecturer. I loved my Sundays, reading in London, and I adored the fact that some of the most wonderful books in the world were available to me in these amazing libraries.

I am definitely a bookworm at heart. I have been addicted to books ever since my childhood where I would read under my bed sheets with a torch because my sister would not approve of the light staying on into the early hours of the morning. Reading is an essential part of the PhD journey and you have to love doing it. Reading widely prepares you to be a good writer and thinker: it develops your vocabulary and gives you confidence to write with fluency. Many artists are very visual people and some are dyslexic but this can be overcome. When I first began writing seriously I made so many mistakes with spelling and grammar, but this did not stop me, I never became obsessed with technique, I just wanted my words to flow out so that I could tell my story, much the same process as painting out your story. The practice improves your skills. I love telling stories.

I think that lecturers who obsess over technique are doing their students a disservice, as the university environment should be aspiring to develop creative and innovative thinkers. To me an original thinker is a much

better candidate for a PhD, than one who dots the “i’s” and crosses the “t’s”. Editing can easily be ironed out, but if you don’t have the ideas and originality, and if you don’t pursue the research truth with rigor, then you are making a mistake entering the PhD journey.

Your PhD thesis is evidence of your skills: it will be housed in the library of your university and will be testament to the rigor and quality of you as the research candidate, the university, your supervisors and your examiners. The readers of your thesis will evaluate whether your work has merit or is dodgy, especially as most readers are specialists in the discipline you research anyway.

I believe in the old adage that “the pen is mightier than the sword”. Words in cold hard print are powerful things: they can challenge and change the world; they can work in more peaceful and effective way than wars; they are the tools with which we debate, negotiate and use as dialogue to change opinions and make understandings transparent; they can be used to challenge the status quo and as a writer you have the prerogative to change your mind, so what you write today may be your immediate perception at that point in time, but may not be the same as what you might say in ten years time once you have learnt more. Life is about learning about our understandings of the knowledge we encounter and indeed create.

My topic itself demanded rigor in learning through reading about the new cultural context of China. It is extremely important that you prepare yourself by reading widely and reading the most up to date research in the area you are studying. It is also most important that you approach the reading and your research with an open mind. It is also important that you remain a sceptic, as other writers may not be writing with ‘TRUTH’ in mind, many have political agendas. After all truth is only the perception of the writer. Understanding what truth is as a philosophical concept

is important for a researcher and therefore it is imperative that you use multiple ways to collect your data to verify your truth: triangulation is a good method.

I can vouch for this difference in perception, because now years later I have had the opportunity to teach in China for a year. I can say that when I went to China to complete my PhD research I saw just a small snippet of how education works in China. Now I have a different point of view, but it does not alter what I documented in the research of my case study. It just proves to me that each case study is different, and my research was a snapshot of one teacher and how he conducted his classes.

My most difficult challenge during my PhD study was balancing my life as a single mother with my day to day teaching and my private life. I worked full time while I completed my study and this was difficult. I am envious of those who are wealthy enough to complete their PhD without having to work. But on the other hand, your own life experience in the classroom offers some extra vision which can make your study more authentic.

Unfortunately I got married and fortunately my unfaithful husband divorced me three months later in the middle of my PhD study. You can look at this experience in two ways: it disrupted my study but my study also kept me sane. It made me realise that many men and women are selfish and untrustworthy. I gained my freedom and went to teach in London after this tumultuous experience.

At the end of my study, I spent six months of my life as a night owl. I would arrive at my London school at 7.30 am, return home at 5.00 pm, feed my daughter and be in bed by 8.30 pm. I would then wake up at midnight and write until 4.00 am, when I would return for a short sleep before the alarm went off at 6.30 am. We would then rush to catch the train from Waterloo station at 7.00 am, grabbing a bagel for breakfast on our way to work. This nightlife gave me the flow state I needed for my writing and thinking.

I am extremely proud to have 'Dr' at the beginning of my name. I am always thrilled now when medical doctors I meet ask me about my 'PhD'; they are so respectful, as they realise the hard work that goes into this type of study. One of my most esteemed friends told me that when you finally get your PhD it is like being an Olympian. It is true!

I graduated in 2004 at Wilson Hall at The University of Melbourne, my daughter and my mother accompanied me. It was a proud moment. I have graduated in my research studies as an artist, a writer, a published author and an art educator. I still practice my professions of art making, researching, teaching and writing and I will until I die.

I believe that education and research has the power to make the world a better place to live. Through my understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's writing, I acknowledge that teachers play a significant part in the education of young children. The education of the child requires teachers who are open-minded, who love learning and who love children.

Teachers need to have the vision, intelligence and continuing education to be able to see outside the classroom door, to view the real world; the local, the national and the international perspective. The world needs teachers who have the integrity to put politics aside for an open minded vision, always with the child's interest at heart.

Education is about jumping puddles and walking around the rocks in the road. It is about Shakespeare and Wordsworth; it is about Bejart, Bangarra and Ballet; it is about Einstein; and Spielberg; Darwin and Fleming; da Vinci, Picasso and Chagall; the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Opera and Klezmer; the Dalai Lama, Daoism, the Dreaming, God and Tutu; Churchill, Meir, Suu Kyi, Thatcher, Mandala and Obama; to name but a few. It is about everything that encompasses knowledge, understanding and meaning. It is about Science, Art, Music, Geography, History, Religion, Peace, Wellbeing, Maths and Literacy and much, much more.

Education is talking the talk and walking the walk. For future educators I say don't hand our children a static curriculum that bores them or spoon feed them to make them like you. Let them co-construct the magic of learning with you as the teacher and produce an emergent curriculum that suits you, your students and the context of their social and cultural environment. This is why a sound education and deep knowledge in your discipline area is essential for you as a teacher, so you have the confidence and knowledge to take risks with curriculum development.

An effective teacher is one who is a specialist in a couple of subject disciplines, be that science and maths, or art and literacy and so on. One who has an open minded, empathetic vision of "the other". To see 'the other' is a challenge for us all. It takes a curious, imaginative and fearless nature for an educational journey into the labyrinth of learning. Teachers have to be fearless and honest, because they have to deal with all aspects of the human condition; it helps them to stay resilient and passionate about their chosen career.

My doctoral journey was one of the best experiences of my life and I thank my supervisors, my university, my art education colleagues and my daughter for the support of the fabulous experience.

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# Psychoanalysing the discourse of art education

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Creating art teachers. A psychoanalytic history of the impact of the Gleeson Enquiry for concepts of art teaching in New South Wales  
✎ *College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, 2003*

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## **Abstract of thesis**

This study investigates the history of a government enquiry held in NSW between 1969 and 1973, known as the Gleeson Enquiry, which investigated the need for a specialist art and design tertiary training facility. The study focuses on concepts of art teaching by examining archival evidence pertaining to the employment and training of art teachers in the state of New South Wales (NSW) in the south-east of Australia. The Gleeson Enquiry established parameters for two new institutions offering professional programs for designers, artists, and art teachers employed in state high schools. The study discloses the attitudes and beliefs underpinning the findings of the Gleeson Enquiry in relation to the training of art teachers.

The study investigates the ways in which the Gleeson Committee represented and described art teachers and their training. The archival records of submissions to and reports produced by the Gleeson Enquiry

are treated in the context of a survey of additional archival data, derived from records of the government bureaucracies in NSW that were responsible for art teacher training for most of the twentieth century. The author additionally conducted a series of interviews with individuals who were significant players in the events being explored. The study utilises an analytic method derived from the theories of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in combination with the work of the French psychoanalyst and feminist Luce Irigaray.

The Gleeson Enquiry is symbolic of significant modernisation and change within the institutions constituting an artworld hierarchy prevailing in NSW during the period in question. The nature of the committee's findings with regard to art teachers and their training produced key modifications to professional relationships between artists and art teachers in particular. The study provides an examination of the conceptual history of these relationships. It maps the position occupied by art teachers in the NSW artworld over most of the twentieth century, generating a picture of the relationships between various bureaucratic and professional stakeholders in an attempt to open a debate about the identity of the art teacher.

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In retrospect, choosing to undertake a doctoral study in art education was a way of disentangling myself from the institutional threads – of previous employers, of the artworld, of schooling, and of undergraduate study – which left me bound and gagged, poised on what, at the time, seemed like a precipice. I did not feel confident discussing art, and felt more comfortable *making* art – how could I *teach* it? The question loomed ever more ominously over me, the closer I gravitated to the end of my teacher

education program. My rationalisation of this fear has changed since then quite dramatically, and this is especially due to the skills I gained as a result of engaging in doctoral study. It was not just the post-doctoral experience of becoming a school teacher that enabled me to overcome the fear (I went straight from undergraduate coursework to postgraduate research). The research training provided me with the opportunity to analyse the apparent disjunction between ‘art’ and ‘teaching’ which was posed by my question in the first place.

It is therefore interesting to me in reflecting on the selection of my topic that it can be taken as an investigation of how professional identities in the Australian artworld have been composed. Although at one level my question smacks of undergraduate naïveté and the jittery egotism and paranoia that mark the outset of many a beginning teacher’s career, on another level it addresses the conflict between the ephemeral character of being an artist and the pragmatic and highly conservative structure of professional experience, in high schools, for the art teacher. Could these professional and interdisciplinary conflicts be resolved? While I was driven at one level by white-knuckle fear of being exposed as a fraud, I was not merely lured by the chance to divert away from the classroom, to a different kind of professional knowledge, a different engagement with my profession, one that might change my understanding of myself. The research promised to tell me something significant *for me*, about what artists do (and what I was doing when I engaged in artmaking) and whether my perception of art teachers as occupying a lower status to artists was correct.

It was the experience of completing Honours research before the end of my undergraduate program that established this impulse, and excited a new dimension of my psyche. I wanted to pursue that excitement on a higher ground. Honours had left me with a genuine sense of discovery, literally opening up previously hidden boxes of archival documents,

which were the residue of a formative era in the field of art education in this country. The doctorate beckoned as an opportunity to combine this journey down into the rabbit hole of history with a much more structured and rigorous theoretical investigation. I could not have known at the time that I was swinging myself wilfully, yet inadvertently toward a precipice that remained invisible until I was in mid-air, plunging into an abyss that I could never have anticipated.

Research, of course, *is* that abyss. If approached correctly, it represents an inquiry into an object that one cannot possibly know in advance, if ever, at least not completely. It is, in dialectical terms, the labour of negativity, relentlessly crossing out and denying any level of existing knowledge that one appears to have reached, climbing up onto a ledge to apparent safety only to discover that this plateau is sandy, shifting and more or less illusory. But this sense of uncertainty, of slipping towards an uncertain destiny did not even occur to me until the doctorate was edging toward completion! At the beginning, I felt exhilarated by the chance to study the work of writers about whom I had heard but not had a good opportunity to read, and I seized on this aspect of the theoretical preparation for constructing my conceptual framework with enthusiasm.

The project initially grew from a chance discovery, during my Honours work, of a copy of the published Gleeson report, a record of a government enquiry held between 1969 and 1973 which examined the need for a new tertiary institution in New South Wales that would specialise in preparing artists and designers. Art teachers were included in this institution when it was planned because of the assumption that art teachers should learn from artists, and because many artists used art teaching as a means of supplementing their own income. Although the study began with archival searching, this seemed to end quite quickly when it appeared that almost all the original records of the committee proceedings of the Gleeson

Enquiry itself had been shredded. Over the next year I pursued various possible sources of additional records from individuals who had sat on the committee, until being satisfied I had exhausted all likely repositories of such data. At the same time I began with the suspicion that there might be a pattern emerging between the pejorative associations made to art teaching within the Gleeson data, and the comparative kudos of being (or even studying to be) a professional artist. I had the idea that this pattern might represent an ideology of art and art education.

I consequently began by reading Louis Althusser's theory of ideology (1971), at the suggestion of my supervisor, thinking at the time that this pattern might have been ideologically generated. But after conducting what was, in retrospect, a fairly exhaustive study of Althusser's work, I was convinced that it did not offer an analytical tool with which to investigate the archival traces of Gleeson's deliberations. There was an ideological dimension to the data and it was significant, but it was another thing to use Althusser's writing as a tool to analyse an ideology. In interrogating this issue, I noticed that Althusser himself was combining his own approach to Marxism with psychoanalytic tools. Althusser was influenced by the eccentric and flamboyant psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1977), so it seemed logical to check this unexpected source as a possible alternative for my own framework. I was ultimately persuaded that Lacan's approach to psychoanalysis was not simply a rehashing of Freud's transformation of medical psychology, but a method of cultural analysis which had been applied in a range of literary and critical studies for several decades.

This led me through a careful examination of the field of semiotics as well, since Lacan's chief modification of Freudian psychoanalysis derived from emphasising the analytical techniques that apply to the dream as a 'text', produced by listening to the patient's recollection of the dream. The archival documents I had uncovered were therefore submitted to a similar kind of

discourse analysis. The specific achievement of my doctoral methodology was that I had to determine a coherent and logical means of codifying these archival sources, in order to interpret them and disclose something new about the data. The focus of this task remained upon the continuing pattern of conflict and opposition between artmaking and art teaching. Over and over the artist was privileged above the art teacher, and taken as a 'natural' basis for constructing the boundaries of an art teacher's professional identity. It seemed that in 1969, it was unthinkable for an art teacher to practice simultaneously as an artist, but of course, no one ever blinked when an artist "taught" in an art school. Art teachers, it seemed, could not constitute an ideal professional exemplar for their own profession!

Gradually, I gathered the courage to test my suspicion that this hierarchy of artists over teachers owed itself as much to the fact that virtually all professional artists were men and virtually all teachers were women, as it did to any more abstract disciplinary conflict. The evidence was never straightforward with respect to this suspicion, and many pieces of the evidence seemed contradictory: for instance, there were just as many female as male students enrolling to study a professional art course, so the sexual hierarchy did not seem to obstruct women from pursuing artistic practice. Yet at the conceptual level, when it came to planning the structure of a new training facility for art teachers, it was never an option for them to remain a part of Sydney Teachers College (which generically trained teachers from every discipline) as they had since 1945. The art teachers needed to be near the artists, even though many artists strenuously objected to the inclusion of art teachers in an art school, preferring an institution that would exclusively nurture creative individuals (amongst whom art teachers could not be counted!) Gender identity had been submerged within the process of conceptualising art pedagogy, *and* artistic practice – in ways that it would be difficult to reveal by looking at art history alone (Nochlin, 1971). Much

of the documentary evidence relating to the enquiry failed to provide clear support for my thesis, but oral accounts of the relationships between key players and their beliefs and attitudes eventually reinforced it enough for me to draw appropriate conclusions.

The most demanding aspect of the study was, unquestionably, coping with this mass of archival and oral data, and analysing it. In trying to produce a meaningful code with which to interpret this material, I needed at the same time to develop a cogent explanation for the complex ways in which pieces of historical evidence contradicted each other, and allowing these contradictions to remain intact while at the same time using them to reveal something new. There were few precedents for this kind of historical study of art education, so much of my struggle with the material related to exploring and mapping more or less uncharted educational territory. One of the most significant antecedent histories of art education in NSW was written in 1962 as an Honours thesis for an arts degree undertaken at Sydney University, by Ellen Waugh (1962). My investigations revealed that Ellen was the first full-time student specialising in art teaching at Sydney Teachers College, enrolling there initially as an experiment by the Principal, Christopher MacRae in 1943, which was successfully followed up in 1944 with a cohort of six. Ellen went on to produce a Masters study (1968) on a similar historical topic, this time with greater emphasis on curriculum. I was extremely fortunate to interview Ellen on a number of occasions, in the process being enchanted by her stories of the slow emergence of the Sydney artworld.

Ellen also kindly introduced me to other remaining players in some of the events that I was investigating (she herself had written a submission to the Gleeson Enquiry which formed a significant dimension of the data). The more I spoke to these distinguished and remarkable teachers and artists, the more visible the jigsaw appeared. They made the historical past

real to me in a way that would have been impossible without the chance to talk and probe their memories of that distant horizon. But nevertheless, there was at the same time a flaw appearing in the looking glass that I realised I was constructing for the profession. It would never be possible to reconcile the contradictory pieces of the art teacher's identity in such a way that an image might be produced of a seamless, normative professional role-model. The reason for this was, at least partly, that Lacan was leading me to a structural analysis or code that remained contradictory, incomplete and unsatisfying. I read more carefully through commentaries upon Lacan's work, much of which has been written by feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz (1990), and discovered the work of one of Lacan's former students, the brilliant and highly controversial psychoanalyst and feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray (1985).

I decided to apply Irigaray's critique of Lacan alongside the Lacanian analysis itself, to mirror the interdisciplinary relationship between artists (men) and teachers (women) that formed the conceptual core of the dissertation. Now, at least, the contradictory nature of the images and symbols that I was interrogating could be explained dialectically, in a way that also enabled me to deepen my understanding of theories of representation. Irigaray's work builds powerfully on a range of important contributors to twentieth century continental philosophy, such as Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida. Deploying her theory within my study eventually became the most satisfying aspect of the work, providing a vastly more convincing explanation of the dynamic ways in which concepts of art teaching have been determined. It allowed me to place a history of art teaching within a larger history of the changing status of women in Australia, and to avoid the trap of trying to represent artists or teachers without accounting for the complexity of sexual politics and its effects for language and educational culture.

The turning point for the conceptual organisation of my study came a year before it was due to be completed, when the advice of my supervisors led me to consider including a wealth of archival data that had originally seemed to be unrelated to the specifics of the Gleeson Enquiry. This material had emerged in the process of searching for sources of commentary that might allow me to better contextualise the events leading up to the Enquiry, but it was eventually included on the basis that it enabled me to tell a bigger story about the history of art teaching in NSW, and in Australia more broadly. It linked the Gleeson Enquiry to parallel events in international contexts, and allowed me to map the intellectual terrain that had provided many of the values and symbols of art and art teaching on which the committee relied in its deliberations. But while I grew in confidence that the dissertation was coming together as a coherent whole, it seemed that my supervisor was reticent to confirm my feelings.

The nature of the relationship between candidate and supervisor is delicate and sometimes fraught, in this case by the fact that I was the first doctoral student from my institution to submit work for examination. Students seeking out a supervisor for the first time should try to get some sense of the level of experience that a scholar will bring to the relationship. I would recommend that students try to be prudent about weighing the merits as well as the disadvantages of placing trust in a relatively inexperienced doctoral supervisor. It seems to me that research training is a bit like practicing to teach, and there can, in that sense, be no such thing as a “bad” practicum (or a ‘practicing’ to research?) My supervisor supplied me with important and appropriate advice as well as a range of professional support throughout the duration of the doctoral project itself, but I also think that having more than one source of authority in matters relating to the “completeness” of the work might occasionally be very useful. In most cases reputable universities these days employ very rigorous

review structures to ensure that such gaps are resolved systematically within the institution. In my case part of the problem was the relatively tiny department to which I was attached, which meant that there were few available academic staff to provide supervisory assistance, and at times they were drawing on expertise from surrounding institutions. One particularly helpful strategy I adopted on my supervisor's advice was to submit manuscripts drawn from the doctoral work for publication in scholarly journals, and in one case this led to a very productive mentoring relationship with one of the editors who eventually published my writing. But the student should never be persuaded that implacable trust and authority can be safely assumed with even highly respected academic staff; and they ought always to be in a position of establishing a good understanding of the appropriate rules and policies surrounding doctoral study that apply at the institution where they are enrolled, even as to how frequently meetings should occur and what should be recorded on each occasion. I was probably somewhat naïve and impressionable and selected my supervisor mainly on the basis of a positive undergraduate experience, combined with respect for her demonstrated erudition. In the end, however, a "breakdown" in the supervisor-candidate relationship led to an unpleasant and unnecessary gap of nearly twelve months between submitting my thesis and arrangements to send it to three examiners. When I finally received examiners reports from these three international scholars, none of them called for substantial revisions (I apparently still have a poor sense for the use of an apostrophe!)

I think my doctoral journey was a life-changing experience. My sense is that although there are certain common elements to every such journey, many factors come into effect to make it quite distinctly different – depending on who you are and what you put into the project. In my case I was in a good position to be pragmatic and treat the project like

a job, something that I needed to manage in a range of practical ways in order to complete it in a timely and satisfying manner. The sage advice I heard more than once was that this is not “the rest of your life”, merely an opportunity to gain useful research skills. It is actually once the project is over that one realises the finite quality of the study, and a horizon of new opportunities to apply those newly gained research skills should open in front of you. That has for me been the most satisfying benefit of my doctoral journey.

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Reflecting critically on an EdD:  
The process and the product

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Art education in New Zealand: Issues of culture, diversity and  
difference ✎ *The University of Auckland, 2007*

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**Abstract of thesis**

New Zealand is becoming increasingly multicultural and its school population progressively diverse. Since the 1980s Ministry of Education policy documents, evaluation reports and curriculum statements have acknowledged the value of New Zealand's bicultural identity and multicultural society. Developed during the historical periods of the New Right (1984-1999) and the Third Way (1999-) these policies were influenced by neo-liberal political theory, which emphasises economic sustainability rather than principles of social justice, and the shift towards a 'knowledge society'.<sup>1</sup> The policies impact upon secondary school art education, the field investigated in this research. They raise issues of the position, value, and nature of art education for students from diverse cultures living in New Zealand. Cultural theorists, internationally and locally, claim that schooling has a responsibility to educate for an equitable democratic society. Similarly,

multicultural art education theorists argue that art education can make a significant contribution towards democratic practices.

This thesis is underpinned by a critique of interpretations of culture, diversity and difference, an interrogation of pedagogical practices for culturally inclusive art education, and a critical analysis of curriculum policy. Evident in the literature from within New Zealand is critical, theoretical, and philosophical debate on the framing of the arts curriculum and its socio-political and cultural context. There is no evidence, however, of empirical investigation into how secondary school art teachers are interpreting and implementing the visual arts discipline in the arts curriculum or exploring the underlying issues of culture, diversity and difference. The research investigated, through case study fieldwork in five secondary schools, the extent to which policy, curriculum directives and art education practice take into account the ethnic diversity and cultural differences of students living in a contemporary multicultural society and globalised world.

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### **Artistic beginnings and professional motivations: Catalysts for my doctoral journey**

I became captivated by making and appreciating art at the age of seven and can vividly recall the people and events that facilitated and enhanced my burgeoning interest in art and art history. Although my secondary school experiences were somewhat unremarkable, for those were the days of formal academic training in drawing, I knew early on that my destiny lay in becoming an art teacher. Attending Elam School of Fine Arts afforded me the requisite tertiary qualifications for teacher training, following which I became assistant art teacher and, soon after, Head of Art Department at Papatōetoe

High School for eleven years. Since 1980 I have worked in three teacher education institutions in New Zealand, and in each have had responsibility for preparing graduates from tertiary schools of fine arts, visual arts and design to become secondary school art and art history teachers.

My most recent position at The University of Auckland Faculty of Education arose from an amalgamation between the university and my previous workplace, the Auckland College of Education. The merger of two institutions, one whose prime focus was pre-service teacher education and the other that actively promoted engagement in research, was not without its tensions. But as a lecturer in the secondary sector I had already gained a first degree in Fine Arts and a Master of Education (in art education) from the University of South Australia. I felt no resistance to the new imperative to become 'research active' and for my teaching to become 'evidence-based'. The timing was perfect. In 2002 I had been awarded one of ten inaugural Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards, for 'sustained excellence' in teaching, by the New Zealand Government. This substantial grant motivated me to commence a doctorate in 2003. The University of Auckland, the logical site for my study, was to later award me a Staff Amalgamation Scholarship which enabled me to spend six months writing up my thesis in 2006.

My decision to enrol in a Doctor of Education (EdD), rather than a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or Doctor of Fine Arts (FaD), was fourfold. First, I was foremost an art educator and at that stage had been a teacher educator for twenty-three years. The EdD seemed more tailored towards practical practitioner research. Second, I was aware of the lack of empirical research on art education in New Zealand. My third reason was informed by the reality that this country is relatively young and demographically small, thus there are comparatively few tertiary teacher educators in my fields of art and art history education. This sense of academic isolation,

coupled with embarking on doctoral level research as a mature student, made the EdD an attractive option. At The University of Auckland the cohort-based EdD is organised around the study needs of full-time professionals in education. Furthermore, the description in the course handbook of a degree, which “allows top educators to address questions and issues in research and professional practice at an advanced level” afforded appropriate criteria. I was attracted, also, to the two major components – Part A, a Research Portfolio to be completed in the first two years of the programme, and Part B, a Thesis which could normally be completed over two further years. The projects in Part A were designed so that candidates would begin the thesis in Part B with a clearly articulated proposal informed by an understanding of the critical literature and relevant methodology. I anticipated, and was proven right, that attending the eight two-day intensives would address the nature and purpose of educational research, assist me in sharpening my research question/s, and demand wide and critical reading. Being part of a group exposed me to academics who are respected in their fields. This part of the programme also encouraged me, and the thirteen other students in my cohort, to engage in the processes of open critical peer review of each other’s work. Furthermore, we were encouraged to seek publication in a refereed journal, which I was able to accomplish (Smith, 2004a).

The only stumbling block I experienced was that admission to the EdD was subject to the availability of suitably qualified supervisors, one of whom needed to be a main supervisor from The University of Auckland School of Education, and a co-supervisor. But there were no suitably qualified supervisors in the School of Education in my field! The only doctoral dissertations pertaining to art education in New Zealand that I was aware of in 2003 were by Grierson (2000) and Mansfield (2000), neither of whom were employed in the School of Education at the

university. I count myself especially fortunate that the EdD Programme Advisor was astute in his reading of the four-page proposal in which I discussed my intended area of research. He recommended an historian and expert in cultural policy studies to be my main supervisor. Negotiations were then made for a person in my field from another institution to be the co-supervisor. I was to discover that the quality of supervision was a critical factor in me completing my doctorate in a timely manner.

### **Imagining the vision: Clarifying my research topic**

From the outset I had a clear vision that my research would focus upon multicultural art education. This interest arose from my role as a European New Zealand teacher educator increasingly conscious of the imperative to investigate, empirically, issues arising from the changing demographics of the New Zealand school population. Until the late 1990s a priority in my teacher education programmes was upon issues of biculturalism, and preparing pre-service teachers to fulfill bicultural obligations arising from Te Tiriti o Waitangi–Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>2</sup> This focus had arisen from being conscious of how few Maori enter pre-service teacher education to become secondary school art teachers. It was motivated by an awareness of the paucity of knowledge that the majority of the predominantly New Zealand European/Pakeha students in my programmes had of taha Maori, Maoritanga, tikanga Maori, and of traditional/customary and contemporary Maori art forms upon entry to pre-service education (Smith, 2003, 2007a).<sup>3</sup> These factors resulted in a professional focus on the challenges confronted by and strategies required to support non-indigenous art teachers to work with indigenous knowledge (Smith, 2010a).

While maintaining an emphasis on biculturalism, due in no small part to the continuance of bicultural imperatives in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1993, 2000, 2007), my attention shifted during the 1990s to take

account of New Zealand's increasingly multicultural school populations. Government and educational reports (Education Review Office, 2000; Statistics New Zealand, 2001) and practicum visiting in numerous secondary school art departments confirmed the changing demographic. Thus, influenced by Eisner's (1991, p. 193) declaration that "personal biography is one of the tools researchers work with; it is the major instrument through which meaning is made and interpretation expressed", I embarked upon this research topic. My hope was that the findings from the empirical data would inform professional judgments about the shape and role of art education practice in a diversified society, which, in an era of economic and cultural globalisation, has a historically contingent commitment to biculturalism. I was aware, too, that because a 'neat fit' between policy and practice cannot be assumed, any professional debate must search out what is happening in the field and investigate what prompts art teachers to do what they do in the interests of learning for all students.

A significant change in my thinking about 'multiculturalism' began during the first project in the Research Portfolio - the literature review<sup>4</sup> - and was confirmed by an invitation to present a public lecture (one in a series of six on Indigeneity, Internationalism, Globalization: Challenges for Multicultural Education) at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, in early 2004 (Smith, 2004b). From the literature, and discussions with the Chair of Multiculturalism at the university, I became increasingly concerned about the confusions and complexities associated with the term 'multiculturalism'. Many claim that the term is now little more than a catchword for a wide variety of approaches to education. Indeed, a proliferation of pedagogical practices, and the theoretical positions underpinning them, which focus on issues of cultural pluralism, cultural diversity, cultural difference, and anti-racism are articulated in a comprehensive body of literature on multiculturalism

in education in general, and in art education in particular. On the one hand, proponents argue that the multicultural education reform movement was, from the outset, and continues to be an educational process dedicated to providing more opportunities for disenfranchised individuals and groups to obtain equity in social, political, and especially educational arenas. Its policies are those of a dominant sector acknowledging the need to provide for minority groupings. On the other hand, critics of multicultural education, such as May (1999, p. 1), consider that multiculturalism “has promised much and delivered little”. To this end, May and others (see Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Nieto, 2004) advocate for a ‘critical’ or ‘insurgent’ multiculturalism to foster students “who can engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including their own” (May, 1999, p. 33).

While the historical antecedents of multicultural education (see Banks, 1986; Stross-Haynes, 1993), as well as its earliest and more contemporary interpretations, appeared to resonate in varying ways within the New Zealand educational landscape, my focus shifted during the portfolio phase. I narrowed down the broad topic, *Beyond biculturalism: Multicultural art education for the plural societies of Aotearoa New Zealand*, to a key research question – “How does visual arts policy, curriculum and pedagogy in secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand take account of students from diverse cultures?” In addition, I conducted a survey of heads of art departments in Auckland secondary schools (Smith, 2005), which confirmed that 83 percent of them are European/Pakeha. This finding aligned with Sleeter’s (2001, p. 94) review of eighty data-based research studies on pre-service teacher preparation for multicultural schools in the United States, most of which focused on the “overwhelming presence of whiteness” of pre-service teachers and the implications for teacher education programmes.

However, before I could begin to frame my research proposal another problem needed to be resolved – the question of what is meant by ‘cultural diversity’. In education reports (ERO, 2000) and curriculum documents in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1993, 2000) interchangeable and indistinguishable references are made to multiculturalism and cultural diversity. A large body of literature, which explicates and debates interpretations of culture, perspectives on cultural diversity, and distinctions between diversity and difference (Bhabba, 1995; McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood & Park, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004), assisted me in clarifying my thinking. A further issue I needed to consider was the question of pedagogical practices. In her case studies in the United States, Nieto (2004, p. 376) noted that “although teachers’ ethnic group membership may have a very powerful impact on student learning, it is this in conjunction with teachers’ cultural knowledge and awareness, and their curriculum and instructional accommodations that can make a major difference”. Nieto claimed that teachers’ pedagogy is also influenced by their lack of knowledge and/or understandings concerning the diversity of their students. Her particular criticisms that subject matter dominates pedagogy in secondary school education, and that teaching from the point of view of students is uncommon, raised important issues for my research.

By the time I embarked on the fourth and final project in the Research Portfolio – the research proposal – I had decided that my thesis would seek to answer the following questions:

- (i) How are art teachers’ understandings of the ethnic diversity and cultural differences of students reflected in their pedagogical practices in year 9-10 art programmes?<sup>5</sup>
- (ii) In what ways, and to what extent, are these practices shaped by personal and professional influences?

### **Contextualising the topic: Selecting an appropriate research methodology and methods**

For the second Portfolio project – research methodology – the brief was to “select methodological and research literature, understand and analyse the selected literature in the context of my topic and question/s, identify relevant and excellent sources of evidence and argument for adequately addressing my research question or issue, outline how this evidence is best collected, present a convincing argument to support my selection of methodology, and demonstrate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach”.

This project confirmed that, similar to my MEd thesis (Smith, 2001), the nature of the research problem lent itself to a methodology underpinned by an interpretive qualitative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). From the outset I decided to use the flexible methodology offered by case study research (Stake, 2005, 2006). As well as fitting the purpose of the research question/s my extensive experience in secondary teacher education, including practicum visiting over many years, afforded me ready access to the field. Five schools, ranging from comparatively monocultural to very multicultural, were purposively selected for the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 1990). In each school the Head of Art Department and an assistant art teacher consented to be the research participants. [Subsequently these ten ‘key’ participants were joined by six ‘complementary’ participants. During the data analysis it became evident that I needed the voices of art teachers with extensive experience who had historical knowledge of the field].

My choice of a range of interconnected research methods correlated with the research questions. The multiple data collection methods used – document analysis (policy and curriculum documents, school policies, art department schemes), classroom observations (three lessons each with the

ten participants, the head of art department and an assistant art teacher in five diverse secondary schools), interviews (three with each teacher), and photographic documentation of students' work in process and on completion (from all schools) – did not privilege one method over another. My aim was to explore the possibilities of pedagogical practices for an art education which takes into account the ethnic diversity and cultural differences of students living in a multicultural nation and globalised world. Behind that lay the pre-requisite to investigate the historical, social, cultural and political contexts in which art education developed in New Zealand, the political climate in which national educational policies were conceived, and the formulation of the arts curriculum. Above all, I set out to investigate the nature of art education at years 9-10 in secondary schools according to the interpretations and behaviours of the teacher participants.

A major implication for my study was the ethical requirements associated with the data collection methods. Ethics approval was sought from all stakeholders, including 231 year 9-10 students and their parents/guardians. From a specifically New Zealand perspective, Tolich and Davidson (1999) stress that the social researcher in this country must think of it as a small town in order to protect the participants. Pertinent, also, was Snook's (2003, p. 165) warning to researchers to recognise the "power component" of their work when there are disparities between the researcher and their subjects. In this study, not only were the research settings situated in my professional location, Auckland, but nearly all the participants were known to me either as former pre-service teachers or colleagues in the art education community. Many were aware of my professional roles, including teacher educator, curriculum policy developer, examiner, moderator, and referee. Thus, while the role of researcher offered a new and different dimension to participants it was essential to be mindful of issues of power relationships. Moreover, an

interest in the personal as well as the professional views of art teachers, and the circumstances of their work in art education, was an inherent part of the study. Personal convictions, responses, and reactions to issues of culture, multiculturalism, ethnic diversity and cultural difference can involve commitment, rejection, or apathy in respect of 'politically correct' interpretations. Participants were potentially vulnerable, risking criticism, perhaps condemnation, for expressed or discerned views and attitudes. This brought into focus my role in terms of professional integrity, as well as the question of whose interpretations were to be recognised in and through the fieldwork.

### **Organising my life and work around the thesis**

The dedication in my thesis is "To my husband Peter Smith for his constant love and personal and professional support". I have the great fortune to be married to someone who has had an extensive career in art education and educational administration. He has always held the view that my career is as important as his. He is also wonderfully domesticated, sharing household duties with me. Without his support I would not have completed this journey in the four years suggested for an EdD, nor accomplished it with such a feeling of elation.

During the Research Portfolio phase in 2003-2004 one of our cohort teachers exhorted us all to write every day! This was difficult to achieve given that I was lecturing full time in the Faculty of Education. At the beginning of the journey I was also Convenor of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators' (ANZAAE) biennial conference held in April 2003. My daily diary entries during these years paint a vivid picture of a very busy life. It is fortunate that I am a well organised and focused person. During the summer break from lectures, following my Doctoral Confirmation Seminar in November 2004, which enabled me

to proceed to the thesis, I prepared the ethics application, wrote the drafts of formal letters to schools, principals, participants, students and parents/guardians, and informally made arrangements for data collection. Of particular importance I constructed a year plan, an essential instrument for achieving my goal of completing the data collection in one year. In early 2005 I began a critical document analysis as the catalyst for the series of participant-observations, interviews and photographic recordings that were to follow. Each method informed the other. Following ethics approval in March I began the fieldwork, collecting data primarily during blocks of time when my pre-service art and art history teachers were on practicum placements in schools. Stake (2005, 2006) maintains that in qualitative research there is no particular moment when the analysis of data begins. Sanger (1996, p. 100) declares that, “the act of writing is an act of analysis”. My analysis and interpretation thus began from the very first sighting, with the results of the early analysis guiding subsequent data collection. My writing was confined largely to the weekends when I had time and space to think. By the end of 2005 I was drowning in data!

In early 2006 I constructed a further plan, this time focusing on what I would include in my thesis and how I would present it. My two research questions were written on large sheets of paper pinned to the wall above my computer. I needed to keep my eye on the ball! I worked methodically, organising a Table of Contents that would contain nine chapters in three parts: ‘Contextualising the problem’, ‘Contextualising the discipline’ and ‘Contextualising reality’. It was a challenge confining serious writing to the weekends for I often forgot the thread of what I had written the previous week. Being awarded a University of Auckland Staff Amalgamation Scholarship saved my life. This enabled me to spend six months writing up my thesis in semester 2, 2006. I organised my life so that I could spend six days a week completing the project, and I succeeded (Smith, 2007b).

### **Advising prospective doctoral candidates**

Selecting a doctoral programme, whether it is a PhD, EdD or FaD, is a critical first step. Finding the ‘best fit’ is essential. For me the EdD Research Portfolio programme, with its scaffolded submission dates and peer review requirements for each of the four projects during the first two years, was a perfect fit. I had few problems meeting the rigorous project deadlines and enjoyed the peer review process for each. Although I work best independently, attending the two-day cohort intensives was refreshing, challenging and reassuring. My educational perspectives were enriched by the opportunities for group sharing and discussion with peers and cohort teachers from a range of disciplines.

A second critical factor is having a passion for the topic to be researched, and a strong desire to contribute new knowledge to the field of enquiry. I also believe that a candidate should really ‘want’ to study for a doctorate and not just ‘need’ to in order to gain a higher qualification. In a research report, *Perceptions of teaching and supervision in a professional doctorate* (Tuck, Adair & Haigh, 2008, p. 4), for which 41 candidates, including my cohort, were interviewed about our doctoral journeys the academics employed in tertiary institutions “often commented that it was a necessary credential if they were to advance in their career.” A number of candidates in my cohort were under pressure from their various institutions to upgrade their qualifications.

A third factor is the necessity to be realistic about the scale of the research endeavour. During the literature review project for the Research Portfolio one of the cohort teachers suggested that the scale of my project was far too ambitious. She questioned why I would revisit ‘biculturalism’ (the topic of my MEd thesis), and advised me to focus on a more ‘bounded study’. From time to time my main supervisor reminded me that this thesis was not my ‘life’s work’ – that the completion of a doctoral thesis was to demonstrate research capability.

For those embarking on qualitative case studies it is essential to be well planned and highly organised in advance. Gaining ethics approval for fieldwork is time consuming and can be a protracted process. (I also had to gain additional ethics approval for the six ‘supplementary’ participants.) Because I used multiple data collection methods I had to carefully plan a year-long timetable to include interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and the photographic recording of samples of students’ work. It was important to be sensitive to the teachers’ professional commitments, for they received no remuneration for the hours they devoted to my project. As well as fitting in with their schedules I had to manage my full-time position as a lecturer.

### **The most difficult memory of all**

The most difficult memory of my time as a candidate was the Doctoral Oral Examination. There is a paucity of art educators with doctoral qualifications in New Zealand hence the ‘local examiner’ was appointed from another country. Prior to my oral defence I had heard from colleagues about the differences between examiners – that there are those who ‘examine your work’, and those who want ‘their ideas (and their references) added to your work’. I was assured that the oral examination would be a supportive experience. It was quite the reverse. The local examiner, whom I later discovered was inexperienced with the process, disagreed with me about the focus of the fieldwork dimension of my study. While she claimed that I should have interrogated the students’ art works more critically, I maintained that I had been subtle and implicit with my ‘critical voice’. In my view the students’ work ‘spoke’ clearly about the teachers’ pedagogical practices, without the need for overt criticism. This examiner, unlike the external examiner from further afield, appeared to not comprehend the ‘small town’ nature of New Zealand (see Snook,

2003; Tolich & Davidson, 1999) or why I had to protect my participants to the degree I did. The chair of the examination panel recommended that we agree to differ. There remains a slight sense of disappointment that my ‘spirited defence’ (in the words of my main supervisor) rested upon the examiner’s opinion of the type of art work produced at some of the schools rather than on the shape and merit of the thesis.

### **Remembering the good times**

The memorable experiences during my doctoral journey far outweighed the difficult times. Among the most unforgettable was the level of support I received from my supervisors. (This was in stark contrast to the experiences of some in my cohort whose completion of their thesis was delayed due to problems with supervision. Tuck, Adair and Haigh (2008, p. iv) reported that of 41 EdD candidates interviewed “half experienced periods of floundering with supervision, during which they recalled little in the way of constructive support”.) In contrast, my co-supervisor gave me invaluable input into both the research portfolio and thesis. Her emphasis on the theoretical dimensions of research, and on academic rigor, contributed greatly to my research capabilities. The support of my main supervisor was especially impressive. Located with me on campus at the Faculty of Education she was readily available to offer prompt advice, critique my writing, and make useful suggestions. At her prompting, for example, I explored the ‘historical moments’ in art education in New Zealand from the 1840s (I planned to begin with the 1980s!) which gave me insights into how the present (and the future) is located in the past. This exploration is one of the seminal parts of my thesis, and has informed my own supervision of postgraduate students. I have no hesitation in describing myself as ‘a mature and perfectionist student’, determined to do well. My main supervisor was attuned to my personality and “sense

of commitment to everything I undertake” (her words). Her approach to supervision, in particular her perceptiveness, attention to detail, constant encouragement and warm personal support, smoothed the path and enabled me to complete the doctorate part-time over four years (including full time in semester 2, 2006). Whenever I became bogged down with the complexity of ideas she simply advised me to push ahead rather than dwell on difficulties. My two supervisors regularly met with me in my home. In her letter of congratulations the co-supervisor wrote that “It has been a wonderful combination of minds and expertise and I believe that you have produced research worthy of the years of dedication and knowledge in your reservoir of experience”.

### **Reflecting in retrospect**

The question of what I would do differently in my journey has prompted me to reflect upon the process and the outcomes. There is little I would change in terms of the research question and methodology. On another occasion, however, I would modify one of the data collection methods. Conducting thirty face-to-face, audio-taped interviews (three with each of the ten art teachers), which were then transcribed and member checked by participants, was physically and emotionally demanding. I now consider that email interviews (Ison, 2009; Reid, Petocz & Gordon, 2008) would be a more manageable method of seeking information to supplement the insights gained from and about the participants and their pedagogical practices during the repeated visits to their classrooms.

At the completion of my study I did reflect upon whether the topic, located in the New Zealand context, was too localised and whether it would be sufficiently useful for art educators beyond this country. I reassured myself that such chapters as ‘Framing the theories: Culture, diversity and difference’ and ‘Mapping the field: Pedagogical practices

for culturally inclusive art education' resonate with art education internationally. Moreover, the chapter in which I contextualise the study, 'Locating the present in the past: Historical moments in art education in New Zealand', provides a model for examining social, historical and political influences on curriculum change in other countries.

A colleague recently commented that I had been 'very strategic' with my thesis. During the doctoral journey I did not consciously plan what I might do post-thesis or how I could disseminate the findings. What I have discovered in retrospect is that the differing components of the thesis have provided a rich source of material for a variety of research outputs, including journal articles, book chapters and conference presentations. I have been strategic in so far as I have submitted articles about art education in New Zealand's colonial past to other British colonies with similar histories, such as Australia and Canada (Smith, 2008a, 2009a). I have consciously set out to inform art educators in New Zealand about the findings of my fieldwork, at conferences and in articles (Smith, 2007c, 2008b). My pre-service art and art history teachers are the beneficiaries of evidence-based teaching.

Colleagues assured me that I would likely suffer from 'post-thesis depression' after such an intensive journey. Fate intervened, for soon after I was invited to hold my first solo exhibition. Employing the metaphor, *Talking my way through culture*, I constructed an installation comprising 14 'talking sticks' drawn from the concept of nga rakau korero, or ceremonial staff used by Maori orators.<sup>6</sup> Arranged in a 'talking stick circle', my art works were a response to the critique of literature, curriculum policy, and selected findings from my doctoral research. The aim, post-thesis, was to show how art works can function as a multi-layered interpretive act, as a re-presentation of a literature review, and as an evidence-based 'voice' with which to challenge pedagogical practice (Smith, 2007d).

My thesis, exhibition and teaching have informed my most recent interest – engaging in an approach to A/R/T in which art practice, research, and teaching interconnect in an ever-continuing cycle (Smith, 2009b). I am indebted to the University of Auckland for its support during my doctoral journey. The university is, in turn, reaping the benefits of my professional work as a teacher educator, artist and researcher.

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## Notes

- 1 In the early 1980s a radical swing to the right in political and economic ideologies, influenced by globalisation, caused New Zealand to undergo a rapid transition from a Keynesian welfare state to a New-right, user-pays climate (see Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004; O'Neill, Clark & Openshaw, 2004; Peters & Marshall, 1990). The New Right policies in New Zealand of post-1984 developed in response to Neo-liberalism (free markets, individual freedom) and Neo-conservatism (Christian fundamentalism, and family values) that were being driven by the Reagan and Bush administrations in the United States and the Thatcher government in the United Kingdom. The New Right, a loose coalition of groups such as multinational corporations, business interest, and the moral Right, saw the welfare state and the power of trade unions as a threat to entrepreneurship and enterprise (Olssen et al., 2004). The primary aims of the New Right were to increase the role for the market and to reduce the role of the state.
- 2 Te Tiriti o Waitangi–Treaty of Waitangi was signed on 6 February 1840 by over 500 Maori chiefs and by William Hobson representing the British Crown. Although never ratified by the Crown it is considered the founding document of New Zealand. The Treaty carried no legal force in New Zealand until receiving limited recognition in 1975, following which “the value of the Treaty of Waitangi and of New Zealand’s bicultural identity” (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 1) has been acknowledged in governmental, including educational, documents.
- 3 Walker (1989) explains the nomenclatures Maori and Pakeha: With the arrival of European navigators, traders and missionaries Maori (the tangata whenua, people of the

land) applied the descriptive term Pakeha (white man) to these strangers. Because their white skin was a strange and abnormal condition to the indigenous people they adopted the term Maori (normal or natural) to distinguish themselves.

- 4 The Portfolio I submitted at the end of year two includes five evaluations on my literature review from two cohort teachers, my main supervisor and two peers. Not only was this feedback invaluable for honing my skills at writing a literature review and for clarifying my thinking, but the Portfolio continues to provide a useful reference as a 'beginners guide to research'.
- 5 Year 9-10 students are predominantly 13-14 year olds. These year levels have national curriculum descriptors in common.
- 6 Nga rakau korero (talking sticks) are used by Maori orators on the marae (the meeting place of Maori tradition) to indicate authority and mana (status) and to make important announcements. While orators use the stick to support their korero, my talking sticks were designed to speak for themselves.

The doctoral journey:  
An initiation into the practice of  
research in art education

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A qualitative analysis of creativity as misrecognition in the transactions between a visual arts teacher and their senior art students in the final year of schooling ✎ *College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, 2009*

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**Abstract of thesis**

This thesis researches the proposition that student creativity occurs as a function of misrecognition in the culturally situated context of art classrooms. Following Pierre Bourdieu's socio-cognitive frameworks of the habitus, symbolic capital and misrecognition this study uses these concepts as a means of navigating teacher-student relationships at moments of creative origination. These concepts predict that exchanges between teachers and students are sites for transactions of symbolic capital where the teacher's pedagogical role is objectively repressed through the mechanism of misrecognition. The study seeks evidence for creative autonomy as misrecognition as it takes place in classroom transactions and

that differing levels of ‘tact’ are employed in these exchanges. It emerges that the social reasoning that underscores these exchanges is inferentially sensitive to different contextual points of view, expressed in open secrets, repression, denial and euphemisation. The study finds that the artworks produced evidence degrees of originality that vary in character according to the subtlety of misrecognition that is transacted in these pedagogical exchanges. The case of an art teacher and an art class in the final year of schooling is examined in detail. The design employs an idiographic, qualitative methodology. Methods include observations and interviews which are augmented by digital records. Results are interpreted using a form of semantic analysis and triangulation. Four functions are distilled from the results. These functions govern the way in which misrecognition performs as a contradictory logic in the relationships between the teacher and students which works towards affirming the group’s belief in creative autonomy, while paradoxically, all members take advantage of the contextual inputs that are available. Creative autonomy is revealed as a fiction, nonetheless, a fiction worth nurturing for the successful realisation of creative ends. The study concludes that creativity cannot be strictly taught or learned. Nor is it innate and autonomous. Rather it encompasses a socially intelligent uptake in the culture of artmaking. What is possible is dependent on shared beliefs, desires and intentions which are transformed over time. Broader implications are suggested focusing on the significance of collaboration in creative education and the impact for educational systems, schools and undergraduate programs in art education.

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The story invites... *reconstruction of what might have happened*  
(Paul Ricoeur)

In writing this article, I have continued to reflect on the question: To what extent is a Doctoral investigation a journey? It seems to me that the making of a thesis is like making a journey in so far as it involves practical reasoning (Brown, 2005, p. 1). This kind of reasoning is contextually dependent, responsive to circumstances as they unfold and seeks to hedge against uncertainty (p. 1). Whatever may have happened – the exhilaration, uncertainty, dead ends and blind alleys – is redeemed through a contribution to new knowledge and the furnishing of future research prospects, favourable examiners comments and a degree of acceptance by the field, and an unwavering belief that the prolonged engagement in the study was worth it.

Nonetheless, the journey is also retroactively constructed, now some time after the event, where facts, events and circumstances may take on different purposes to those attributed at the time. In the case of this study, the narrative as set out below is characterised as a reflection on an *initiation* into the practice of research in art education. It identifies various reasons for the thesis, as it now exists. There were others that also figured prominently, but these have been set aside for this account because they are too personal to disclose. It is hoped that the reasons given offer something of the flavour and texture of the journey, while acting generatively for future PhD students.

### **Identification and speculated betrayal**

I began work on my PhD and then entered academic life after years of a public profile in art education in NSW, in the positions of Inspector Creative Arts and Curriculum Officer for Visual Arts K-12, both at the New South Wales (NSW) Board of Studies. Prior to this I had been a Regional Consultant for Visual Arts K-12 with the Department of Education. I had also held positions at different times as Chair of the Visual Arts Syllabus Committee, Chair of

the Visual Arts Higher School Certificate (HSC) Examination Committee and Supervisor of HSC Visual Arts Making. I knew, in an embodied sense, the aspirations and concerns of many of the visual arts teachers across NSW and understood the attraction of the subject wherein teachers and students believed that students could ‘express’ themselves in the making of art. The dare of doing something different, within certain constraints, held an appeal and was also often rewarded. Earlier in my career I had taught Visual Arts for ten years in a range of secondary schools and acted as a Head Teacher before my move into consultancy. As Geertz (1973) would say, in paraphrasing Ryle, I was sufficiently qualified to distinguish a wink from a blink in art education (pp. 6-10).

The move to undertake my PhD in the School of Art Education, College of Fine Arts (COFA), University of New South Wales (UNSW), began while I was in the position of Inspector. It was motivated, at least in part, by the collective speculation that the value of the Visual Arts had been betrayed in a new 2 Unit curriculum structure for the final stage of schooling that was bent on economy – except in some subjects sanctioned by the then Premier and Board as being beyond the 2 Unit paradigm including Mathematics, Music, English, History, Science and later various languages.

My colleagues and I had just completed the HSC Subject Evaluation (1998) for the Stage 6 Visual Arts syllabus, in response to the sweeping reforms proposed the McGaw Review of the HSC (1997) and the subsequent White Paper (1997). Our HSC Subject Evaluation was robust and comprehensive, if somewhat unorthodox for our audience, in that it adapted concepts from beyond the field of art education to meet the criteria of the Review in its representation of the domain of the Visual Arts, as well as its role in the curriculum and benefits for learning beyond school. The Evaluation covered concepts associated with frameworks for representing knowledge in the Visual Arts, artistic practice and the development of

skills, practical modes of knowing, the significance of intentions, the role of the audience in making the artwork and metacognitive assessment (Board of Studies, 1998, pp. 28-30). Ironically, while the Evaluation left few stones unturned as to the rigour and value of the subject, the findings ran counter to the Government and Board's agenda and proposed curriculum structure. Despite the promise, it seemed that good arguments and comprehensive research did not win the day. This decision propelled not only me but also others on to undertake further study, despite our conflicted identities and the demands of our curriculum positions.

The commitment of so many outstanding Visual Arts teachers and their students who were devastated by the Government and Board's decision also spurred me on. The decision effectively meant that there would not be a discrete option for advanced study in the Visual Arts in what would be known as an Extension course in other subjects.<sup>1</sup> A bitter and ironic twist, given that in the public imagination at least, art education in NSW has a well-recognised top end in ARTEXPRESS, which is revered as a 'jewel in the crown' in education, both locally and internationally.

There were other reasons for wanting to study. In a move that ran counter to what outcomes were purported to be in NSW and other state curricula, that is non-contested criteria assuming an incontrovertible truth as the basis for knowing and assessment, what lay beyond the appearance of things was of far more interest to me. Things could be deceptive in their appearances. After all, art and politics were about illusion, craftiness in the sense of bending the natural order, and the suspension of disbelief. Appearances by themselves, as I understood, were illusionary and had no implication for causality. Thus, in my view, a simple means-ends relation as proposed by outcome statements provided an unacceptable explanation of the relations between learning, the student and teacher and the production of creative objects.

By early 2002, I resigned from my position as Inspector, discontented with the direction of curriculum, although deeply committed to an ongoing involvement with syllabus development and the field of art education, but no longer in this significantly compromised role. I had successfully applied for a lecturer's position at COFA UNSW, where I was already undertaking my doctoral study.

### **The topic of Creativity**

My investigation into the creative object, in the final years of schooling, stemmed from an immersion in the field of art education over many years and a keen interest in the distributed values attributed to visually and aesthetically sophisticated artworks made for high stakes senior school assessments. The study was culturally situated, located in time and place, and in working with the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1997), I speculated that there could be other factors that contributed to the production of creative artworks, beyond the intentional and psychological resources of the student. In this study I would look at the most subtle forms of social reasoning that took place in the day-to-day transactions between art teachers and their students in order that creative outcomes in artmaking were realised. Paradoxically, a belief in the students' creative autonomy, or at least an intention to believe, made the transactions and contextual inputs between the teacher and students possible, while offering the recognition and identification that the group desired.

Ironically, when I began my study, the concept of creative expression (Lowenfeld, 1947, 1960) in art education had tended to lose favour. It had been superseded by a more disciplined based approach to art education (Clark, Day, & Greer, 1989), and subsequently, by visual culture (Freedman, 2000; Duncum, 2002). In some Australian states, visual culture was gaining in popularity, but it was less the case in NSW because

of its centralised curriculum history, where the identification of different frameworks of belief and value in the Visual Arts had already taken hold (Board of Studies, 1995, 1999).

Nonetheless, a resurgence of interest in the topic of creativity has emerged in recent years, in Australia and in other countries including Singapore, the United States, South Korea, and Britain. To a considerable extent, this has been brought about by the need for post-industrial economies to search for ways of maximising their competitive edge and/or promoting innovation and intercultural understanding which, in turn, now exerts a force on research and curriculum design (Thomas, 2009, p. 65).

### **The Seer**

My supervisor was both a brilliant and difficult man, and a man of great insight. At the time of our supervisor-student relationship, he was highly respected and exerted a powerful influence in fields as diverse as art, design, art education, interactive media and practices of research at UNSW. He was known nationally and internationally for his research and, as a Chief Investigator, was deeply committed to a range of ARC funded projects. At the time of my own study he had seven other PhD students that I knew of.

I had known him for many years although he did not teach me in my undergraduate studies in the mid 1970s at Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education – a previous incarnation of COFA. I had read much of his research and got to know him professionally during my years and Curriculum Officer and Inspector at the Board. During the 1990s at key points, he was a member, and later Chair of the Visual Arts Syllabus Committee, and we worked closely on a number of Visual Arts Syllabus reviews, including the Subject Evaluation referred to above. His generosity was repeatedly shown in his ability to offer ongoing philosophical and practical insights into what the

visual arts could be. Radical, daring propositions which were backed by his razor sharp control of theories and concepts.

All the same, the supervisor-student relation was a different one from that of a professional colleague. My supervisor could be cryptic in his exchanges while at other times his wit, humour and capacity to mimic were the source of sheer delight. Often his tactics were not simply used gratuitously, but rather, as a way to make a powerful point or as a distraction. Sometimes his purpose was not immediately apparent and it would take time for it to be recognised, and then there was the thrill of catching his meaning.

Like an Ancient Greek seer, my supervisor recognised and accepted that the oscillation between the visible and invisible was indispensable to the revelation of truth. He also used all manner of cunning to help me understand this (Detienne & Vernant, 1978). Beyond the humour, euphemisation and restraint were significant tactics used to assist me to develop my own agency and keep me hunting. So too were the poignant moments of a confidence, or a gesture, that licensed my future thinking and action about a hunch, or some emergent proposition which also worked towards instilling our mutual belief in what I could take on. His questioning could be piercingly Socratic, pushing me to the edge of what I knew, and what I thought I knew. I began to understand the importance of this method as I reread *The Meno* (1976) where Socrates engages with Meno, while questioning the young slave boy about the practical problem of how to double the size of a square. Like Socrates, my supervisor was both my most feared opponent and my trusting guide, and these contradictory tendencies worked with the purpose of building my ability to defend my research, even with the harshest of critics.

While many qualitative studies in art education and education more generally embrace phenomenology as a theory and methodology, this

was not to be the case in my study. Phenomenology might be used as a form of conjecture and the empirical detail of the visible world minutely scrutinised. Nonetheless, my supervisor, following Bourdieu (1997), Boyd (1988) and Searle (1995) pressed the importance of functional mechanisms and explanations. These functions involved an attempt to reunify subjective states and the objective structuring structures of systems of practice through the investigator's imputation.

As it would be revealed in my study, the functions of *Authoring*, *Provocation*, *Brokering* and *Instilling* powerfully shaped up the generative and organising schemes in the habitus of the art classroom (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 57; Thomas, 2008, p. 180). These functions performed as “cognitive and motivating structures”, “self-regulating mechanisms” and as “an embodied and accumulated capital” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 56). They sought to reproduce themselves in the protagonists' thoughts and actions. These functions could only be diagnosed by catching the participants out, within the very real constraints of their habitus in which they revealed their motives, commitment, aspirations, obligations, beliefs and desires, over time. Thus, the design of my study was longitudinal and culturally situated. It was facilitated by the use of idiographic and qualitative methods, including unstructured and structured interviews, semantic and domain analysis (Spradley, 1979; 1980) and visual ethnographic methods (Pink, 2003). These methods were triangulated with one another over time so that the truth could be disclosed and, in turn, the deep mystery of creative practice revealed with all of its hope, contradictory reasoning and ethical ambiguity.

I had little, if any, interest in working with any other supervisor, whether at COFA UNSW or elsewhere. My identity and trajectory as a researcher has been shaped through our long-term professional relationship and the social alchemy of the student-supervisor relation, with all of its allure and uncertainty.

## Writing

The writing of the thesis was in itself eventful. Just after the release of his recent book *Truth* (2009), Peter Temple, the Ballarat based South African born crime writer, was interviewed by Peter Craven about his approach to writing (Craven, 2009, p. 8). Temple replied that writing was “like repairing a tapestry” (p. 8). Sometimes he said he wrote “three chapters ahead” then back filled chapters to fulfill his intentions (p. 8). Contrary to how students are often counseled about following a step-by-step approach to building the thesis, chapter by chapter, my experience was similar to Temple’s and my supervisor encouraged this approach.

As I recall, the ‘Results’ were the first chapter to be formally written up. But because the micro detail of events and the nuance of intonation and gesture were so significant in the study, the conventional format of reporting proved to be difficult. The chapter itself was reworked thirty or forty times, sometimes with dramatic revisions and at others with minor changes to enhance its intelligibility. It was not until the final few days before the thesis was submitted that this chapter, pivotal to the framing of the interpretation that followed, was extracted from the body of the thesis and became the first of a number of appendices. In its place a series of grounded narratives, that until then had been located in Appendix 1, but were central in forming a bridge between the results and their interpretation, was inserted into the body of the thesis.

Writing, like so many other aspects of the thesis, was rarely if ever mechanical although it was regular. Nonetheless, with a background in writing for syllabus documents in a kind of cryptic bureaucratese, my early writing was criticised on the grounds that it was too ‘scientific’. Taking these comments to heart, I sought to address the problem in various ways. I became preoccupied with how writers wrote fiction, delighting in attending selected sessions at the *Sydney Writers Festival*, over several years.

A notable memory is May 22, 2004 when I listened to Susanna Moore and Louis de Bernières in a joint session. They compared their approaches to writing and read a few pages from their soon to be published novels, *One Last Look* (2004) and *Birds without Wings* (2004) respectively. Moore refused the adjective. Her clipped style created a tension that was so well suited to the representation of highly erotic and repressed moments. In contrast, de Bernières conjured honey coloured images with a lavishness of adjective and feeling. Both had something to offer.

Just under a year before, Shirley Hazzard's *The Great Fire* (2003) was published. Not only was the book a compelling read but I was also captivated by how Hazzard used language and constructed her sentences. Short, sharp, and exacting sentences while others contained wistful counter movements, her punctuation involving parenthetical clauses and phrases, colons and semi colons. Then she came to Sydney to promote her novel and undertook selected readings at the Seymour Centre. A demure woman, Hazzard walked onto the stage as if she had just alighted from a bus, with a small shopping bag dangling from her arm where her recent book was lodged – the perfect intelligence officer. And then in her reading of selected extracts of her novel, the explosive power of her pared back observations, with their meticulous detail, flooded the collective imaginings of the crowd.

It was Moore, de Bernières and Hazzard's talking about writing, along with their writing itself, that helped me to work with words, to sweat over and take pleasure in what they could do and conceivably to be more creative in how events and actions could be represented. This in turn, affected how I would represent the dramatic detail and suspense in the performances of the teacher and students as they anticipated and sometimes sidestepped one another in the grounded narratives of the thesis. It also helped me to understand, along with my supervisor's coaching, that the thesis itself needed to be a good read.

### Research and social games

My supervisor had suggested to his PhD students to write up and rehearse sections of their emerging studies in papers to be presented at occasional School postgraduate caucus meetings, and national and international conferences. This would assist us to get used to rehearsing results, or other aspects of our studies, and ensure that research did not become a fetish object. His advice was highly instructive. There were some few conference options in Australia and so international venues gained in their appeal. Conference destinations through the *International Society of Education through Art* (InSEA) and the *National Art Education Association* (NAEA) provided useful events and contacts. Beyond art education, the *Australian Association for Research in Education* (AARE), *Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia* (PESA), and the *Illinois Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, offered valuable conference experiences where I talked with educators, philosophers, ethnographers, sociologists, artists, designers and design historians amongst others. Over time, presentations and papers could also attract COFA UNSW conference and early career funding which furthered the work while assisting me to begin to shape a profile as a qualitative researcher in art education and in the institution of university and faculty.

The conferences themselves were like going to a series of gallery openings that privileged the exhibition of competing genres, or time travelling with Doctor Who into social epochs unlike our own, where one had to learn the etiquette of exchange in research – a markedly different habitus from the expectations associated with running a professional development course for visual arts teachers. In some cases, I was met by indifference or intolerance by educators who, it appeared, wanted the research to align more with their own findings on draft national professional standards or who thought that the findings were too peculiar to art education. On occasions, there was resistance shown by art educators and academics

because the study contravened the long-standing taboo in art education concerning the creative autonomy of students. Some conference goers thought they knew all about 'Bordeaux', rather than Bourdieu, but were then suspicious when my theoretical framework was informed by his concept of misrecognition, a subset of his theory of practice that had rarely, if ever, been applied beforehand in education or more specifically, art education. More positively, some participants wanted to apply the findings to their own research, even before the study was complete, or to maintain contact because the work generated excitement in thinking about teacher-student relations and the concept of creativity in ways that seemed to accord with the lived reality of teaching. Others were held spell bound by the painstaking work of the semantic analysis of the linguistic exchanges between the teacher and students. This linguistic analysis, which took around two years to complete because of my inexperience with the method and the complexity of the social reality of the classroom, contributed to the formulation of the functions, as briefly noted above.

The presentation of these papers, whether double blind peer reviewed or otherwise, propelled me on in writing, and meeting deadlines, while assisting me in how I thought about audiences for the research. I began to understand how similar or quite different papers could provoke a range of responses that one could begin to anticipate – a useful lesson while awaiting the final examination results of the thesis. Critique was something I learned to accept and take in good faith on most occasions, with the consequence that while amendments were often hard work, they clarified thinking, or assisted in making plain what I had mistakenly thought to be self evident. Conferences also afforded opportunities for finding out about what others were doing in recent research in art education and qualitative and philosophical studies and some remarkably interesting conversations ensued.

## Reading Bourdieu

In the preparatory phase of the PhD, my supervisor had suggested I read Bourdieu's *Practical Reason* (1998), which had been released only a year or two before. To a degree, this was a gift but also a test as I was to work on a summary and be ready to talk with him about Bourdieu's concepts. As I understood later, there were obligations attached that needed to be tactfully negotiated, as Bourdieu was also highly influential in my supervisor's own research. Bourdieu was not an easy read, with sentences that might go on for ten-twelve lines. What was so extraordinary was Bourdieu's ability to explain practice, in the detail of particular cases and within the structuring structures of the habitus, and how he understood the importance of tempo, improvisation, and the centrality of often forgotten collective histories in practices of any kind (1997, p. 53). As Bourdieu (1998) reflected:

my entire scientific enterprise is indeed based on the belief that the deepest logic of the social world can be grasped only if one plunges into the particularity of an empirical reality, historically located and dated, but with the objective of constructing it as a 'special case of what is possible' (p. 2).

Bourdieu's writing style took considerable practice for me to comprehend – even a little. I would spend hours sitting on my bed reading aloud so that I could 'listen' to what he was saying, while making notes that would later inform the chapters on the theoretical framework which, in turn, would inform my interpretation. There was an urgency in his writing, like the "feel for the game" that he had described as the necessary investment, desire and commitment of practice (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 66). I was hooked and my supervisor knew it. Later my supervisor would caution against over-reading Bourdieu, again another possible fetish, counseling to just 'do it' as Wittgenstein had said.

Oddly, I had bought *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) some years before, although the language seemed almost impenetrable at the time. And yet, within this text, Bourdieu's diagram of the artistic field with his discussion of how any field is contained within a field of power fascinated me (p. 38). I had used the diagram loosely and his concept of the game in my professional discussions with teachers about artistic practice. Some years later, this reference would be reconsulted in order that I might think more about the production of belief, collective misrecognition and the market of symbolic goods in the creative economy of the art classroom.

Bourdieu was so powerful theoretically that while other references were consulted throughout the study, his was the bedrock that framed the research. His theories of the habitus, symbolic capital and misrecognition, nested in his theory of practice, provided the theoretical framework and rich conceptual apparatus that motivated and guided my study of creative practice in art education in the particular case of the art teacher and students in the senior art classroom (Bourdieu, 1997, pp. 53, 113, 178).

### **Ethical dilemmas**

Any empirical study, set within contemporary accountabilities of university research, requires the approval of an ethics committee in order for the study to proceed. Various details were needed including a sample of questions and information on the location and respondents. Such a request seems logically reasonable. Although, when a study is emergent it is difficult to predict what will be relevant, let alone how the participants' course of action may change. For instance, dilemmas arose in the reality of the context, as to what I should do when faced with the problem of another teacher entering an interview space unannounced who proceeded to contribute to the discussion. Given that a study like this involved complex confidentiality agreements to protect the anonymity of respondents, was it

the right thing to do to declare the project and compromise the research, or should the contribution become part of the investigation and compromise the approval?

Complex micro-political issues of interpersonal relations were also made within the context during the fieldwork (Punch, 1994, p. 84). For instance, while ethics approval was granted to digitally record activity in the classroom between the teacher and students, it was not altogether clear as to when an observation became more like a violation, particularly in those moments when the teacher or students were revealing their anxieties, frustrations or dependencies in a way that might appear to compromise them.

As these different situations unfolded, I needed to consider on a case-by-case basis how far I could infiltrate the setting. These dilemmas needed to be resolved in the moment (Punch, 1994, p. 84). On some occasions, tacitly or explicitly, consent was sought from the teacher and/or students in order to continue with the recording of events. At other moments the camera was switched off as the intrusion created too much offence. I backed down or moved on to another scene of interest. To take too much advantage of the situation ran the risk of mistrust and heightened the danger of needing to abandon the project. On other occasions, recording continued with the recognition that there were advantages of documenting the dramatic details of the exchanges between the teacher and students, with all of their complexity. The drama was part of their lived reality.

### **Advice for prospective PhD students**

In concluding, the following suggestions are offered to assist future students in their investigations. While the advice is primarily directed at students interested in pursuing qualitative and ethnographic research, it is hoped that these points are also relevant to others interested in undertaking quantitative and/or mixed method studies.

- 1 Recognise that your context and the peculiarities of your background may assist you to shape a proposal and the study itself and thus, potentially contribute to new knowledge in art education. Work with concepts and respondents that you want to deeply understand and that excite you.
- 2 Select a supervisor who has expertise as a researcher and supervisor. They are the most well informed, generous and perhaps wily. Look for someone who will challenge you. And yet, be prepared to stand up for those things that you think are critical to finding your way. But at times, be prepared to let those same things. They will probably resurface if they are really important.
- 3 Don't confine yourself to theorists within art education. Look beyond and consider how importations of theoretical 'capital' may contribute to a regeneration of concepts and understandings in art education and trajectories for future research.
- 4 Consider your design in relation to the problem posed in your study and the attendant methods with a view to uncovering what may not be immediately apparent. Understand how your methods are built on precedents that are accepted by different fields that may include sociology, anthropology and art education as offering a legitimate means of explaining knowledge. Look to what these fields offer and recognise that each of your methods will take practice to use well. Your methods should work towards building the validity of your findings and they are also concerned with the reliability of the research to capture the truth.
- 5 The interpretation is possibly the most creative aspect of your study, the place where you can take the greatest risks and where your agency and contribution to new knowledge is manifest. It is where inferences can be drawn against your results and mapped against your theoretical framework. However, keep in mind that the greater the risk, the more

you need to ground your interpretation in order to retain its plausibility for your reader.

- 6 Practise writing by preparing articles for conferences and journals. Developing some authority takes time to become familiar with the material and for the research to be recognised. Writing requires an ongoing exchange with others, some of whom may be more expert in a similar area of study. Be aware that some may be doubtful of your research or concerned that their territory is being violated. Accept this as a given.
- 7 Recognise that the activity of research is largely solitary. Enjoy this but try not to be too isolated.
- 8 Be prepared to be uncertain, to hold onto and let go of what you think you know. Research involves being skeptical about current explanations and representations of practices that may be taken for granted by the field.
- 9 While the concentration involved in the micro-detail of the work will be like few other conceptual challenges you have had, in that it takes you into different levels of consciousness, distract yourself, on occasions, so that you have time to rest and space to think.

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## Notes

- 1 Despite these difficulties, it was at this time that the innovation of the Body of Work was introduced and accepted by the Board that reshaped teachers' and students' approaches to artmaking (Board of Studies, 1999).

Learning to use another pair of eyes:  
The story of a doctoral journey investigating  
art rich picturebooks

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Pictures, words and voices: Provoking thinking and inquiry through  
art rich picturebooks ✨ *The University of Melbourne, 2009*

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**Abstract of thesis**

This thesis examines an emerging phenomenon in children's literature – the vast, varied and growing sub-genre of picturebooks, linked together fundamentally by their intertextual references to art, artists and artmaking within their narratives (text and visual). The aim here was twofold: to investigate these works, collectively called art rich picturebooks for this study, and to use this investigation as a foundation into their pedagogical possibilities.

The research design encompassed an intrinsic case study model containing within it two loosely bounded systems under investigation: the range of books categorised through predetermined criteria as *art rich picturebooks*, and a small selection of primary school teachers using these books in their teaching. Extending on Sipe's (2001) research on "picturebooks to teach art history" (p. 197), a sample of 190 art

rich picturebooks were used to analyse, categorise and generate into a bibliography and profile of these books – their qualities, challenges, limitations and possibilities. The second strand of this study used the researcher’s own practice as a framework for analysing the narrative data collected from three participating teachers. The findings informed the development of an exemplar for teaching with these resources.

It became increasingly evident that while these picturebooks present with multiple entry points for thinking and inquiry through art, integral to activating their potential, is the flexibility and artistry a teacher brings to translating the curriculum into lived practice. The artistry allows the teacher to seek creative and art rich ways into the books, and the flexibility lets them invite in the children’s thinking, wonderings and imaginings. Aoki (2005) talks of the teacher seeking the spaces ‘between’ and ‘among’ in their teaching, and that these interspaces are “the voice of play in the midst of things” (p. 282). This study has worked towards finding these interspaces of possibility through teaching with art rich picturebooks.

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This really is a story about an individual who was accustomed to observing with one pair of eyes, those of the practitioner, but who learned to use another pair, those of the researcher. (Potter, 2001, p. 28)

I have been a teacher since 1981. Just after graduation, I moved from Melbourne to the Northern Territory where I taught for twenty-two years. In the latter years, while working as a curriculum advisor, tertiary educator and specialist art teacher, I had the opportunity to step outside generalist classroom teaching and look back in. This job is emotionally draining if done with intensity, passion and love, and after twenty years teaching, I

had come to the realisation that my *inner teacher* needed energising. In 2003, and now back in Victoria, I taught fulltime in a primary school while undertaking a Master of Education by coursework at the University of Melbourne. Then in 2004, with my Masters completed, I confronted the role of researcher and began a doctoral journey that was to envelop and enrich my life fully for the next five and a half years.

### **Where did I begin?**

From the beginning I found the shift from confident practitioner to qualitative researcher to be challenging. Fully aware that I had much to learn about the language and processes of research, I struggled early on to find a way in to this self-induced, somewhat harrowing endeavour – my Doctor of Education. One of my initial challenges was settling on a topic for my research, as I was interested in so many aspects of education. Very early in my candidature I had selected a topic and supervisor (more for expediency for enrolment) but I was not happy. Around this time a new staff member joined our department, and I connected with her immediately. I approached her to be my new supervisor and she encouraged me to begin over, and to rethink my topic in terms of following my professional curiosity. Our initial conversation was to be the catalyst for my doctoral process and one for which I am extremely grateful.

I took time after our first meeting to reflect deeply on my teaching and what I wondered about and felt compelled to investigate. Over the past decade, through frequent visits to bookshops and art gallery shops, I had become increasingly aware of the plethora of narrative-based picturebooks featuring direct references to *art*, *artists* and/or *artmaking*. I began to see these books as a kind of emerging phenomenon, and one I was drawn towards. Since the mid 1990s, I had been purposefully including art rich picturebooks in my primary school teaching: *Camille and the Sunflowers: A Story about*

*Vincent Van Gogh* (Anholt, 1994); *For the Love of Vincent* (Northeast, 1995); *Katie Meets the Impressionists* (Mayhew, 1997); *When Pigasso met Mootisse* (Laden, 1998); *Luke's Way of Looking* (Wheatley & Ottley, 1999); *The Genius of Leonardo* (Visconti & Landmann, 2000); *Frida* (Winter & Juan, 2002); and *Willy's Pictures* (Browne, 2000) to name a few.

My encounters with these art rich picturebooks had been engaging to the extent that I had cultivated “deep friendships with these works of art” (Stankiewicz, 1994, p. ix). Significantly these ‘friendships’ had been developed within a culture of appreciating the picturebook as being “a provocative, sophisticated, cultural product” (Schwarcz, 1982, p. 10), and a product rich with extrinsic benefits (Stankiewicz, 1994, p. ix). I wondered if other teachers shared my intrigue. I wanted to investigate and to talk to teachers to see if their ideas and experience would “help illuminate, extend or challenge my own” (Ferguson, 2001, p. 85) regarding the potential of these books.

I was encouraged by my new supervisor to investigate these art rich picturebooks and their pedagogical possibilities. I believe that she recognised early on that my strong passion for, and belief in, these books as a phenomenon worthy of investigation would drive my research forward and hold my wondering gaze as researcher over the duration of my candidature (Polanyi, 1983). She was correct!

### **The unfolding research design**

My research design began to take shape. Along with gathering teachers’ stories on using these books in their teaching, I needed to know about the picturebooks themselves. I wanted to explore the reasons why authors and illustrators were purposefully (and, sometimes, playfully) including artistic references and the different ways these references were manifested. I wanted to know what art rich picturebooks existed, and to find out about their

availability. I uncovered early in my literature search that there has been little research into the intersection of art rich picturebooks and children's thinking and inquiry. I aimed to illuminate the pedagogical possibilities of these picturebooks, and, in the process, generate a unique contribution to the literature of arts education. To support this investigation I invited another highly respected colleague to be my co-supervisor. Having two supervisors with their areas of expertise was invaluable for helping me pull together the threads of this multi-layered inquiry.

My methodology was shaped initially by concentrated 'gazing' and the wondering and puzzling this 'gazing' generated. I approached the research believing that encounters with art rich picturebooks provide possibilities for cultivating thoughtfulness, and for imparting knowledge, piquing curiosity and engendering wonder in children (and adults). I recognised the potential of these books to facilitate the apprenticeship of children into the world of art and literature, and to afford opportunities for thinking about art, and talking together about ideas, feelings, issues raised through this artful thinking. However, I was also open to scrutinising these perspectives and to interrogating my own assumptions, systematising and, possibly, transforming them (Mason, 2002).

Searching for a methodology that would best meet the aims of this multi-layered inquiry, I adopted a case study approach. I value the qualitative paradigm for how it embraces and celebrates "richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity" (Mason, 2002, p. ix). My research design encompassed a case study model containing within it two loosely bounded systems under investigation: the range of books categorised through predetermined criteria as 'art rich picturebooks', and a small selection of primary school teachers who identify as using these books in their teaching. I included myself purposefully in this selection.

My study involved engaging in a critical analysis of art rich picturebooks, to investigate their characteristics, and their potential in the classroom. To lay the foundation for this investigation, an audit was undertaken that involved extensively seeking out, analysing and categorising these books. The second aspect of this study investigated the pedagogical possibilities of these resources. With my own teaching story forming a pivotal part of this investigation, I strengthened the inquiry with narratives collected from a small group of primary school teachers who participated in qualitative interviews providing dialogic evidence of their experiences, practices and teaching philosophies. Classroom observation and document analysis reinforced this inquiry.

### **My process**

My final thesis marks the trajectory of my professional learning over my three decades of teaching, and I found its process to be both challenging and exhilarating. Fortunately for my doctoral progress there were several highlights along the way to offset the challenges, and to maintain my energy and focus.

The use of my own story in my research proved to be both a challenge and a highlight. There is a long tradition of embedding our stories into research monographs for their potential for reflection and reflexive practice and I embraced this tradition in my study. I opened my thesis with a vignette – a short, descriptive literary sketch – of one of my teaching experiences with an art rich picturebook. My story, *Letters to Frida*, took the form of an “evocative narrative” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) through which, a continuous, recursive process of thinking, writing, reading, analysing and interpreting, enabled me to get inside my practice to give meaning to my research.

My *Frida* narrative first came to life in 2003 during *The Art of Visual Literacy* – a subject I was undertaking for my Master of Education. I was

attending classes in the evenings while living the ‘art of visual literacy’ during the day in my Grade Two classroom. As the *Frida* picturebook encounter unfolded and took hold, I was regularly taking notes – collecting fragments of narrative – aware of the resonance of this experience with my coursework. I used these notes and the children’s letters to artist Frida Kahlo to craft a story of the experience that would become the impetus for a paper and a conference presentation on ‘picturebooks with an edge’, and later a journal article (Watkins, 2005), two university arts workshops, several seminars on ‘art rich picturebooks’ and a case study in an arts in education book (Jeanneret, 2008). Ellis and Bochner (2000) talk about inviting others “to take the story and use it for themselves” (p. 748) and others have since drawn on my *Letters to Frida* story in their own teaching and writing.

My interest in the aesthetic, psycho-social, and informative and instructional power of quality picturebooks, such as Winter’s and Juan’s *Frida* (2003), propelled my researching. With so little out there on teaching with these resources I considered that citing my own experiences with the phenomenon under study – art rich picturebooks – to be a useful source for analysis. I considered that the personal narrative data I contributed could enhance understanding, not only of the subject matter covered, but also my reasons for investigating the topic. Within this theoretical framework I saw my role as researcher as a connoisseur and ‘instrument’, whose personal schema and past experiences provided the sensibilities that made the investigation possible (Eisner, 2001).

However, in my use of personal narrative and assuming the roles of both academic researcher and personal self (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), I found my dual role to be fraught with tensions and conundrums. How objective could I really be, with myself, a subject of my own research, and within this inherently subjective genre? How could I avoid my thesis reading as a “mono-vocal and self-indulgent text” (Coffey, 2002, p. 327)? Was I guilty

of what Convery (1999) acknowledges as constructing an attractive moral identity through *my* selection, organisation and presentation of events and emotions in my story? To what extent was I relying on a ‘too comfortable’ story as an opportunity for fulfilling a personal identity project at the expense of a more critical analysis of a narrative?

While mindful of these issues and considerations, I found that using my story as a foundation to my data collecting and analysis helped significantly shape and anchor my research. This proved to be a successful methodological choice as attested to by my supervisors’ support and from the extremely favourable feedback received from both my examiners. Capitalising on my story to propel my research also worked on a level of reflexivity. Studying my practice and its underpinning assumptions enabled me to develop a creative and critical understanding of myself as researcher and teacher. The knowledge of teaching and learning that emerges from this personalised form of research is of a practical nature (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). It is intended to yield unique insights and shifts of perception into the practical wisdom of teaching with art rich picturebooks. This process has afforded me both complementary and alternative lenses and perspectives on teaching with these books, which I have welcomed:

if dialogue and authentic conversation take place, the stranger or the newcomer can be gradually moved to attend to others’ stories, to apprehend through others’ eyes the world she/he is expected to join (Greene, 1995, n.p.).

I was also motivated by the need to engage with others, to extend my own observations, insights and assumptions for “a reciprocity of perspectives” (Brubaker, 1994, p. 38). To strengthen my insider perspective on “teacher-thinking” (Convery, 1999, p. 132), I employed narrative

inquiry to provide the perspectives of others in the field. However, this presented its own challenges. In my initial design it was proposed to generate case stories or “data stories” (Lather & Smithies, 1997, p. 34) from the narratives of between six to eight key informants – primary school teachers who use art rich picturebooks in their teaching and who self-nominated to be in the study. They could come from Government, Independent or Catholic school sectors within Victoria, and be generalist classroom teachers, specialist visual art teachers or teacher librarians. However, there were significant problems encountered recruiting these teachers.

The number of teachers who finally consented to participate and who successfully received school approval was three. The constraints of this reduced number of anticipated participants and an inability to recruit others forced me to reconsider my research design. This coincided with my preliminary research. I discovered that although the body of art rich picturebooks was expanding rapidly, there was a deficit of literature and academic writing about them, and their availability appeared limited. Consequently, I shifted the research focus from the teachers onto the art rich picturebooks and the opportunities they afford for teaching and learning as the ‘phenomenon’ to investigate.

I found collecting and analysing my data and crafting my findings into a written report – my thesis - to be an intensively dynamic process and I worked in peaks and troughs. In the early years of my candidature I could go for several weeks and not touch my work, however, in the final eighteen months, I needed to work steadily to maintain focus and momentum. I describe this process as ‘nibbling’ away daily at my research – reading and writing whatever I could manage within the time and brainpower available. If I left my work for too long I struggled to get back into the zone. I also tried to give myself small amounts of dedicated time off when I would purposefully leave thinking about the thesis and working on my

laptop alone. I found this really helped refresh my thinking when I did get back to work. My focus on trying to balance ‘nibbling’ away at the work with ‘breathing out time’ seemed to work well for me, allowing me to finish my thesis amid the busyness of university teaching and family life.

A considerable highlight was how, over the duration of my doctorate, I amassed an extensive collection of over 150 art rich picturebooks. Initially, there were two significant reasons for wanting to own the books: in a pragmatic sense, the risk of the book going out of print; and secondly, on a more personal, aesthetic level, wanting to own, even covet, these ‘unique art objects’ and to make them my own special belongings. I entered this research acknowledging that I approach the picturebook – this “important form of literary-visual art” (Stanton, 1998, p. 2) – as a form of “enlightened cherishing” (Broudy, 1994). Broudy (1994) defines enlightened cherishing as “a love of objects and actions that by certain norms and standards are worthy of our love ... a love that knowledge justifies” (n.p.). I found the books to be aesthetically nourishing and I never tired of reading them and sharing them with others.

I prefaced my thesis chapters and sub-chapters with illustrations from art rich picturebooks, carefully selected to reflect the essence of the sections and to work collectively to frame the thesis as a whole. Extracts of text from the picturebooks and/or quotes from the authors and illustrators accompanied each illustration to provide a context. Having entered into a close, reciprocal and dynamic relationship with the illustrations within the picturebooks, I integrated visual images and text in this thesis into a coherent, aesthetic whole. I aimed to facilitate a dialogue between the world of images and the world of words (Marcus, 2003) and in the process to contribute to the richly descriptive end-product nature of qualitative research. The inclusion of visuals also served the function of writer engagement. I had invested several years of focused energy in generating this thesis and the visuals kept me invigorated

through the multiple re-readings for editing and refining. Anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake suggests “that ‘making special’, the desire to embellish and transform, is deep within us all” (1995, p. 42). It certainly is for me!

I was continually encouraged by the ongoing support and shared expertise provided by both my supervisors. Normally quite sensitive to criticism, I thoroughly welcomed their constructive feedback, ideas and provocations. Although very reluctant to submit drafts of my writing until well shaped and carefully edited, I somehow managed to forward work to my supervisors for feedback. I came to realise that I write in an iterative fashion, constantly massaging the text and reworking the words right up to final submission. This exacerbated my readiness to submit work to my supervisors; I would email through drafts and then have significantly reworked them by the time we met for our feedback doctoral meeting. This proved to be one of my biggest personal challenges experienced over the tenure, and one I am not sure I fully reconciled.

I came into this study propelled by my own set of intellectual puzzles (Mason, 2002), and continued to generate questions and identify provocations as I travelled through my research. Australian painter, Garry Shead (2007), discloses that his “finished painted canvases may mask up to eighteen other versions in layers underneath” (p. 30). This is a process I can relate to with the extensive writing, rewriting and massaging of text needed to capture and summarise my thoughts and insights throughout this study. The constant rereading and rewriting of this research report led me to richer and different understandings of my data, kept me focussed and helped me trust the process of discovery.

### **Final words and lessons learned**

In developing this study it was as if a conversation was born between my research and my teaching experience – an interactive conversation of ideas, feelings and

insights challenging me to wonder, probe and inquire. I really felt I had learned to “use another pair [of eyes], those of the researcher” (Potter, 2001, p. 28). This study has immersed me in the field and engaged me in conversations with teachers, students, picturebook authors and illustrators, bookshop staff, colleagues and university students. I have entered into a dialogue with others and it has been intriguing to learn how differently different teachers and readers respond to these art rich texts. There are still more conversations on this topic to be had. Curiously, after five and a half years and successful completion I still feel energised to explore this topic further.

I fully embraced the intellectual rigour demanded from undertaking a study focussed on uncovering the “richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity” (Mason, 2002, p. ix) of this relatively unknown phenomenon of art rich picturebooks. Looking back, there is something quite empowering and very satisfying in delving so deeply in a topic that you are passionate about, and in becoming expert in that particular field.

My advice to prospective doctoral candidates is to accept the knowledge that you will invest both intellectually and emotionally for the duration, that compromises will need to be made to make spaces in your life for this close (and, at times, obtrusive and demanding) companion, that you will benefit from selecting a topic that will hold your interest and propel you forward when your energy lags, and that you may find yourself experiencing emotions and responses from self-doubt to quiet pride to utter relief to total exhaustion. All this is normal! Keep focussed on completion and enjoy the ride.

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## Contributors

**Linda Ashton** has been Senior Lecturer for arts education at James Cook University from 1994 to 2010 working with pre-service teachers in Townsville, Cairns and remote Queensland sites. Major themes in her teaching are the promotion of learning, critical literacy and active citizenship through large scale collaborative public art projects and community-building experiences. Demystifying ‘creativity’ from a feminist, postcolonial perspective and offering new ways to frame ‘artistic development and talent’ are also complementary themes. From 2000-2003 Linda co-edited the national scholarly journal *Australian Art Education*. Her research-informed teaching and community engagement have been awarded local, state and national commendation. For example, in 1999 Dr Ashton won the inaugural James Cook University Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching; in 2007 a National Carrick citation for her outstanding contribution to student learning; and in 2009 The Townsville City Council’s Limelight Award for her sustained, outstanding contribution to the cultural life of Townsville. Throughout her 35 year education career Linda has worked closely with Indigenous students and communities with a profound respect and synergy. One symbolic but tangible legacy is the Bwngcolman School Song written with and for the local community in 1992, which is still sung at every school assembly. Linda has been married 32 years to David, is proud mother of Ben and Emma, and Grandmother to Maddyx, Mia and Ava, so far.

**Joanna Barbousas** is Senior Lecturer at the Australian Catholic University in Professional and Educational Studies in the School of Education,

Victoria. Joanna's experience as a Secondary Visual Arts Educator and a researcher of teaching practice provides her with a range of school contexts to draw from in both her teaching and research practices. Joanna develops and implements teacher education courses within graduate and post-graduate primary and secondary degree programs. Her expertise in the areas of effective teaching practice, social and cultural perspectives that impact on education and art education, and discourse formations in education, inform her teaching and research interests. With a particular emphasis on post-structural theories, Joanna draws from a critical perspective in examining and mapping the formation of concepts and practices in education. Joanna's ongoing research interests focus on pedagogical practices in the Twenty First Century. Theoretical dimensions of global issues and the surplus of visual technologies impact on the framework of contemporary teaching practices. These contentious issues are examined in her publications and continue to inform her research and teaching.

***Penelope Collet*** is a Senior Lecturer in art education and higher degrees coordinator in the Faculty of Education, University of Bendigo. Her research includes women's careers in the visual arts and teaching, art collections in tertiary institutions, and the fields of textiles and ceramics. She co-edited the national peer-reviewed journal *Australian Art Education* for four years with Dr Linda Ashton and has recently been appointed for a further three-year period. She has a growing reputation as a writer in the art and art education field both nationally and internationally. Her doctoral research was published by Edwin Mellen Press, New York as *Women Contesting the Mainstream Discourses of the Art World*. Dr Collet is curator of the F. M. Courtis Collection, a fine art collection in the Faculty of Education, Bendigo. She uses the collection extensively in her teaching and manages the daily care, hanging and lending of the art works, as well

as advocacy and policy development at all levels of university management. She has recently completed a manuscript on the history of the art collection and this is currently being considered for publication. Her ongoing research is writing the life histories of a number of Welsh women artists for publication in 2010.

**Max Darby** is an Educational Consultant who originally taught in government and private schools in Victoria for 30 years. His most recent school appointment was Head of Art at St. Catherine's School, Toorak. He has taught all art and craft subjects at all levels of schooling. He wrote the VCE Art and Studio Arts courses and provided extensive professional development for those and other educational initiatives. He produced six highly successful text books for students, wrote numerous art education articles for publication and gave keynote addresses and lead workshops at many national and state art education conferences. Dr Darby worked with prisoners in Pentridge Prison, was a consultant to television programs and is currently researching youth and street culture. Most recently he held the position of Chief Examiner, International Baccalaureate (IB), Visual Arts. Each year he leads numerous IB workshops in Australia, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, China, Singapore and America. He also examines about 400 IB Visual Art students face to face each year in China, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Fiji, Laos, Jakarta and in Australia in Darwin, Brisbane, Perth, Tasmania and Victoria. He is a practising artist who completed three school Artist in Residency projects in 2009.

**Lee Emery** retired in 2006 as Associate Professor of Art Education at the University of Melbourne. She had been a lecturer for 21 years in the Faculty of Education, teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She is an honorary life member of the national Art Education Association

of Australia and was editor of *Australian Art Education*, the national art education journal, for a period of three years. She was also co-author of Australia's National Curriculum Statement and Profile documents published in 1994. In 2002 Lee published a book for secondary students entitled *Teaching Art in a Postmodern World*. Since retiring from The University of Melbourne she has been a volunteer guide at the National Gallery of Victoria where she guides members of the public in both Australian and International galleries.

**Adele Flood** has taught and worked across all levels of Education with ongoing particular interests in creativity, narrative and memory, while maintaining a strong personal interest in her teaching domain of Visual Arts Education. In the tertiary sector she has worked in Teacher Education for a number of years and more recently in Academic Development. Adele has expertise in curriculum development, assessment strategies and the alignment of graduate attributes with assessment and practice. She is a past president of Australian Institute of Art Education (AIAE) and is currently on the research board of The International Society of Education through Art (InSEA). She has written extensively on creativity and her most recent research is concerned with ideas of identity through both artistic and written narratives. She has a strong belief in the need of an individual to be heard and that notions of self should be explored by engaging creative practice. In her current research Adele is exploring further the ways recording narratives in visual diaries or journals can add to a person's understanding of self and thereby enable a change in their practice. At the same time she is reconceptualising ideas of teaching as a gift and interrogating the ways in which such a transaction is made manifest. Adele presents her research regularly at both national and international conferences and she has many published papers in the fields of Art Education, Narrative

Inquiry and the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching. She has attended UNESCO international learning summits and represented Australia at the UNESCO Regional forum in Nadi (2002). Adele is a practising artist with 12 individual and 10 group exhibitions to her credit. She was invited to be Australian Artist of the Year to Washington DC in 2001. In her exhibition *Sojourn* (March 2007) she presented a series of 30 gouache and acrylic paintings based upon her travels in the South of France. Adele is currently developing an exhibition of drawings and works in oils titled *A Fox called Melancholy*, which explore ideas of narrative within a non-prescriptive narrative frame.

**David Forrest** is Associate Professor of Music Education in the School of Education and the School of Art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University). He has contributed to the fields of music, education and industry linked arts education, policy in music and arts, education and cultural development. He is a member of the National Executive of the Australian Society for Music Education and editor of the *Australian Journal of Music Education* and the *Victorian Journal of Music Education*. He has published *The Doctoral Journey in Music Education: Reflections on Doctoral Studies by Australian Music Educators* (2003) and *Journeying: Doctoral Journeys in Music Education* (2009), as well as three books on the Russian composer and educator D. B. Kabalevsky.

**Althea Francini** is an art educator, writer, and practising studio artist. She was awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award in 2002 and her doctorate in 2009. After teaching in secondary schools, she taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in research practices in art, design, and education and other subjects in the School of Art History and Art Education at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales. Her research interests

concern theories of explanation in the visual arts and education, and the philosophy and science of mind. As well as her studio work, she is currently writing on embodiment and the role of practical reason in developing expertise, and the role of empathy and simulation in learning.

**Elizabeth Grierson** is Professor of Art and Philosophy and Head of the School of Art, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University). She gained her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Auckland in 2001, and has a long career in art education in secondary and tertiary institutes in New Zealand prior to working in Australia. She is research leader of the *Intervention through Art* program of RMIT Design Research Institute and Chief Investigator on an Australia Research Council Linkage project: *Designing Sound for Health and Wellbeing*. Appointments include Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA), World Councillor of International Society of Education through Art (InSEA), Editorial Board member of Australia Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS), and Art Education Australia (AEA), and was national president of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators for two terms (2001-2005). She was a New Zealand representative at the UNESCO meeting for the arts in education in the Pacific Region, 2002; presented her research on the arts in the Pacific at the UNESCO World Congress in 2006; and is an invited presenter at UNESCO, Korea, 2010. In 2009 she was appointed to the Arts Reference Group for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for the new national arts curriculum; and in 2010 is appointed as the visual arts expert for the Australian national arts curriculum Writing the Shape Paper. She is on the Editorial Board of refereed journals, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *Australian Art Education* and *International Journal of Education through Art*, and Executive Editor of *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on*

*Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies*. Elizabeth is widely published in the philosophy, politics and practices of art education, aesthetics, creativity, cultural policy, and poststructuralist perspectives on knowledge production. Authored books include, *Creative Arts Research: Narratives of Methodologies and Practices* (with L. Brearley, Sense Publishers, 2009); *A Skilled Hand and Cultivated Mind* (with H. Edquist, RMIT Press, 2008); edited books, *Thinking Through Practice: Art as Research in the Academy* (with L. Duxbury & D. Waite, 2007); and *The Arts in Education: Critical Perspectives from Aotearoa New Zealand* (with J. Mansfield, Dunmore Press, 2003).

**Rob Haysom** has extensive experience at the tertiary level since 1975 at Deakin University and its antecedent institutions. He has taught units in visual arts (ranging from art history and theory, painting, drawing and sculpture), science education, creative arts units combining film, drama, music and the visual arts, and general education curriculum theory and practice with practising teachers. He has been a school co-ordinator of various schools' Higher Degree programs, as well as successfully supervising several Masters and PhD candidates at Deakin. His research on Arnold Shore has been used in a catalogue essay for a recent exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia, *Misty Moderns - Australian Tonalists 1915-1950* (2008). The exhibition toured to the McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin and the Australian National Gallery, Canberra (2008-2009).

**Janet Mansfield** is an art and music practitioner and educator of primary and tertiary background. She has developed courses on the philosophy and theory of the arts in education and the place of cultural studies at postgraduate level at Auckland University and Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Her PhD was one of the first in arts education in New Zealand and paved the way for other scholars to critically

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**Karen Maras** is Senior Lecturer in Visual Arts Education at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). She is an Assistant Head of School in the School of Education (NSW) responsible for teaching, learning and the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs. In her research Karen focuses on cognitive development, critical reasoning and a realist philosophy for art education. In particular, her research explores the theoretical bases on which younger and older children come to understand and explain representational meaning in art. By adopting a realist theoretical framework this research challenges traditional conceptions of learning in art education. Recent post-doctoral work extends her investigations of children's ontologies of art during middle childhood to the domain of early childhood. Karen's contribution to pre-service Visual Arts teacher preparation is grounded in her experience as a secondary art teacher, involvement in curriculum and policy development at state level, as well as in her research on students' learning in art. In teaching

Karen's focus is primarily on Visual Arts education for early childhood, primary and secondary pre-service teachers. She also teaches in the area of curriculum studies. More recently she has established a Visual Arts Education specialisation in the Master of Education at ACU catering for teachers seeking professional enrichment and research pathways. Beyond ACU, Karen has demonstrated leadership as Chief Examiner for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Visual Arts and regularly works as a consultant for Visual Arts education in Catholic Education. Karen regularly participates in local, national and international conferences focusing on Visual Arts education and education more broadly. As a Vice President Professional Development of the Visual Arts and Design Educator's Association New South Wales, Karen also contributes to maintaining the strength and rigour of learning and teaching NSW Visual Arts Education.

**Les Morgan** is an artist, lecturer and researcher with experience in a diverse range of educational settings in Britain and Australia. Morgan's art practice spans thirty years and his work is represented in private and public collections in Britain, Australia and the United States of America. He is author of two books, *Illegal Action* (2005), *The Significance of Diaspora Politics in the Visual Arts* (2008) and journal articles. He is a Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of Learning & Teaching in the School of Art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University). He has previously worked as a Research Fellow on Australia Research Council funded projects: *Social Networks in Migrant Youth*, with the Institute of Citizenship & Globalisation, Deakin University, and *Learning by Design and Pedagogies for eLearning*, with the Globalism Institute, RMIT. He completed his PhD by exhibition and thesis: *The Significance of Diaspora Aesthetics in the Visual Arts* in 2006 at the Australian Centre, The University of Melbourne. The

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**Jill Smith** is Principal Lecturer in the School of Arts, Languages and Literacies in the Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland, New Zealand. She is a graduate of the university's Elam School of Fine Arts, and trained as an art and art history teacher at Secondary Teachers College, Auckland. Following eleven years as Head of Art Department at Papatoetoe High School Jill was appointed Lecturer in Visual Arts at Secondary Teachers College. Since 1980 she has taught in three teacher education institutions, with responsibility for pre-service education in secondary school art and art history and in the postgraduate programme. In 2002 she received an inaugural Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award from the New Zealand Government in recognition of 'sustained excellence' in teaching. Her leadership and national profile in her specialist fields have been recognised by her numerous roles undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority. A Pakeha (European) New Zealander, her teaching, research, and publications focus upon the relationships between art, culture and curriculum. Her master's study of biculturalism informed her doctoral investigation into issues of culture, diversity and difference in art education. She is on the Editorial Boards of the research journals *Australian Art Education* and *Multicultural Education Review*.

**Kerry Thomas** teaches in the areas of curriculum in art and design education, teacher development, creativity, design issues, and research practices in art, design and education at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales. Her research interests include creativity and practical reasoning in art and design classrooms, pedagogical exchanges between art teachers and students, and the value of high stakes student art exhibitions. Pierre Bourdieu, the French Realist philosopher and sociologist's theories of practice, the habitus, symbolic capital and misrecognition underscore these interests. Prior to her current position, she was Inspector, Creative Arts at

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***Marnie Watkins*** is a Lecturer in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at The University of Melbourne. She is currently teaching in Visual Arts Education within the undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and working as a Clinical Specialist in the Master of Teaching (Primary) course. She has been awarded a MGSE Staff Competitive Grant to fund a research project in 2010 investigating graduate primary teachers' practical knowledge, confidence, efficacy and agency related to implementing the visual arts in their first year of generalist classroom teaching. Dr Watkins completed her Doctor of Education through The University of Melbourne: an investigation of 'art rich' picturebooks and their affordances for thinking and inquiry in the primary classroom. Her professional experience extends over thirty years working in Victoria and the Northern Territory as a teacher, lecturer and project officer on curriculum development. She is a councillor with Art Education Victoria (AEV) and a member of Art Education Australia (AEA) executive.

*The Doctoral Journey in Art Education: Reflections on Doctoral Studies by Australian and New Zealand Art Educators* presents accounts and reflections by a range of art educators on the experience of undertaking doctoral studies in art education. The individual considerations are significant in that they assist current and potential candidates to appreciate what they are going through – although seemingly unique – has been experienced by others.

The contributors to this volume include: Linda Ashton, Joanna Barbousas, Penelope J. Collet, Max Darby, Lee Emery, Adele Flood, David Forrest, Althea Francini, Elizabeth M. Grierson, Geoff Hammond, Rob Haysom, Janet Mansfield, Karen Matas, Les Morgan, Susan Paterson, Chris Peers, Jill Smith, Kerry Thomas and Marnee Watkins.



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