

**A Visual Arts Transformative Learning Practice in the Aesthetic
Re-Imagining of Contemporary Society**

Submitted by

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part form a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics / Safety Committees (where required).

Name: Adam John Holland Staples

Signed:

Dated:

Abstract

This thesis is located in the areas of arts education, visual arts learning and society formation. The aims of the study were to undertake an analytical, empirical and conceptual study of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation; to clarify the conceptual, policy, professional and practical issues relevant to the role of learning in the visual arts in stimulating learning and promoting contemporary society formation in a time of societal transition and change; and to generate theory and develop recommendations for theory, research, policy and practice. The study began with an examination of literature pertaining to the social, cultural and educational contexts of the study, with particular reference to Australia's diversity, government policies relevant to culture and the arts, and to visual arts education and learning. This qualitative research study adopted an evolutionary epistemology and a meta-theoretical perspective based upon interpretivism. A Grounded Theory Method approach to data gathering and theory development was chosen. There were two distinct stages to the study. Data were gathered initially from teachers and secondary school students and then from a range of artists, senior arts administrators and visual arts educators. Two core categories were identified in the findings of the study. The first core category, *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant*, showed how learning in the visual arts can transform young people's understanding of self, others and society and how learning in the visual arts itself can be transformed as a mode of learning. Such a transformative and transformed mode of learning can provide something different and significant both in stimulating learning and in contributing to society formation in a time of societal transition and change. The second core category, *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*, based on data gathered from senior arts advocates, confirmed the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation, in particular the distinctive manner and form in which a visual arts practice might enable contemporary society to be re-imagined. The emergence of the substantive theory generated in this study, and the manner in which it addresses the central question of the nature of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society, was assisted by reference to the metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft, derived from the craft of weaving. From the examination of the findings, the substantive theory and the analysis of the relationship between the theory and the practice (practical wisdom) generated in this thesis, recommendations were put forward for the advancement of theory, research, policy and practice addressing a visual arts transformative learning practice and the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society.

Dedication

In loving memory of my mother, my father and my sister.

Non nobis solum

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*Have Ithaka always in your mind.
Your arrival there is what you are destined for.
But don't in the least hurry the journey.
Better it last for years,
so that when you reach the island you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to give you wealth.
Ithaka gave you the splendid journey. (Cavafy, C. P.)*

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Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	xiv
List of Figures	xv
List of Artworks	xvi
List of Appendices	xviii
Exordium.....	1
Chapter One	9
<i>A Study of the Relationship between Visual Arts Learning and Contemporary Society Formation</i>	11
Introduction	11
1.1 Setting the Scene	11
1.2 Assumptions, Values, and Beliefs Underpinning the Study	13
	16
1.3 Significance of the Study	16
1.4 Epistemological and Meta-Theoretical Framework of the Study	17
1.5 Methodology and Methods	17
1.6 The Study Design and the Research Program	18
1.7 Weaving of Theory	19
1.8 Understanding the Terms	19
1.9 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study	22
1.10 Artworks	23
1.11 The Organisation and Structure of the Thesis	23
1.12 Referencing Style	25






Chapter Two.....	27
<i>A Review of the Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts</i>	29
Introduction	29
2.1 A Portrait of a Diverse Society	29
2.1.1 An Australian Diegesis	29
2.1.1.1 <i>A Rupture</i>	30
2.1.1.2 <i>A Derivative Nation and Society</i>	32
2.1.1.3 <i>War and Conflict</i>	34
2.1.1.4 <i>Of Rights and the Right</i>	36
2.1.2 Policies Pertaining to Australia’s Population and Social Fabric	37
2.1.2.1 <i>A Snapshot of the Australian Population</i>	37
2.1.2.2 <i>Migration, Multiculturalism and Border Control</i>	38
2.2 The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities	41
2.3 Visual Arts Education Landscape	46
Conclusion: Reflections on the Emancipatory Purpose of Policy	51



Chapter Three	53
<i>Research Methodology & Methods</i>	55
Introduction	55
3.1 Elements of the Research Design	55
3.1.1 The Epistemological Framework of the Study	56
3.1.1.1 <i>Evolutionary Epistemology</i>	56
3.1.1.2 <i>Adaptionist and Non-Adaptionist Approaches to Evolutionary Epistemology</i>	58
3.1.2 Interpretivism	59
3.1.3 The Grounded Theory Method	60
3.1.3.1 <i>An Historical Overview of the Grounded Theory Method</i>	61
3.1.3.2 <i>The Grounded Theory Method and the Research Question</i>	63
3.1.3.3 <i>The Grounded Theory Method and the Review of Literature</i>	64
3.1.3.4 <i>The Grounded Theory Method and Researcher Capital</i>	64
3.1.4 Methods of Data Gathering	66
3.1.4.1 <i>Qualitative Methods</i>	66
3.1.4.2 <i>Intensive Interviewing</i>	67
3.1.4.3 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	67
3.1.4.4 <i>Participant Observation</i>	68
3.1.4.5 <i>Field Notes</i>	68
3.1.5 Methods of Data Analysis	69
3.1.5.1 <i>Glaserian Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis</i>	69
3.1.5.2 <i>Manual vs. Software</i>	70
3.1.5.3 <i>Substantive Coding</i>	70
3.1.5.4 <i>Open coding</i>	71
3.1.5.5 <i>Selective coding</i>	74
3.1.5.6 <i>Theoretical Sampling</i>	75
3.1.5.7 <i>The Writing of Memoranda</i>	75
3.1.5.8 <i>An Analytic Protocol</i>	75
3.1.6 Generation of the Grounded Theory	77
3.2 Conduct of the Research	77
3.2.1 Two Stages of Research	78
3.2.2 Stage One of the Study	79
3.2.2.1 <i>Stage One Participants</i>	79
3.2.2.2 <i>Stage One Data Gathering</i>	80
3.2.2.3 <i>Stage One Data Analysis</i>	82
3.2.3 The Nexus between Stage One and Stage Two	83
3.2.4 Stage Two of the Study	84
3.2.4.1 <i>Researching Influentials</i>	84
3.2.4.2 <i>Stage Two Participants</i>	84
3.2.4.3 <i>Stage Two Data Gathering</i>	85
3.2.4.4 <i>Stage Two Data Analysis</i>	85
3.2.5 The Presentation of the Data Analysis from Stage One and Stage Two	86
3.2.5.1 <i>The Data as Artworks</i>	86
3.2.5.2 <i>CMYK Colour Model</i>	90
3.2.6 Ethical Dimensions	91
Conclusion	91






Chapter Four	93
<i>Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant</i>	95
Introduction	95
4.1 The Story of a Journey	96
4.2 The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students	100
4.2.1 Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative	102
4.2.1.1 <i>Seeing Self, Others and Society</i>	102
4.2.1.2 <i>Considerations of Cultural Identity</i>	104
4.2.2 Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind	108
4.2.2.1 <i>Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice</i>	108
4.2.2.2 <i>Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice</i>	112
4.3 Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers	118
4.3.1 Something Different and Significant	120
4.3.1.1 <i>From Learning in the Visual Arts to Visual Arts Learning</i>	120
4.3.1.2 <i>Visual Arts Learning as Experiential and Experimental</i>	123
4.3.1.3 <i>Visual Arts Learning as a New Way for Exploring and Contributing to Society Formation</i>	125
4.3.2 Realising the Potential of Visual Arts Learning	130
4.3.2.1 <i>Valuing Creativity</i>	130
4.3.2.2 <i>Addressing Challenges to Traditional Approaches to Curriculum, Teaching and Learning</i>	133
Conclusion: Drawing of the Threads (Part I)	138




Chapter Five	141
<i>Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice</i>	143
Introduction	143
5.1 Australian Arts Advocates: Portraits of Participants	144
5.1.1 Michael Brand	145
5.1.2 Blair French	146
5.1.3 Richard Leonard SJ	147
5.1.4 Ben Quilty	148
5.1.5 Khaled Sabsabi	150
5.1.6 Tamara Winikoff	151
5.2 Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society	153
5.2.1 Considerations of Honesty and Practice	154
5.2.1.1 <i>An Honest Practitioner</i>	155
5.2.1.2 <i>An Honest Practice</i>	156
5.2.2 The Pursuit of Honesty in Contemporary Society Formation	158
5.2.2.1 <i>Questioning, Truth Seeking and Facing Taboos</i>	158
5.2.2.2 <i>Acknowledging the Past</i>	160
5.2.3 The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture	162
5.2.3.1 <i>Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation</i>	162
5.2.3.2 <i>Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance</i>	163
5.2.4 Considerations on Society Formation	165
5.2.4.1 <i>Indigenous Culture and Contemporary Society</i>	165
5.2.4.2 <i>An Amalgam of Evolving Identities</i>	166
5.3 The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice	169
5.3.1 The Nature of the Endeavour Itself	171
5.3.1.1 <i>Making, Feeling and Thinking</i>	171
5.3.1.2 <i>The Demystification of Practice</i>	173
5.3.1.3 <i>The Possibilities of Practice</i>	174
5.3.2 Communicating in Different Ways	176
5.3.2.1 <i>Visual Communication</i>	176
5.3.2.2 <i>Cultural Discourse</i>	179
5.3.3 Providing for Different Modes of Engagement	181
5.3.3.1 <i>An Individual Engagement and the Experience of Self</i>	181
5.3.3.2 <i>A Collective Engagement</i>	182
5.3.3.3 <i>An Interweaving of the Individual and the Collective</i>	184
5.3.4 Enmeshing Imagination and Skill	185
5.3.4.1 <i>The Nature of Imagination</i>	185
5.3.4.2 <i>The Nature of Skill</i>	186
5.3.5 The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact	189
5.3.5.1 <i>Non Activist and Activist Practice, Practitioner and Artefact</i>	190
5.3.5.2 <i>Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Ambassador</i>	192
5.3.5.3 <i>The Capacity of Practice, Practitioner and Artefact to Enable and Inform</i>	192
5.3.5.4 <i>Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Social Commentator</i>	193
Conclusion: Drawing of the Threads (Part II)	195





Chapter Six.....	199
<i>The Weaving of Theory</i>	201
Introduction	201
6.1 Empirical, Analytical and Conceptual Findings of the Study	201
6.1.1 The Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts	208
6.1.2 The Core Categories, Sub-Core Categories, Categories and Concepts	208
6.2 Weaving Relationships: The Emergence of Theory	211
6.2.1 Theorising Relationships Between Visual Arts Learning and Contemporary Society Formation: The Loom, the Warp and the Weft as Metaphor	211
6.3 The Weaving of Theory and Practice	216
6.3.1 The Intent (The Desiderata)	217
6.3.2 The Practice (Aspects and Features)	219
6.3.2.1 <i>Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative</i>	219
6.3.2.2 <i>Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind</i>	219
6.3.2.3 <i>Learning in the Visual Arts as Something Significant and Different</i>	219
6.3.2.4 <i>The Distinctive Nature of the Visual Arts Endeavour</i>	220
6.3.2.5 <i>Providing Opportunities for Communicating in Different Ways</i>	220
6.3.2.6 <i>Providing for Different Modes of Engagement</i>	221
6.3.2.7 <i>Enmeshing Imagination and Skill</i>	221
6.3.2.8 <i>Acknowledging the Significance of the Pursuit of Honesty in Visual Arts Learning and Practice</i>	221
6.3.2.9 <i>Linking Visual Arts Learning and the Complex Provenance of Society Formation and the Re-imagining of Society</i>	222
6.3.3 The Impact (The Transformed and Re-imagined)	223
Conclusion: A New Theory and Practice	224





Chapter 7	227
<i>Overview, Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion</i>	229
Introduction	229
7.1 Overview	229
7.1.1 Aims of the Study and the Research Question	229
7.1.2 The Provenance of the Study	230
7.1.3 Methodology and Methods	231
7.1.4 The Review of the Findings	231
7.2 The Weaving of the Theory Emerging from the Study	233
7.3 Discussion: Situating the Thesis within the Scholarly Literature and Visual Practice	234
7.3.1 A Visual Arts Transformative Learning Practice	238
7.3.2 Visual Arts Learning and Society Formation	240
7.3.3 The Aesthetic Re-Imagining of Contemporary Society	244
7.4 Recommendations for Theory, Research, Policy and Practice	253
7.4.1 Recommendations for the Advancement of Theory	253
7.4.2 Recommendations for Undertaking a Progressive Research Program	255
7.4.3 Recommendations for Policy Reform and Development	256
7.4.4 Recommendations for the Improvement of Practice	257
Conclusion to the Thesis	260
References	263
Appendices	279





List of Tables

Table 1: Elements of the research design	57
Table 2: Coding nomenclature	71
Table 3: Overview of the Two Stages of the Research	79
Table 4: The Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts	204
Table 5: Stage One findings	205
Table 6: Stage Two findings	207



List of Figures

Figure 1: Early life and line drawing	7
Figure 3.1: Theme / Concept Model	73
Figure 3.2: Concept / Category Model	74
Figure 3.3: Category / TCC Model	74
Figure 3.4: TCC / SCC / CC Model	75
Figure 3.5: Grounded Theory Method Analytic Protocol	77
Figure 3.6: Analytic Protocol (detail)	77
Figure 3.7: Analytic Protocol (detail)	78
Figure 3.8: Identity mindmap #1	82
Figure 3.9: Identity Mindmap #2	82
Figure 3.10: Self Portrait	82
Figure 3.11: Alexander Calder inspired self-portrait	82
Figure 3.12: I Am Art	82
Figure 3.13: My Message	82
Figure 3.14: Four concentric circles	90
Figure 3.15: Illustration of a Sub-core category (SCC)	90
Figure 3.16: Illustration of a Category (CAT)	90
Figure 3.17: Illustration of a Concept (CON)	90
Figure 3.18: Legend with CMYK colour	91
Figure 6.1: Three dimension space overlaying the loom	213
Figure 6.2: Applying the metaphor of weaving	214
Figure 6.3: Theory of the Relationship between Visual Arts Transformative Learning and Society Formation	216
Figure 0.1: A loom	278
Figure 0.2: A warped loom	279
Figure 0.3: Shuttle and weft	280
Figure 0.4: The Z and S twists	280
Figure 0.5: Throwing the shuttle through the shed	282
Figure 0.6: The emerging fabric	282



List of Artworks

Fish Poison Tree seed pod (Adam Staples)	3
Figs and Scampi (Adam Staples)	4
The Arnolfini Marriage (Jan van Eyck)	15
Monga Khan “Aussie”(Peter Drew)	40
Monochromatic Sectors from Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Colour Ring, Light Centre (Damien Hirst)	88
Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Colours: Concentric Spin (Damien Hirst)	89
Cultural Jigsaw	98
Interfaith Australia	98
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#1]	101
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#2]	103
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#3]	104
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#4]	105
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#5]	109
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#6]	109
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#7]	113
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#8]	119
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#9]	121
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#10]	122
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#11]	124
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#12]	126
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#13]	131
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#14]	131
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#15]	135
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#16]	140
LanceCorporal M (Ben Quilty)	150
Spinifex (Tamara Winikoff)	153
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#1]	154
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#2]	155
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#3]	156
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#4]	157
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#5]	159
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#6]	159
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#7]	161
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#8]	163
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#9]	163
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#10]	164
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#11]	166
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#12]	166
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#13]	168
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#14]	170
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#15]	172
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#16]	172
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#17]	174
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#18]	175
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#19]	177
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#20]	177
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#21]	180
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#22]	182





Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#23]	182
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#24]	183
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#25]	185
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#26]	186
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#27]	186
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#28]	187
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#29]	190
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#30]	191
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#31]	193
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#32]	193
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#33]	194
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#34]	197
Colour Enmeshment Series 1 [#16]	206
Colour Enmeshment Series 2 [#34]	208
Colour Enmeshment Series 3 [#1]	233
Fairy Bower Rorschach (Ben Quilty)	246
Self portrait Kerobokan (Ben Quilty)	247
Black Flag (Liam Benson)	248
Naqshbandi Greenacre engagement (Khaled Sabsabi)	250





List of Appendices

Appendix A

The Metaphor of Weaving and the Importance of the Loom, the Warp and the Weft	278
---	-----

Appendix B

Census Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics	284
<i>Table B1: Total population of Australia</i>	284
<i>Table B2: Total population of Aboriginal Australia, 2011</i>	284
<i>Table B3: Place of origin, 2011 (of total population)</i>	285
<i>Table B4: Most commonly spoken language at home, 2011</i>	285
<i>Table B5: Most popular religion practised, 2006 & 2011</i>	286

Appendix C

An Analytic Protocol	288
----------------------	-----

Appendix D

Stage One Information Letter	290
------------------------------	-----

Appendix E

Stage One Consent Letter	292
--------------------------	-----

Appendix F

Stage One Interview Questions	294
-------------------------------	-----

Appendix G

Stage Two Information Letter and Consent Form	296
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Appendix H

Stage Two Guiding Questions	300
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Exordium



Adam Staples, 'Fish Poison Tree seed pod (*Barringtonia asiatica*)', 2015
oil on linen

Running through the life of this story are lines. Lines of enquiry. Lines of thought. Solitary lines. Entangled lines. Structured lines. Connecting lines. Lines of imagery. Lines within imagery. Lines of text. Lines in-between text. Intentional lines. Accidental lines. Lines of clarity. Lines of confusion. Tangible lines. Intangible lines. Lines of possibility. These lines are traced and threaded across and through the story. The story itself comes into being and is given form at knots along these lines, with the confluence of lines becoming coordinates that map the topology within which the story exists. Lines do not begin with the story. The story begins on the lines. In hindsight, it is obvious to me that the lines within the story of this thesis were already in existence at the start of this journey, waiting to be taken up as part of the weaving of relationships within the story.

In his book, *Lines: A brief history*, anthropologist Tim Ingold developed a “rough-and-ready taxonomy of the different kinds of line that we may encounter in everyday life” (Ingold, 2007, p. 41). I now draw upon this taxonomy to describe the types of line of significance to this story, in particular the *trace* and the *thread*. The intention is for the reader to become familiar with the nature and form of these lines so that as they emerge in the following chapters, they form trails to be followed towards understanding.

The trace is any enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement. Most traces are of one or other of two kinds: additive or reductive.
(Ingold, 2007, p. 43)

Drawing a pencil across paper leaves a trace. The movement of a laden paintbrush across a canvas leaves a trace. The linear symbols of letters and numerals printed on a page leave a trace.

Line as a trace is integral to my practice as an artist. In my drawing, in my painting, in my printing, line creeps across and below the surface, linking the disparate and the unconnected, re-imagining relationships and layering stories. Some are made with a powerful stroke, others are lighter, even hesitant. Some assume permanence. Some are erased, leaving only clues and fragments but never entirely disappearing. This practice is how I represent, annotate, conceptualise and make my world. It is through my practice that I have been able to trace and thread the surfaces and fabric of this story.

Trace lines are evident throughout the story of my thesis in my painting, drawings and sketches. Pencil line drawings, made from observation as visual cues to accompany text, were worked and reworked onto a tracing paper surface. Brown ink sketches, additive and enduring marks on the paper surfaces of an ever growing series of notebooks, are permanent representations of emerging ideas and interconnecting theoretical ideas.



*Adam Staples, 'Figs and Scampi', 2014
charcoal on paper*

A filament of some kind, which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three-dimensional space. At a relatively microscopic level threads have surfaces; however, they are not drawn on surfaces (Ingold, 2007, p. 41).

The thread is the second kind of line significant to the story of this thesis. In the early stages of this thesis, perhaps as a result of my own background and training as an artist at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, I focused my attention on the visual arts as encompassing artefacts and practices that engendered an allegiance to the theory and the canons of western art. Reservations and personal bias regarding the role, value and applicability of craft in the visual arts and learning in the visual arts underpinned this early direction. R. G. Collingwood, a philosopher and archaeologist, wrote that craft produced “a preconceived result by means of consciously controlled and directed action. In order to take the first step towards a sound aesthetic, it is necessary to disentangle the notion of craft from that of art proper” (1938, p. 15). The necessity of disentangling the visual arts from craft was, for a time, of significant intellectual and epistemological importance to me.

However, in keeping with both the evolutionary nature of this study and the significance of the transformative in the study, my own attitude and habit of mind about craft experienced a shift as I began to consider what form society formation may take in the context of its relationship with the visual arts. The notion of there being an entanglement of craft and art presented itself as a rich conceptual idea through which to consider the relationships integral to this research, and to position the study and its approach to the visual arts, not as one concerned with separation and elitism, but as one concerned with the coming together and building of a myriad of lines and relationships. The craft of weaving and the metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft were central to theorising relationships in this thesis.

In an effort to further understand weaving and how it may deepen my conceptual thinking, I established contact with a Melbourne based weaver, Brianna Lee Martin. Over the duration of a number of visits to her weaving studio, I watched Lee Martin weave and listened to her explain her practice, and this precipitated a further transformation in my understanding of how the fabric and formation of society may be described, understood and expressed. The process of weaving and the structure of the loom, the warp and the weft provide a metaphor that is used to describe and illustrate the findings of this research and the emergence of theory,

in particular the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation.

Similarly, the approach taken to the analytical, empirical and conceptual aspects of the study, and to the data gathering, data analysis and theory development, took up a process where differing perspectives were gradually intertwined to form the relationships synonymous with the multiple modes of thinking and understanding within the study's progressive research program. The spinning of perspectives into concepts and then categories, and the weaving together of these categories to form a cohesive theory, culminated in an answering of the research question and the formulation of recommendations for further investigation. The metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft, and the craft of weaving, lent themselves to, and underpinned, both the journey of much of the thesis and the development of its theory. In putting forward the theory emerging from this thesis, I am using the model of the loom, warp and weft as a way of presenting and characterising the relationship that exists between a visual arts transformative learning practice and the re-imagining of contemporary society.

To assist in understanding the metaphor of weaving and the importance of the loom, the warp and the weft to the theorising of relationships in this study, a detailed discussion of weaving and an accompanying glossary of terms are presented in Appendix A.

In the development of the story of this thesis, not only are the aesthetic, the scholarly and the educational and research lines of significance, but so are the personal lines of my own story.

I was born in Rusape, Zimbabwe in 1973, where I lived on a farm in the Eastern Highlands with my parents and siblings. In 1977, we moved to Benghazi, Libya following an offer of employment for my father at the local hospital. Whilst in Benghazi, I started my schooling at the British School. Four years later, I was sent to Winchester House School, a preparatory boarding school in Northamptonshire, England and I remained at this school until 1986. During this time a family home had been built in Cyprus, although my parents largely lived and worked firstly in Saudi Arabia and then in Bahrain. On leaving Winchester House School, I began my secondary schooling at Repton, an old and established school in Derbyshire, England. In 1991, I completed my schooling and moved to London to study an Art and Design Foundation course at Central St Martin's Art College. I studied at Central for a year and was then accepted into the honours degree program at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. My final degree show in 1996 was an exhibition of ten paintings of popular icons of the day.

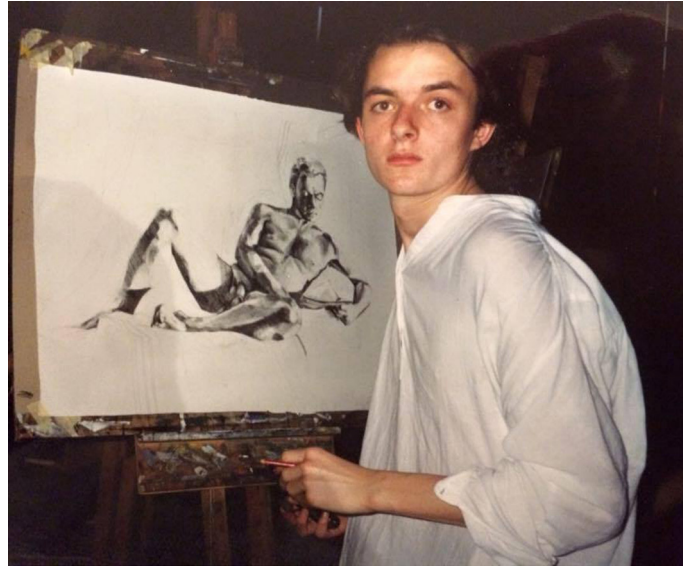


Figure 1: Early life and line drawing

By 2002 I had emigrated to Australia. It was an interesting experience settling in a new country as an adult, establishing new friendships, learning new cultural expectations and creating a new existence. Undertaking this research has resulted in the unexpected outcome of a return to my own practice as an artist. The crafting of a written thesis was perhaps not my natural line of expression and indeed it could be said the greatest moments of conceptual clarity experienced over the last few years have been when I was creating the artworks included in the thesis.

This thesis weaves the lines of the aesthetic, the cosmopolitan and my life as an artist, an educator and, most recently, as a researcher and a scholar.

Every animate being, as it threads its way through and among the ways of every other, must perforce improvise a passage, and in doing so it lays another line in the mesh. Of course, there may be places of convergence and divergence. But whereas the network has nodes, the meshwork has knots. Knots are places where many lines of becoming are drawn tightly together. Yet every line overtakes the knot into which it is tied. Its end is always loose, somewhere beyond the knot, where it is groping towards an entanglement with other lines, in other knots. (Ingold, 2012, p. 15)

Chapter One

A Study of the Relationship between Visual Arts Learning and Contemporary Society Formation

We don't accomplish anything in this world alone...and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something. (O'Connor as cited in Fernandez, 2013, p. 197)

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation. The aims of the study were:

- To undertake an analytical, empirical and conceptual study examining the perspectives of secondary school students, teachers, artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators regarding the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation.
- To clarify some of the conceptual, policy, professional and practical issues relevant to the role of learning in the visual arts in stimulating learning and promoting contemporary society formation in a time of societal transition and change.
- To generate theory and develop recommendations for theory, research, policy and practice relevant to learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation.

The question guiding the research was *What is the nature of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation?*

1.1 Setting the Scene

The study was undertaken in Australia between the years 2008 and 2016. The broad context of the study resides in an analysis of Australia's social diversity and the place of culture and the arts, in particular learning in the visual arts, in a time of social transition and change. An in depth discussion of the social, cultural and educational contexts of this study is presented in

the second chapter of this thesis.

Australia has a unique history among nations and is considered to be one of the most multicultural and diverse countries in the world (Australian Government, 2013). A lesson of history in Australia is that an increase in population and a diversification of cultural demographics cannot merely be accommodated or subsumed into existing societal structures, just as these existing societal structures cannot be pushed aside and replaced in their entirety by new social groups. In the past, society formation in Australia was often addressed in the development of policies of integration, assimilation, and more recently multiculturalism. These policy orientations are now viewed as politically and socially contested, if not redundant. In the current context, new orientations and ways of weaving the fabric of society must be considered and put into action.

This issue has never been of greater international and national importance, especially as it relates to education. Since 2014, global and national stability have been threatened with the emergence of a new form of tension in which young people, often of first or second generation migrant families, have left the land of their birth to take up the extremist fight against western nations. The era of the western educated home-grown fighter has started and it has substantial implications for the kind of societies we are building and the kind of education that is being made available to young people. A federal election has recently been held in Australia in an international context of considerable uncertainty and volatility and issues associated with Australia's social fabric, Australian identity, immigration, border protection, multi-culturalism and social integration are among its most controversial and sensitive areas of public policy and social concern. Australian identity, education, society and change continue to be matters of critical importance.

It was a key focus of this study to position learning in the visual arts, Australia's Indigenous past and Australia's continuing history of cultural diversity and immigration as building blocks in contemporary society formation. The link between the aesthetic and society formation was at the fore of considerations during the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art, *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration & Convergence* (Radok, 2008), which took place at the University of Melbourne in 2008. Professor Jaynie Anderson, convener of the congress, reflected that the aesthetic and societal theme of the congress was illustrative of,

a metaphor for the lives of many Australians, for in our genetics we are all immigrants or descendants of immigrants, even Indigenous peoples, who arrived in Australia some 50,000 years ago. The concept proved to be of equal relevance to the international world, and of political significance in diverse countries, but especially for art history south of the equator. *A substantive change in the history of art took place in Melbourne, and it opened up the discipline to the rest of the world* [emphasis added]. (Anderson, 2009, p. xvii)

1.2 Assumptions, Values, and Beliefs Underpinning the Study

Underpinning this study are a number of assumptions, values and beliefs that are enumerated and then elaborated upon in the following discussion. To begin, it is believed that the visual arts and visual arts education have distinct and powerful roles within the arena of knowledge generation and learning. Secondly, it is believed that the visual arts and visual arts education offer societal groups pro-social methods of communicating across and amongst each other, and consequently of building society. Thirdly, it is believed any society that humankind seeks and creates requires a visual authenticity, constructed by means of engaging with visual cultures. Fourthly, it is believed that the crucial role which visual culture has played in migration and society formation throughout the ages remains a powerful mode of expression and voice in contemporary times. Fifthly, there exists a language of the visual that is common to us all and which in itself is an enabler of, and a basis for, meaningful communication. It should be pointed out that there are also alternative perspectives from those underpinning this study. In particular the visual arts can also be employed for anti-social as well as pro-social means; and whilst the language of the visual may be viewed as common to all in an increasingly globalised world, the meanings derived from ‘the common’ signs and images might differ widely from context to context.

Firstly, underpinning this study is the belief that the visual arts and visual arts education are distinct and powerful ways of generating knowledge about, and understanding of, the world. The visual arts offer insights through objective representation and subjective intentionality, and in doing so allow both practitioner and audience to form new knowledge and understandings. Visual arts education is a pre-cursor of new discoveries as the skills acquired by means of a

visual education enable the practitioner and audience to engage with and to decipher the visual.

The second belief underpinning the study is that the visual arts and visual arts education offer societal groups a pro-social method of communication across and amongst each other (Bierhoff, 2002). The visual arts are, quite apart from their inherent identity, nature, value and purpose, a vehicle of communication and sharing. These powers of communication and sharing have the potential to form a basis from which it becomes possible to break down barriers currently existing in society and importantly, to form a basis with which to construct new and informed approaches to our attempts to successfully inhabit, and to succeed in facing the challenges of a rapidly developing globalised society (Katchadourian, 1980).

Thirdly, underpinning the study is the belief that visual culture provides society with its visual capital. The visual representations of society across the millennia act as a lens through which contemporary society informs itself about past times, about how it may represent itself visually today and why the beauty of aesthetic representation is a valid twenty first century language.

The fourth belief underpinning the study is that the unique role visual culture has played in migration and society formation throughout the ages continues to provide a powerful voice in contemporary times. Three approaches to understanding the nexus between the visual and migration were considerations in this study. The first of these approaches is that of art as migratory and the manner in which it is able to cross borders, cultures, environments and barriers. The second approach is that of art depicting migration, in which artists represent a migratory journey (Staples, Devine, & Chapman, 2010). The third approach focuses on the practitioner who herself or himself undertakes a migratory journey and how this movement of artistic capital impacts on societies and communities. A painting seminal to my understanding of these approaches is 'The Arnolfini Marriage' by the Early Renaissance Dutch painter, Jan van Eyck. The subject matter of this painting is contentious. Is the female figure pregnant? Are the couple betrothed? However, its provenance and embodiment of the migratory are not contested. Carola Hicks, author of *Girl in a Green Gown*, a book about the history and mystery of the painting, wrote,

Through different accidents of fate the portrait became a prized possession which passed through many hands and travelled from medieval Bruges via Hapsburg Spain, through



The Portrait of Giovanni (?) Arnolfini and his Wife Giovanna Cenami (?) (The Arnolfini Marriage)
 1434 (oil on panel) by Eyck, Jan van (c.1390-1441); 83.7x57 cm; National Gallery, London, UK;
 Netherlandish

the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars to Victorian London. It survived through fires, battles, hazardous sea journeys. And uniquely, for a masterpiece this old, its provenance can be tracked through every single owner from the mysterious Mr Arnolfini via various monarchs to a hard-up Waterloo war hero, until it finally came to rest in 1842 as an early start of the National Gallery. These owners, too, have cameo parts in the enthralling story of how an artwork of genius can speak afresh to each new generation. (Hicks, 2011, pp. 16-17)

The fifth belief underpinning the study is that there exists a language of the visual that is common to us all. Every society in the world is the inheritor, bearer and custodian of

a visual tradition and hence the visual presents contemporary society with a common bond, and a common language that transcends perceived difference. Acknowledging that excessive emphasis on text and written work is often not appropriate to all learners, the visual arts and visual arts education are not only ideally suited to the needs of much learning associated with society formation, but are in themselves *a way* of learning and knowledge generation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study was initially undertaken during a period of time when visual arts education seemed either poised to experience a national revivification or doomed to flounder in dusty curriculum doldrums. The study has positioned learning in the visual arts away from traditional approaches and into the realm of transformative learning and new frames of reference, especially in regard to the nature of its relationship with contemporary society formation.

In the decade leading up to 2016, a number of policy initiatives had impacted upon visual education, and consequently upon its ability to impact upon learning and learners. *First We See*, the 2008 National Review of Visual Education (Davis, 2008), presented a number of recommendations and in particular suggested that the notion of visual arts education being a handmaiden to other curriculum subjects be dispelled. Instead, it proposed the unique character and powerful force of the visual arts as a way of generating knowledge and personal, social, cultural and economic capital be acknowledged and promoted. The *First We See* report noted that a comprehensive overhaul of how visual arts education is articulated within curricula remains a key issue needing to be addressed by curriculum designers. It is argued in this study that the identification of society formation through visual arts education and learning is one such articulation.

The role of the visual arts in society today is strong and vibrant. The visual arts provoke and interrogate. They have the potential to bind and divide opinion. They contribute to social and cultural capital and economic revenue. This study has the potential to contribute to the further strengthening of the visual arts and visual arts learning in Australia.

Societies often see a reflection of themselves through the work of artists, poets, architects and writers. The Arts provide societies with substance, meaning, story and influence. This study acknowledges the multifaceted social, economic and cultural influence of the visual arts and visual arts education. It is set in a period in Australia's history characterised by diversity and change and

so its significance lies in its potential to position the visual arts and visual arts learning as one mode of transforming Australian society so that it meets the challenges of the twenty-first century.

1.4 Epistemological and Meta-Theoretical Framework of the Study

An evolutionary epistemology (Campbell, 1974) was selected for this study and interpretivism was selected as the meta-theoretical frame. A Grounded Theory Method (Glaser, 1992) approach was adopted for data gathering, analysis and theory development.

Evolutionary epistemology approaches knowledge generation from the perspective that truth is never absolute, and that all knowledge can be defined, refuted, renegotiated and redefined on an ongoing basis. The growth of knowledge reflects the process of successive evolutionary adaptations in the natural world and is therefore constantly evolving. This epistemological approach was ideally suited to this study for particular reasons. Firstly, the tenets of the evolutionary approach resonate with my personal understandings and experience of how knowledge develops. Secondly, the research design and two stages of data gathering adopted in this study lent themselves to an approach that enabled flexibility in conceptualisation and method.

Interpretivism (Goldkuhl, 2012) was selected as the meta-theoretical frame for the study. Interpretivist approaches to research address the characters and interaction of the individual and society, both separately and together. Society may “be understood in terms of the individuals making it up, and the individuals are to be understood in terms of the societies of which they are members” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p. 16). By its very nature interpretivism allows for subjective interpretation to be formed into data and hence knowledge but within an overarching and, importantly, objective framework. This approach fits with the evolutionary epistemological frame of the study as it allows for reinterpretation or revisiting of knowledge and theoretical understandings.

1.5 Methodology and Methods

An adapted Grounded Theory Method approach was adopted for the gathering and analysis of data and for the generation of theory. The Grounded Theory Method is concerned with the inductive emergence of theory that is grounded in the data gathered (Punch, 1998). The Grounded Theory Method is both a strategy for engaging in “research and a style of analysis

which uses procedures to develop a theory grounded in the data” (p. 163).

A number of methods to data gathering and analysis were explored in the early stages of the study and after due consideration an adapted version of the Grounded Theory Method was adopted. The approaches to qualitative data gathering associated with the Grounded Theory Method were selected and these included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field-notes and collection of relevant documentation. Data were gathered from secondary school students, teachers, artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators. The approach taken to the qualitative analysis of data in this research was substantive coding, including open coding, selective coding, the writing of memoranda and theoretical sampling.

1.6 The Study Design and the Research Program

The design and provenance for this study were located in three distinct settings. The first setting was the experience of students in schools that formed membership of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster of the Australian Commonwealth Government’s Values Education Good Schools Practice Project (Chapman & Staples, 2008; Curriculum Corporation, 2005) and in particular that aspect of the student experience which focussed on opportunities for students to learn to value and share cultures and contribute to Australian society formation through visual arts learning. The second setting was my participation in the *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence* conference of the International Committee of the History of Art. It was evident from my experience at this conference that the visual arts and art history have a distinctive capacity to inform student learning, particularly on matters concerning society formation. The third setting was my participation in *Future / Forward: The National Visual Arts Summit* in 2014 (National Association of the Visual Arts, 2014). This summit brought me into contact with artists, senior arts advocates and writers, and it was during this time that I began to develop my thinking about how a visual arts practice might be integrated into visual arts learning and contemporary society formation.

There were two distinct stages of the study’s research program. At the start of the study, multiple stages of research had not been a consideration and the emergence of a second stage was very much in keeping with the evolutionary epistemological framework of the study. Stage One of the study began with the identification of the wide research range, which had taken form as a consequence of my work with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster and from

my participation in the international history of art conference on *Crossing Cultures*. In Stage One, data were gathered from students and teachers from the Catholic secondary school that had hosted the visual arts component of the work of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. Stage Two of the study began with the identification of a need to deepen and enrich, extend and complement the findings of the initial Stage One data gathering and analysis. As a consequence, a second phase of data gathering and analysis, this time from artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators, was undertaken.

The analysis of the data laid the basis for the identification of core categories, sub-core categories, categories and concepts from which the substantive theory from this study was developed.

1.7 Weaving of Theory

In the weaving of the study's substantive theory, the loom, the warp and the weft are used as a metaphor for understanding the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation. The loom is the overarching construct. It is the environment within which the study evolved and it is the societal environment that was the concern of the study. The warp is the social, cultural and educational elements of society that have provided the study with its specific contexts. The warp is detailed in Chapter Two. The wefts are constituted from the findings of the research, data gathering and analysis. The wefts are detailed in Chapters Four and Five. The process that brings the loom, the warp and the weft together in life is weaving. The theory to emerge from this study is presented in Chapter Six.

1.8 Understanding the Terms

A number of terms are used to explore issues and concerns relevant to this investigation. These include:

The visual arts

The collective of art forms that can be created, seen and appreciated. These art forms include, but are not limited to, painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, digital imagery and photography. The visual arts incorporate fine art and craft. The visual arts are a way of knowing and a way of generating knowledge.

Visual arts education

Visual arts education refers to the formal curriculum processes into which the visual arts are integrated. Visual arts education is both discipline based and cross-curricula.

Learning in the visual arts

Learning in the visual arts refers to the opportunities that arise for learning in standard visual arts classrooms in primary, secondary and tertiary settings. In the visual arts in particular, students often engage in learning beyond primary, secondary and tertiary settings, in community settings with peers and in family. Such learning is designed in response to the visual arts curriculum, with a focus on the development of skills, techniques and art history knowledge.

Visual arts learning

Visual arts learning is the particular style of learning identified in this study that aims to develop in learners a visual practice, the advantages of which can be drawn upon across the lifespan and in a diverse range of situations. This practice is a champion of the visual as a means of both transforming personal perspective and the re-imagining of contemporary society.

Aesthetic

In this study, aesthetic is the broad but nuanced reference to the visual. It incorporates the tangible qualities of the visual, such as artworks and discourse, and the more cerebral considerations of the visual, such as frames of reference. It is understood as being a powerful means of describing and understanding the dynamic nature of society.

Contemporary society formation

Contemporary society formation refers to the conscious formation of societal communities in the modern era. It involves consideration of what it means to be a society in the twenty first century, in contrast to approaches in the past where there was a subsuming of existing society through passive or aggressive means. Society formation implies an adherence to the development of societal characteristics and the evolution and adaptations of existing societies. Society refers to communities of people who share among other things, culture, policies, government, beliefs and borders. A society will have common goals. A language or

languages are common to the society, and whilst one may be defined as the official language, it is by no means the only language of society.

Multicultural

The multicultural concept has been adopted by a number of countries such as Australia and Canada and has been used to inform national identity as well as immigration policy. In a clear move away from the traditional strategy of assimilation found in the policies of many countries, those countries adopting a multicultural approach have endeavoured to create their national identity with every cultural group, both immigrant and host, being recognised and permanently accommodated. This has occurred to the extent that “in very few countries can the citizens be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethnonational group” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 1).

Cosmopolitanism

On the concept of cosmopolitanism, Papastergiadis (2012) notes its centrality in examining and understanding the manner in which everyday lives are given form and meaning by the “processes of global mobility and that everyone is now required to engage in some reflexive evaluation of how their own experiences are entangled in transnational networks of communication and attachment” (p. 84). Cosmopolitanism as an “ongoing activity through which multiple identities communicate with each other within an arena of mutual recognition” (p. 88) is understood as being the more nuanced and contemporary successor to multiculturalism. It is conceived of as a way of communal existence that offers its inhabitants capacity and possibility.

Globalisation

Globalisation was defined by Giddens (1990) as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64), whilst Robertson (1992) suggested that globalisation refers to the “compression of the world” (p. 8). Fast forward twenty-five years and globalisation has emerged as a pertinent and dominant topic, particularly in the political arena as evidenced by recent elections in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The advent of the internet and social media has contracted the experienced world but it can be argued

that this has not led to a better or fairer world. Globalisation runs the risk of a homogenisation of cultures and societies. In terms of education in the twenty first century, globalisation is an important concept for many reasons. In particular, students must understand the impact their decisions and actions have on the world as well as their own community and also the speed with which these actions and decisions will be felt.

Practice, Practitioner and Artefact

The terminology of *practice*, *practitioner* and *artefact* is important in this thesis. The three words are synonymous with the visual arts and the following discussion points to the way in which the words are understood and used in analysis of data and in the theory emerging in this thesis.

Practice is understood to be the diverse form of purposeful and meaningful actions that occur in which a visual arts focused endeavour is being enacted. Practice is more than a momentary experience and is instead one of duration and longevity. It can be the act of considered making and is concerned with seeking explanations on matters of depth and significance. *Practitioner* is understood to refer to the person who engages in practice, from which an artefact is formed as intangible thought becomes a tangible form. *Artefact* is understood to be the product of practice and practitioner.

1.9 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was undertaken within the geographical and societal boundaries of Australia. Notwithstanding the distinctive history and characteristics of Australia, it is believed that the dominant concerns, issues and themes relevant to this examination of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation have relevance to other countries.

The collection and analysis of school based data focused on data gathered from one school in the State of Victoria, Australia. This school had a student population drawing upon students from a range of cultural backgrounds. The school was chosen because it had hosted that aspect of the work of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural community which had focused on looking at contemporary society formation through a visual arts lens. The principal, staff and students were enthusiastic about engagement in this research study and

involvement was readily negotiated and conducted.

1.10 Artworks

The touchstone of the research has been the visual arts. A number of artworks accompany this thesis and are central to its originality and substance. Firstly, I created a collection of digital artworks, entitled *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1* [#1-16], *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#1-34] and *Colour Enmeshment | Series 3* [#1]. These are presented throughout Chapter Four, Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. This collection is my response as an artist as to how I understand and see the core categories, sub-core categories, categories and concepts that emerged from the analysis of data in the study. The way in which these artworks have been integrated into, and correspond with, the study is detailed for the reader in Chapter Three.

Secondly, the artists who participated in the study kindly gave me permission to reproduce pertinent artworks from their collections. These artworks illustrate the discussion in Chapter Seven situating the study in the scholarly literature and visual practice. Thirdly, carefully chosen artworks that have special meaning to me and that align with the assumptions, values and beliefs underpinning the study are used to illustrate the points being put forward in Chapter One and Chapter Two. Fourthly, artworks created by the students during the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural project are included in Chapter Four. A comprehensive list of all these artworks can be found in the *List of Artworks* section at the start of the thesis.

1.11 The Organisation and Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One serves as an introduction and overview of the study. The purpose and aims of the study are put forward and the context of the study has been described. The beliefs, values and assumptions underpinning the study were then elaborated upon and the significance of the study established. Next the epistemological and meta-theoretical framework of the study were discussed, and the methodology and methods presented. The research design and research program were described, as were the terms used in the study.

Chapter Two, *The Review of Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts*, situates the study in its relevant social, cultural and educational contexts. By conducting this analytical review of the literature pertaining to the contexts, I was able to identify the warps that underpin the metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft, which was used to generate the study's

substantive theory. In line with the Grounded Theory Method, the conduct of the review of the extant scholarly literature and visual practice pertaining to the core categories, sub-core concepts, categories and concepts that emerged from the analysis of data was not undertaken until the final stages of the study and is located in the final chapter of the thesis.

In Chapter Three, *Research Methodology and Methods*, a rationale for the selection of evolutionary epistemology and interpretivism is provided. The Grounded Theory Method approach to data gathering, data analysis and theory development is presented. The methods of qualitative data gathering and analysis used in this study are described, and the conduct of the research is detailed.

In Chapter Four, *A Visual Arts Transformative Learning Practice: Something Different and Significant*, the data gathered from secondary school students and teachers in Stage One are reported upon and subject to analysis and interpretation. The analysis of findings discussed in this chapter show how visual arts learning has the potential to transform young people's understanding of self, others and society and how such a transformative learning practice can provide something different and significant in stimulating learning and contributing to society formation in a time of transition and change. The findings from this first stage of data gathering and analysis, in keeping with the evolutionary nature of the study, provided crucial threads of insight, direction and meaning, and a theoretical sensitivity with which to design the gathering and analysis of data from sector advocates in the arts community in Stage Two of the study.

In Chapter Five, *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*, I discuss the Stage Two data gathered from artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators. The findings revealed that an engagement with the visual arts offered a number of distinctive aesthetic practices that are central to the aesthetic re-imagining of society.

In Chapter Six, *The Weaving of Theory*, the theorising of the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation using the metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft is presented. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss the development and substance of the theory generated in this study. The chapter also provides a discussion of the relationship between theory and practice, in particular about the practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, derived from the theory, in reference to the intent, practice and impact of a visual arts transformative practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society.

Chapter Seven, *Overview, Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion*, begins

with an overview of the study and a synthesis and analysis of results from the two stages of data gathering. The thesis is then discussed and situated in the extant scholarly literature and visual practice, that literature and practice relevant to visual arts learning and society formation, transformative learning and practice, and the aesthetic re-imagining of society. Recommendations for the advancement of theory, research, policy and practice are then put forward. The conclusion to the study is presented in the final section of Chapter Seven.

1.12 Referencing Style

The referencing style used in this thesis is American Psychological Association (6th edition). In order to ensure clarity and transparency between the gathered data and the analysis, the following additional referencing protocol was devised and implemented. When illustrating the data analysis with direct quotes from the participants in Chapters Four and Five, citation details are provided even though the transcripts of the interviews have not been published. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the use of the citations ensured that I was able to return to specific data entries frequently in order to establish and re-establish meaning. Secondly, the use of these citations provides an audit trail of the data so as to ensure verification and an adherence to ethical analysis.

Chapter Two

A Review of the Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts

Turning from knotting to weaving, the weaver starts not with a single, continuous line of yarn but with one set of parallel lines, the warp, strung lengthways... (Ingold, 2007, p. 62)

Introduction

This chapter locates the study in an analysis of its social, cultural and educational contexts, with particular reference to Australia's fabric and social diversity, its culture and arts, and visual arts education and learning. These three main lines of enquiry provide the weaving metaphor of the study with its warp, and the detail of each context provides the study with its warp threads. The main lines of enquiry were explored through a range of sources, including Commonwealth and State government policy documents, and publications emanating from work of statutory and advisory bodies. Literature from government research data collection authorities, such as national census data, was reviewed, as was literature from government authorities, non-government authorities and commissioned reports. Historical accounts of relevant issues, newspaper articles and public commentaries from online sources were also reviewed, together with literature on the purpose of policy.

2.1 A Portrait of a Diverse Society

This section of the review of the context of the study provides an examination and portrayal of some of Australia's fabric and social diversity. For the reader who might be unfamiliar with Australia's distinctive history, this section of Chapter Two begins with a diegesis of Aboriginal Australia and non-Aboriginal Australia as a background for an examination of recent policies relevant to population, migration and contemporary society formation.

2.1.1 An Australian Diegesis

A diegesis is a narrator's commentary. This diegesis is written as an illustration of my perspectives about what I consider to be the more salient episodes in Australian history relevant to this study. This diegesis does not claim to be neutral nor definitive in its interpretations.

2.1.1.1 A Rupture

47,000 years ago the first settlement of Australia was made by the ancestors of contemporary Aboriginal Australians who had arrived from a group of islands off the northeastern coast of New Guinea called the Bismarck Archipelago (O'Connell & Allen, 2015). Contemporary research has suggested that all Aboriginal Australians originate from this "single Australian founding population" (Malaspinas et al., 2016, p. 3). Settlement of the continent by Aboriginal Australians was both expansive and in harmony with its nature, flora and fauna. By the time the east coast of Australia was reached by Captain James Cook in April 1770, it is estimated 750,000 Aboriginal Australians inhabited the continent in "hundreds of self-identifying and autonomous groups" (Carlson, 2016, p. 19) and "spoke over 250 distinct languages" (Malaspinas et al., 2016, p. 2).

Prior to Cook claiming the eastern coast of Australia in the name of Britain in 1770, other European seafarers had encountered the island continent. The western half of Australia had been mapped by the Dutch by 1650, and had been named as New Holland. In 1606 Janszoon had explored the northeast coast of Australia and in 1642 Abel Tasman had charted the south of Tasmania. Such events represented the first known and documented occasions when Europeans had made contact with Australia but they certainly had not discovered Australia, just as Cook did not discover Australia. Aboriginal Australians were, and remain, the original and traditional custodians of the land. Australia was also visited by non-European peoples prior to 1770. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Macassans, traders from the area of Indonesia today known as Sulewesi, formed temporary camps along the northern coast of Australia as they hunted for marine life. Artefacts show the Macassans interacted with Aboriginal people and that "the touch of these contacts was light...for the Macassans offered few threats to Aboriginal culture and none to their land" (Broome, 2010, p. 13).

The second settlement of Australia began with the First Fleet that left England in 1787 "with 582 male prisoners, 193 female prisoners and fourteen children" (Macintyre, 2016, p. 15), together with civil and military officers and marines. Upon landing at Port Jackson on 26 January 1788, the commander of the fleet, Captain Arthur Philip, hoisted the British flag and "took formal possession of the new colony" (p. 15). This marked the British invasion of Australia and the rupture of Aboriginal society. The Australian historian Manning Clark wrote that "the white man had come to Australia" (2006, p. 18) and with the white man came the

nomenclature of *native*, *savage* and by 1816, *Aborigine*, the singular name meaning ‘original inhabitants of the land’, by which the entire diversity of original inhabitants of Australia became known (Carlson, 2016).

In contemporary Australia, 26 January is now celebrated as the National Day of Australia or ‘Australia Day’ and as is stated on The National Australia Day Council website,

On Australia Day we come together as a nation to celebrate what’s great about Australia and being Australian. It’s the day to reflect on what we have achieved and what we can be proud of in our great nation. It’s the day for us to re-commit to making Australia an even better place for the future. (The National Australia Day Council, 2016, para. 1)

Such broad statements about the nature and significance of Australia Day and what makes Australia and being Australian ‘great’ run the danger of alienating many communities within contemporary Australian society. Such commentary can make no claim to be representative of all Australians. Indeed, some suggest that the history of Australia associated with the arrival of Europeans in Australia is far from great. On this, Macintyre (2016) notes that we cannot be certain of the veracity of Britain’s intentions in colonising Australia. “Was it invasion or peaceful occupation, despoliation or improvement, a place of exile or hope, estrangement or attachment?” (p. 17). As Broome (2010) suggests, convicts transported to Australia were unlikely to be concerned with the “sensitive task of cultural interaction” (p. 21) and a convict society was likely to be “infused by convict attitudes and shaped by its penal and remote status” (p. 22).

With the marking of each Australia Day, increasingly the discourse in the media suggests that Australia’s national day does not bring the nation in its entirety together in celebration. A clear indication of such discord is the increasing number of Australians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who refer to Australia Day as either Invasion Day or Survival Day. There are continued calls from lobby groups to either axe the day completely or to rename it and move it to another date in the calendar. In November 2016, the council of the Western Australian city of Fremantle announced that it was considering rescheduling “its national holiday fireworks to January 28 as part of its commitment to “culturally inclusive” Australia Day celebrations” (Ritchie, 2016, para. 2). This decision was not met with universal support from the local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities but it illustrates that the nexus between Australia’s

past and Australia's future remains an important and sensitive area for debate, conversation and policy development that needs to be had nationally. In early December 2016, the Fremantle council "bowed to pressure from the federal government and agreed to reinstate its citizenship ceremony on Australia Day" (Hunt, 2016, para. 1). Brad Pettit, Mayor of Fremantle, confirmed in a press release that the informal culturally inclusive event planned for 28 January would still go ahead and that the council had received "strong support from (the) community, and beyond, about this decision" (Pettitt, 2016, para. 3).

The rupture to Aboriginal society when the British invaded, and the effect that this rupture continues to have on Aboriginal society and culture today, is of significance to considerations of contemporary society formation in this study. What lessons can be learned from the experiences of the past and how does contemporary society ensure that the mistakes from the past are addressed and not repeated? The colonisation of the new world by European explorers brought with it distinctive and alien western approaches to society, governance, law and economy, with little or no regard for existing ways of living. Questions around national identity and the homogenisation of society and culture, often to the detriment of Indigenous people, continue to be matters of concern.

2.1.1.2 A Derivative Nation and Society

During a public conversation hosted by Melbourne's The Wheeler Centre in October 2015, Paul Keating, a former Labor Prime Minister of Australia, advanced the claim that Aboriginal Australia could not be expected to accept a treaty whilst the current government of Australia remained a derivative of the nation that effectively brought about the demise of Aboriginal society (Keating, 2015). What did Keating mean by this and what are its implications for contemporary society formation in Australia? Perhaps the most telling aspect of what Keating had to say is that the debate concerning the very need for a treaty between Aboriginal Australians and the Commonwealth government remains both pertinent and unresolved nearly 230 years after the British established its penal settlement in Australia (Davis and Williams, 2015). The influence of the British antecedents to Australian society and the role of the British Monarchy in Australia's institutions continue to generate debate. The Australian Republican Movement, of which the current Liberal Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Turnbull, is an energetic supporter, states on its website that the "harmonious development of the Australian

community demands that the allegiance of Australians must be fixed wholly within and upon Australia and Australian institutions” (Australian Republican Movement, 2016, para. 10). This statement does not specifically detail how an Australian Republic would address the injustices experienced by Aboriginal Australians but it does indicate that a cessation from the nation that brought about these injustices is a step towards unifying all citizens of Australia. Peter FitzSimons, Chair of the Australian Republican Movement, recently suggested that support from Australians for an Australian republic continues to increase, with membership at the time of writing “being six times what it was in July 2015” (P. FitzSimons, personal communication, December 10th, 2016).

After the arrival of the British, the needs of the government for convict labour to work on government farms, build roads and build public buildings for the new settlement were the dominant concern of authorities in a penal society characterised by hard labour, punishment and brutality. By 1810, however, as England began to recognise the great natural resources of New South Wales and the opportunities that existed for the new settlement to serve the economic interests of England, the newly appointed Governor Macquarie committed himself to addressing the need for greater justice, diminishing vice and immorality. Macquarie called for the development of a society of honest and industrious inhabitants among a population now being typified by a larger proportion of free inhabitants, many of whom were among the original civil and military officers and marines, the freed convicts, and their native born descendants. In 1823, an Act of the English parliament proclaimed that whilst previously New South Wales was deemed a penitentiary for convicts, it was now to be treated as a British colony (Clark, 2006).

A new period of transition for the newly formed colony had thus begun in which the British government began to encourage migration, in particular the migration of men and women of capital and more genteel birth, particularly from England and Scotland. Many of the migrants saw the new and expanding colony as constituting a land of opportunity and prosperity, providing for themselves access to economic and political power as holders of senior official positions in government, legal and other institutions of society and as proprietors of large expanses of very productive farming and grazing land. The discovery of gold in 1851 ended convict transportation to eastern Australia. The last convicts arrived in Tasmania in 1853 and to western Australia in 1868 (Clark, 2006). Approximately 168,000 convicts had been transported to Australia and many Australians can trace their history of convict origin.

An important consideration is that whilst today's Australian society is formed largely from European heritage, this ancestry is only 230 years old, whilst that of the original and surviving inhabitants is some 47,000 years old.

With the discovery of gold in Australia in the 1850's, the country and its population underwent a rapid transformation. Between December 1851 and December 1861, the "total population increased from 437,665 to 1,168,149" (Clark, 2006, p. 155), suddenly increasing the number of people from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe and America, together with an increase in the number of Chinese. The increase in population during and following the gold rushes impacted on all areas of social, economic and political life, in particular the burgeoning of a strong movement towards democracy. Between 1881 and 1900, the area of land under cultivation almost doubled, new manufacturing and other industries were developed, a strong trade union and Labour movement began to emerge, an increasing proportion of the population were Australian born, and with these changes a strong spirit of nationalism and independence. Following a referendum, in 1901 the Commonwealth of Australia was established. Whilst Australia was to remain part of the British Empire it was to have its own government composed of a federation of states, with a House of Representatives elected on universal franchise, a Senate and a High Court of judges appointed by the Australian Commonwealth Parliament (Clark, 2006), with the British Monarchy, as Head of State, being represented in Australia by the Governor General. It should be noted that whilst Federation provided election by universal franchise achieved in 1902, this excluded Indigenous Australians, a situation that was not redressed until 1967.

2.1.1.3 War and Conflict

The early part of the 20th century saw a time of stability, economic prosperity and growth. However, in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War, Australia was to undergo a substantial change in the way it saw itself as a nation (Bennett, 2011; Pugsley, 2004). The involvement of young Australians in the Gallipoli Campaign saw the first time that Australians fought, and lost, as a military unit fighting as ANZACS with the New Zealand forces in an international arena of war.

In the minds of many people, as evident in the speeches at the 100th anniversary of Gallipoli in 2015 and the speech delivered by Brendan Nelson (2016) to the Canberra Press

Club in July 2016 commemorating the Battle of Fromelles, the experience of the Anzacs at Gallipoli and on the Western Front constituted the birth of the nation. The stories, myths and legends of the Anzacs are central to Australian history and the Australian identity.

The Second World War between 1939 and 1945, and in particular the war in the Pacific against Japan, had profound effect on Australia and its sense of vulnerability in regard to its location in the Asia Pacific region. After the Second World War a policy of “populate or perish” (Australian Government, 2015, para. 16) brought about the introduction of a massive immigration program, bringing over a million migrants from England and attracting hundreds of thousands of displaced people from European countries, especially from central and southern Europe. Immigration from Great Britain, Ireland and from countries throughout Europe continued throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, resulting in successive governments recognizing the need to develop policies to address the complexities and issues associated with the emergence of this diverse multi-cultural society.

The White Australia Policy, which had been introduced after Federation and which restricted the immigration of non-whites, was formally abolished by the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 and in 1975 the Racial Discrimination Act was adopted making racial discrimination illegal (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016). From the late 1970’s, the settlement of people from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and India through refugee, humanitarian and immigration programs have substantially changed the nature and composition of the Australian population, culture and society. The first wave of boat people arrived between 1976-1982 when the Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser allowed the settlement of over 200 refugees from Vietnam who arrived directly by boat. Prime Minister Fraser also supported the resettlement of over 200,000 more refugees whose claims were processed in camps in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand. In 1989 a second wave of people seeking asylum arrived, largely from Cambodia, Vietnam and Southern China. A third wave began arriving in 1999, largely from the Middle East. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States of America in 2001, the subsequent war with Iraq and the involvement of Australian forces in the war in Afghanistan in the early part of the twenty first century heralded a new era in issues pertaining to the social fabric of Australia. The increasing numbers of Muslims in Australian society and the fear and suspicion harboured by some members of the Australian community regarding Muslims, particularly from the Middle East has brought to the fore continuing concerns regarding Australian identity and national security.

2.1.1.4 Of Rights and the Right

These changes in the national debate have heralded a significant shift in public debate and in immigration policy, especially associated with the development of the ‘Pacific Solution’, in which people attempting to arrive in Australia by boat are being processed and detained in offshore centres in Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. In 2012 and 2013 more than 100 boats carrying people from Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka arrived in Australia. Whilst the Pacific Solution has had the stated aim of discouraging people from making the journey by boat for fear of drowning and combating people smugglers it has also been widely criticized by human rights groups and has been the subject of considerable political controversy. The Liberal Government, elected in 2013 and again in 2016, in its electoral platform articulated a strong commitment to stop the boats. The issues associated the rights and safety of the individual and with Australia’s social fabric, multi-culturalism, immigration, border protection and social integration have become more controversial and sensitive areas of public policy and social concern than ever before (Anderson, 2016; Wroe, 2016).

In 2016 many parts of the world experienced a shift to the political right. At the time of the completion of this thesis there was considerable uncertainty across the international and national arena. In June, Great Britain voted to leave the European Union, in a move referred to as Brexit. The ‘Leave Europe’ campaign had been spearheaded by the UK Independence Party, a right-wing populist party opposed to immigration. Political volatility also exists in the United States of America after a presidential election at the end of 2016 in which divisions in society, race related violence and the emergence of the phenomenon of *nativism* among right wing conservative groups threatened the fabric of society (Gehring, 2016). In November, Donald Trump won the presidential election in the United States of America. Many commentators are concerned about Trump’s anti-immigration stance, particularly with regard to Muslims and Mexicans. Terrorism has caused ongoing fear in France and political divisions exist in Germany and other parts of Europe. In France, Marine Le Pen, the popular president of the right-wing National Front party, announced her candidacy for the 2017 French presidential election. Movement of people fleeing war and social disintegration in the Middle East constitute the largest mass movement of people since the Second World War. In Australia the recent election was critically close and has brought to the fore right wing groups promoting fear of Islam and calling on tighter control of borders, drawing attention to radicalisation and the emergence of

home grown terrorists, many of whom are young people still of school age. The Australian federal election in July 2016, which saw a return of the conservative Liberal National Coalition, resulted in four candidates from the right-wing populist party One Nation, led by Pauline Hanson, elected to senate.

2.1.2 Policies Pertaining to Australia's Population and Social Fabric

Policies relevant to understanding the fabric of Australian society, particularly pertaining to the population and immigration policies of both the Labor and Liberal governments in power during the conduct of this research are now reviewed. This section begins with an overview of relevant census data depicting the changing nature of Australian society. Additional details derived from census data are presented in Appendix Two.

2.1.2.1 A Snapshot of the Australian Population

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is Australia's national statistical agency and it is responsible for providing and publishing statistics on a range of "economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). A key function of the Australian Bureau of Statistics is the delivery of the *Census of Population and Housing*, through which the key characteristics of people in Australia, and the dwellings in which they live, are collected every five years. This information is used to determine the distribution of "government funds and (to) plan services for...housing, transport, education, industry, hospitals and the environment", as well as to "make informed decisions on policy and planning issues that impact the lives of all Australians" (2016). This snapshot of the Australian population provides an insight into some of the relevant facts and figures, including total population, Aboriginal population, country of origin, languages spoken and religious affiliation.

In 1901, the census revealed that the population of Australia was 3,773,801, a figure largely non-inclusive of Aboriginal Australians. By 2016, the total population had grown to 24, 271,288 (see Appendix B: Table B1). Aboriginal Australians have been officially included in the census data since the 1971 collection. In 1788 the estimated population of Aboriginal Australians was 750,000. In 2011 this figure was 548,368 (see Appendix B: Table B2).

The 2011 census revealed 15,017,856 Australians had been born in Australia, 911,591 in England, 483,396 in New Zealand, 318,969 in China and 295,363 in India (Appendix B:

Table B3). The most commonly spoken language at home was English, followed by Mandarin, Italian, Arabic and Cantonese (see Appendix B: Table B4). The most popular religions were Christianity, followed by Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. 4,796,786 people indicated they had no religious affiliation (see Appendix B: Table B5).

2.1.2.2 Migration, Multiculturalism and Border Control

The current Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull claims that Australia is the most successful multicultural nation in the world (Turnbull, 2016). Multiculturalism puts a premium on pluralism and diversity, the giving of respect to different values and cultures for the sake of enriching Australia. It is about the possibility of reconciling the need for the rule of law, for legitimate authority which in a political democracy is ultimately based on support and consent of the people, with the preservation of ethnic groupings. Multi-culturalism is about management of ethnic diversity. Its concerns are with pluralism and equality (Zubrzycki, 1995).

At the time that this study commenced, the Australian Labor Government's Multicultural and Integration Services Policy Agenda (2007) set out the principles upon which it aimed to ensure social cohesion through maintaining a multicultural Australia as a tolerant, fair and united nation. These included 1) recognition that migrants and their children have the same rights to maintain their traditional customs, beliefs and traditions as do long established groups and Indigenous Australians, 2) recognition that we all have an interest in and obligation to foster respect for: the rights and liberties of others; the rule of law; parliamentary democracy; freedom of thought conscience and religion; freedom of speech and expression; freedom of association; right to protection from unlawful discrimination and harassment, 3) strong integration services to assist migrants to settle into the Australian community, and 4) strong opposition to the fostering of extremism, hatred, division and incitement to violence.

The Labor Government's agenda in this area brought together education, economic and social policy. This policy was based around two guiding principles: firstly, to tackle the social exclusion of individuals and communities; and secondly, to invest in the human capital of all people. Integration through education was seen as the way to make a multicultural society work effectively and the way to ensure that children of all backgrounds could access educational opportunities and receive the educational foundation upon which they could build their lives in the Australian community and in a globalised world economy.

The Liberal Government that was elected as the federal government in 2013 and re-elected in 2016, based its campaign on a strong commitment to border protection. In July 2015 the Australian Customs and Border Protection service was integrated with the Department of Immigration to become the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The diverse portfolio of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection includes migration, humanitarian and citizenship policy and programs as well as aiming to keep Australia secure through border management. Australia is now committed to an immigration program based on restricted allocation to permanent entry and a large allocation to temporary entry within a framework of secure border protection.

In regard to the permanent migration program the government sets annual targets for three categories, namely skill, family and humanitarian. The skills category has the largest target, more than twice the family intake, and the humanitarian category has the smallest target. Under the skills category there are a number of points that apply in decision making regarding suitability for entry, and these include: age, English language ability, qualifications and occupation. Skilled migrants have a very high rate of employment with a large proportion (85%) being employed or running their own businesses five years after arriving. Those who enter under the skill category are not entitled to receive welfare benefits from the Australian government for two years. Quite a large number of those admitted as temporary entrants, especially graduating students also end up staying in Australia. They are issued permanent visas within the annual limits and generally under the skill category. In fact, the biggest proportion of the Annual Net Overseas Migration (NOM) are students, mainly in higher education, who make up almost more than one quarter of arrivals. At the time of completion of this research, it would appear that there is now a reasonably stable pattern of net overseas migration to Australia.

Policies on Border Protection however continue to be controversial. Amnesty International (2016) in its annual report named Australia as one of the countries in the Asia-Pacific area as violating international law by forcibly returning people to countries where they would be in risk of serious human rights violations. The Human Rights Watch Annual report (Wroe, 2016) has also urged the Government to re-think its policies on asylum seekers and refugees, making particular reference to the 'turn back the boats' policy, mandatory detention for unauthorised arrival and allegations of sexual assault at off-shore immigration centres.

In conclusion to this section, I draw the reader's attention to 'Monga Khan', a poster image of an Afghan cameleer by the Australian artist Peter Drew. Khan had successfully applied for an exemption to the White Australia Policy to enable him to work in Australia as the contributions of cameleers were recognised as being crucial to the development of the Australian economy. Drew says the aim of his practice has been to,

pose a question about the causal assumptions that underlie Australia's identity; does 'Aussie' describe the people who wrote the White Australia Policy, or does 'Aussie' have more to do with the people who survived it? I see more to admire in the courage of those who chose to make Australia their home, despite the racial discrimination of its government. (Drew, 2016, para. 5)

For many contemporary Australians, Drew's art and practice have introduced them to a long standing cultural diversity they did not know existed in Australia.



*Peter Drew, 'Monga Khan', 2016
(courtesy of the artist)*

2.2 The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities

Successive Australian governments, in recent times, have been concerned to address the capacity of cultural policy and cultural agency to further the betterment and enrichment of society. The culture of Australia is unique because its governmental structure is based on western principles and yet its indigenous culture is the oldest living one in existence. Its policy making machine is European and its cultural genetic structure is a combination of a living ancient tradition and multiple modern influences. This unique and diverse societal structure suggests that contemporary national cultural policy needs to be complex and multi-faceted if it is to be relevant and effective.

Prior to 1994 no official legislation existed with regards to a ratified Commonwealth cultural policy in Australia. Craik (2007) describes the model of cultural policy development in Australia as moving from a pre-federation colonial style to early entrepreneurialism from 1901 to the 1930s. This was followed by a period between 1940 and 1954 of wartime and post-war 'all talk no action' in terms of cultural facilitation to one during the interim between 1955 and 1966 in which the federal government was a participant in the establishment of cultural institutions. The period 1967-1974 saw the adoption and growth of multiculturalism and its recognition in national cultural development. Between 1975 and 1990 the focus was on access and equity, with exploration into, and the publication of, the first national cultural policy occurring 1994.

Gardiner-Garden (2009) charts the development of Commonwealth Arts policy focusing on funding, infrastructure development and the growth of independent authorities, administrative and fund granting bodies. He also documents the particular foci of different governments on various aspects of the arts and the administration of them. He notes in particular the impact of the Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, whose passion for the arts and belief in the importance of the arts saw the merging of the many adhoc arts bodies and authorities under one umbrella organisation, the Australia Council. This new organisation became responsible for seven boards representing literature, music, crafts, theatre, film and television, Aboriginal arts and visual arts. The Australia Council was formally recognised through the Australia Council Act of 1975. During the following Liberal Government's term of office led by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, the focus became one of greater accountability for funding, with the Australia Council becoming an advisory body to government with the seven formerly independent constituent boards being responsible to the council. The Labor Government of Prime Minister Bob Hawke,

which succeeded the Fraser government, saw the arts co-located with cultural affairs in the newly established Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment, laying the foundation for recognition of the relationship between the arts and culture. The merging of culture and the arts in terms of federal government policy gained further and significant momentum under the Labor Government of Prime Minister Paul Keating.

On 20th December 1991 Paul Keating had been elected as the Labor Party Prime Minister of Australia and he brought with him an inherent love of the arts. In 2013 Keating was the subject of an ABC television program called *Keating: The Interviews* and as he reflected on his political career, he said “I always thought the arts were central to a country, central to a society” (Keating, 2013). Keating’s attachment to the arts and the beauty of objects was instrumental in his more passionate moments of government and allowed him, (as it had a predecessor Gough Whitlam) in his capacity of Australia’s Prime Minister, “to paint the new horizon”. Keating began to paint this new horizon when in 1992 the government initiated work on a national cultural policy. By 1993, the nomenclature of ‘cultural development’ had started “to appear with increasing frequency in government discussions of the arts” (Gardiner-Garden, 2009, p. 41).

On 30th October 1994 the Australian Department of Communications and the Arts (subsequently the Office for the Arts) released a pioneering document entitled *Creative Nation: Commonwealth cultural policy*. Gardiner-Garden notes,

These were the first attempts at comprehensive cultural statements and represented the climax of the inclination of the previous couple of years to link arts with communication, to put them both into the wider context of cultural policy and then to link cultural policy with Australia’s economic interest and international identity. (Gardiner-Garden, 2009, p. 43)

Creative Nation was a descriptive offering that covered the main areas of concern: the role of the Australia Council, Commonwealth support for the Arts, heritage past and present, education and cultural tourism (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994) .

The then opposition Liberal party was also active during this period. In March 1993, the Liberal party released an election commitment to the arts entitled *A Vision for the Arts in Australia* (Liberal National Party, 1993). In the following year, the Liberal politician Kay

Patterson published an article called *Assembly Line of Arts Ministers stunts Arts Development*, in which “she criticized the postponement of the Cultural Policy and suggested the government’s frequent changing of Arts Minister was having serious adverse impact on its ability to make informed decisions about important issues affecting the Arts Community” (Gardiner-Garden, 2009). Just over eighteen months later on 6th October 1994, and only weeks prior to the release of *Creative Nation*, the Liberal Party released *The Cultural Frontier, Coalition Priorities for the Arts* (Liberal Party of Australia, 1994). On 2 March 1996, Keating’s Labor government was beaten in the federal election by John Howard’s Liberal Coalition government. The *Australian Artists Creative Fellowships*, an initiative of Keating, was replaced by the *Young and Emerging Artists Program*. In 1999 the *Australia Business Arts Foundation* replaced the *Australian Foundation for Culture and the Humanities*, reflecting the differing priorities of the Liberal Coalition government.

Although still very much considered under the umbrella of The Arts, in 2003 particular focus began to be placed on the Visual Arts. Following Prime Minister John Howard’s Liberal Government’s *Review of Contemporary Visual Arts and Crafts* (2002) the previous year, the *Visual Arts and Craft Strategy* commenced implementation. This strategy was to be funded by the government and administered by the Australia Council. During its term, the Howard Government recognised the cultural needs of regional Australia through the *Regional Arts Fund*, with funding again being dispersed by the Australia Council. Its work in encouraging young artists, and private support for the Arts through the *Australian Business Arts Foundation*, illustrated the government’s focus on economic and industrial perspectives of the arts and culture, as did its legislation concerning copyright, and royalties.

In 2011 the Australia Council for the Arts mapped the cultural agency of Australia in its *Cultural Policies in Australia* report as comprising of:

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts
- Dance
- Literature
- Major Performing Arts
- Music
- Theatre
- Visual Arts. (Australia Council, 2011, p. 12)

In 2012, the *Australia Council Review* (Trainor & James, 2012) identified ten sector advisory panels: community arts, cross-disciplinary arts, dance, digital and interactive arts, indigenous arts, literature, music, theatre, touring and visual arts. Within each of these Commonwealth policies the visual arts have been identified as a consistently key area of focus for Australian society formation.

In early 2012, the Minister of the Arts oversaw ten weeks of public consultation with the aim of developing the new National Cultural Policy. The aim of this policy was to provide a structure that enabled Australian Government to support the arts, culture and creativity. This policy embodied a strong commitment to the link between cultural and arts policy and society formation. The 2012 *Australia Council Review* argued that there is increasing evidence to suggest that the benefits of effective cultural policy are seen in areas of Australian society and economy, “such as education, social cohesion, national imagination and health” (Trainor & James, 2012, p. 8).

The national cultural policy, *Creative Australia*, was formerly launched on March 13th 2013 by the then Labor Minister for the Arts, Simon Crean. The policy reflected the “diversity of modern Australia and outlined a vision for the arts, cultural heritage and creative industries that draws from the past with an ambition for future” (Australian Government, 2013, p. 6). *Creative Australia* was shaped using five core goals, namely: recognition of the central importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; recognition that all Australian citizens have a right to shape the Australian cultural identity and expression; the support and nurture of artists and their practice; through the cultural sector, enhance local and national community wellbeing and the economy; and to ensure the continued development of a digital core. The domains of cultural agency identified in *Creative Australia* included, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ arts, languages and cultures; cultural heritage; design; music; performance and celebration, including community cultural development; screen arts, broadcasting and interactive media; visual arts and crafts; writing and publishing” (pp. 8-9).

The Liberal Party, under the leadership of Tony Abbott, was returned to government at the 2013 elections. In the 2015 budget, \$105 million was removed from funding to the Australia Council over four years and was “diverted to a new fund called the National Program of Excellence in Arts” (Cannane and Deavin, 2015, para. 1). This scheme of the then Arts Minister, Senator George Brandis, was met with loud and intense dismay from the Arts sector at

large. In 2016, under a new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and a new Arts Minister, Mitch Fifield, it was announced that the National Program of Excellence in the Art had been renamed “Catalyst - Australian Arts and Culture Fund” (Tan, 2016, para. 1) and that \$32 million had been returned to Australia Council funding.

The cultural policy landscape in Australia has been subjected to a range of scholarly critiques articulated by contemporary cultural commentators, including David Throsby, Josephine Caust, Ben Eltham and Marcus Westbury. Since the coming to power of Abbott’s Coalition government in 2013, contemporary discussions about the nature and form of a national cultural policy in Australia are set in the context of the slow demise of Labor’s 2013 national cultural policy, Creative Australia (Caust, 2015). Within the broader challenge of developing a national cultural policy in Australia, two key themes can be identified, namely the inherent political apathy towards culture in Australia and the question of just what national cultural policy should address and how.

Both Throsby and Caust have written that apathy on the part of Australian political parties towards cultural policy in Australia presents a considerable issue. Caust suggests the Coalition party as being the most apathetic of the two, stating that “from 1996 until 2007, the Australian government was led by the Coalition Parties under Prime Minister John Howard. The Coalition Government was adamant that Australia did not need a cultural policy as such” (2015, p. 168). It should be noted that Caust acknowledges that Labor too can appear indifferent, suggesting that “even under the Labor government, anti-intellectualism and devaluing of cultural difference re-emerged and was not publicly discouraged” (p. 174). Personal apathy on the part of political leaders towards culture is also understood to be an issue. Caust observes that “while both Prime Ministers Rudd and Gillard publicly embraced cultural and creative individuals, their actual personal commitment to arts and culture was limited” (2015, p. 173). Throsby reflected about Prime Minister Howard, saying “when it comes to the theatre or music or the visual arts, he seems to have no particular personal commitment” (Throsby, 2006, p. 19). It should be noted that the first national cultural policy in Australia, Creative Nation, emerged during the Labor Government under Prime Minister Paul Keating, a deeply committed admirer and promoter of the arts and culture.

Just ‘what’ cultural policy should address and ‘how’ are illustrated in a number of models of cultural policy. Prior to the release of Creative Nation in 1994, much of Australia’s

arts and cultural policy had been structured around,

a hybrid system that includes an independent statutory arts council founded on arm's length and peer assessment principles (derived from the British model), some financial provision flowing directly from central government (as in many European countries), and some indirect support through the tax system (in emulation of the American model). (Throsby, 2006, p. 9)

The rise of economic rationalism represented a significant shift in cultural policy development in Australia, with the government requiring the cultural sector to now justify its "existence in economic terms" (Throsby, 2006, p. 8). Throsby (2012) has suggested there are "five areas where the theories, tools and methods of economic analysis can make a contribution to the formation of a rational cultural policy: support for the creative arts; cultural goods in international trade; the management of cultural assets; industry and innovation; and foreign policy" (p. 106). It is clear that economic concerns guide the development of most if not all policies in contemporary society and in this context Caust (2015) offers a warning of the "danger of the economic rationale being the concern rather than the culture itself" (p. 170). Eltham and Westbury question the practices of associating economic approaches to cultural policy development being focussed on arts grants only, saying,

Cultural policy cuts across many government portfolios and encompasses a vast swathe of everyday life. It's as much about the rock band at your local pub as it is about the Sydney Opera House, as much about popcorn during the movie as chardonnay after the ballet. Cultural policy is about what you can and can't watch on free-to-air TV or view on the internet, whether you can exhibit photos of naked children in an art gallery, or when and where a band is allowed to play. (Eltham & Westbury, 2010, p. 105)

2.3 Visual Arts Education Landscape

Ewing (2010) in her seminal paper *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising Potential* reviews a range of research studies exploring "the relationship between the cognitive capacities developed through learning and communicating" in the arts including the visual arts "and student's academic and social skills" (p. 13). Ewing notes the broad and significant findings

which determined the positive and beneficial relationship between the studying of the arts and human learning. Whilst the arts have been integral to the development of society since early times, and their role in learning and development of the individual have been acknowledged for some time, the documenting of studies of their relationship to learning has begun to build a body of evidence in support of their role as a significant domain of learning within education. Their multi-dimensional and complex characteristics have been acknowledged by policy makers in education in Australia too,

The Arts is a learning area that draws together related but distinct art forms. While these art forms have close relationships and are often used in interrelated ways, each involves different approaches to arts practices and critical and creative thinking that reflect distinct bodies of knowledge, understanding and skills. The curriculum examines past, current and emerging arts practices in each art form across a range of cultures and places. (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2016, para. 1)

From a government perspective, the arts, including the visual arts, have long been acknowledged within the education curriculum, however a number of milestones in policy development in the late 20th century and early years of this century have seen the arts, and in particular the visual arts, recognized as a substantial and important component of formal education in Australia with the potential of a growing impact on culture and society formation.

In 1989, state territory and commonwealth ministers for education met in Hobart and agreed to act jointly in planning for the future of school education in Australia. They developed a national collaborative framework of goals in order to address shared and common concerns. The guiding document they developed became known as *The Hobart Declaration*, and contained “Agreed National Goals for Schooling”, including an aim to develop in students “an appreciation and understanding of, and confidence to participate in, the creative arts” (Ministerial Council on Education, 2006a, para. 2). Ten years later (1999) the 10th Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) comprising the various, state territory and commonwealth ministers met in Adelaide and reviewed the Hobart Declaration. Between these two meetings the Keating government’s Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee published a report, *Arts Education* (1995) on arts education and John Howard’s Liberal government responded to ‘*Arts*

Education’ in 1997. Whilst no changes were made to the original aims regarding the creative arts, as detailed in *The Hobart Declaration*, *The Adelaide Declaration* (1999) identified four previously unmentioned emerging priority areas, none of which had a creative arts focus, let alone a visual arts focus (Ministerial Council on Education, 2006b). The only explicit mention of the Arts in the Adelaide Declaration was in point 2.1 where it was included as one of the agreed eight key learning areas (MCEETYA, 1999). In 2008, again at a meeting of all Australian education ministers, *The Adelaide Declaration* was revisited for a third time. The meeting, this time in Melbourne, endorsed *The Melbourne Declaration* and this document provided the opportunity for the development of the Australian National Curriculum.

In 2005, *Education and the Arts Research Overview*, a report prepared for the Australia Council for the Arts by Dr Mary Hunter, was released. In this report Hunter identified “six education and the arts research projects commissioned into the impacts of arts participation on student learning and development” (p. 2). The six projects were,

- Evaluation of School-based Arts Education Programmes in Australian Schools
- Australian Children and the Arts: Meaning, Value and Participation
- EAPI Report: Promoting the Value of the Arts
- A Pedagogy of Trust: Improving Educational Outcomes through Partnerships
- Education, Enculturation and the Arts: Fuelling an Innovation Culture
- The Impact of Arts Education Programmes on Student Motivation: Final Report on a Research Project. (Hunter, 2005, p. 6).

The calibre and number of these commissioned projects was significant in that they were evidence that key arts education thinkers were pushing the Arts as an agenda which resulted in a governmental response in 2007 when MCEETYA and CMC (Cultural Minister’s Council) released the *National Education and the Arts Statement* (2007).

In 2008, with a further change of federal government to a Labor government under Kevin Rudd, a partnership with the Australia Council was initiated, and the commissioned report *First We See* (Davis, 2008) was published. This National Review of Visual Education presented a number of recommendations. The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) served on the Steering Committee and reports on its website that the review put forward “four major recommendations in relation to visual education which provided the blueprint for subsequent

negotiation”. The four recommendations were,

- The centrality of visuacy for all Australian students recognised as a core skill area for each of the compulsory years of schooling
- Preparing teachers with appropriate pre-service training and ongoing professional learning opportunities in visual education
- The potential of partnerships between schools and appropriate external agencies / organisations
- A visual education research agenda be developed along with an implementation plan and stage timeline. (National Association for the Visual Arts, 2016, para. 3)

The review suggested that the notion of visual arts education as being some sort of a handmaiden to curriculum subjects be dispelled and that instead the character and powerful force of the visual arts as a way of generating knowledge and its associated capital – personal, social, cultural and economic - be acknowledged and promoted. The *First We See* report suggested that a comprehensive overhaul of how visual arts education is articulated within curricula remained a key issue needing to be addressed by curriculum designers. The 2010 Ewing review called *The Arts and Australian Education – Realising Potential* further consolidated the idea that the positioning of the arts within the curriculum needs to be raised to a top priority level.

In 2011, after much consultation a discussion paper *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts* (commonly called the SHAPE) was released. The development of the Australian Curriculum for the Arts took a further three years to come to fruition. The year 2012 saw education in Australia as being in a state of change, with the emergence of a national curriculum framework, the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012). In adopting a national curriculum framework all states and territories not only had to experience a transition to a new curriculum but they also, as part of this process, had engaged in an analysis of their state based curricula in particular subject areas. Within this context visual arts educators would, of necessity, have needed to be immersed in the principal forms and channels of curriculum discourse and their interstices. The visual arts and visual arts education had been placed on the agenda of national education reform. The Australian Curriculum: the Arts was released in October 2015.

Within any national curriculum the creative arts are theoretically held in high esteem,

although in practice this esteem is at times challenged. Here the place of the creative arts in the Australian Curriculum is no exception. Whilst the Arts were not central to Phase One of development of the national curriculum, they had been given a significant place within the curriculum both as a distinct discipline and as a trans-disciplinary partner. However, contention arose after the publication of the Shape paper because arts education bodies within some individual states and territories were concerned that the new structure of the creative arts diminished the role of the visual arts and actually pitted them against the other creative arts disciplines of media arts, music, dance and drama. The perceived rigour, value and place of the visual arts emerged as important issues for debate. The newly designed Arts Curriculum was released with the Phase Two discipline areas in July 2013.

In 2013 the Labor government mandated the Arts component of the national curriculum. The change of government in 2013 to a Liberal Federal government saw the release of the final report the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (2014), by the then Minister for Education Christopher Pyne. This report noted the significance of arts education and acknowledged a necessity for professional development of teachers. It also suggested that the strands of music and the visual arts become mandated with the remainder of the arts being elective. This controversial recommendation was not supported by the arts community and has to date not been enacted. The role and position of visual arts within the Australian curriculum was identified as an area of crucial concern. It is argued in this study that the exploration of the relationship between society building and visual arts learning is a significant topic and a step towards a revivification of the visual arts and visual arts curriculum.

Visual arts education and learning is a rich and complex area of for enquiry. McCarthy et al (2004) identify four types of arts learning environments in education: “provision of arts experiences in schools; arts-rich environments, the arts as learning tools across the curriculum; the use of arts experiences in non-arts classes and direct instruction in particular art forms” (McCarthy et al as cited in Ewing, 2010, p. 13).

The place of visual arts and visual arts learning in the list of national priorities is often controversial, and policies have at times been influenced by an extensive range of political considerations including geography (capital city versus regional focus), by considerations of size and influence (large national and state arts institutions as opposed to small, community or local groups and activities) and by its inclusion within the umbrella designation of the arts,

including theatre music, dance and the visual arts.

In education visual arts learning has been shaped recently by the nationalising of the curriculum. The positioning of the visual arts as a second phase development within the curriculum development and the designation of the field as of secondary priority in what is considered to be the priority cognate areas of the curriculum, namely numeracy and literacy has been to the detriment of the status of visual arts education and learning.

It should be noted however that in our ever developing technological world, with its emphasis on visual communication and information systems, the relationship between visual arts and culture and, in turn the formation of society, offers an unprecedented landscape for learning across a lifetime.

Conclusion: Reflections on the Emancipatory Purpose of Policy

In this chapter I have discussed various policies that impact upon the nature of society, culture and the arts, and visual arts learning in Australia. Althaus, Bridgman & Davis provide a succinct statement that illustrates the emancipatory nature and purpose of policy,

We shape our world through public policy. This policy is made not only by politicians, but by thousands of public servants and the tens of thousands of women and men who petition parliaments and ministers, who join interest groups, comment through the media or represent the unions, corporations and community movements. All have a stake in public policy. The entire community is affected by public choices. (Althaus, Bridgman, & Davis, 2013, p. 1)

When seeking a definition as to what public policy may be, O'Donoghue (2007) argues that the policy literature reveals that "the concept of policy is not a straightforward one" (p. 123). Dye (2013) notes policy as being "whatever governments choose to do or not to do" (p. 3), suggesting that policy is primarily considered to be a problem-solving enterprise undertaken by influential and elite policy-makers. Klein and Marmor (2006) similarly suggest that policy "is what governments do and neglect to do" (p. 892).

Howlett, Ramesh and Perl (2009) describe policy as a "set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means

of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve” (p. 6). Colebatch (2009) elaborates by describing policy “as an idea which flows through all the ways in which we organise our life: it is used by a wide range of participants in public life....in their attempts to shape the way public life is organized” (p. 1). He goes on to describe policy further as “an idea that we use in both the analysis and the practice of the way we are governed. It gives both observers and participants a handle on the process, a way of making sense of the complex processes of governing” (p. 1). Colebatch also notes that policy is found within and beyond the domain of government, and that non-government entities such as universities and schools are able to construct, enact and review policy.

Defining the purpose of policy assists in further developing an understanding of what policy is. Wheelan (2011) sees the decisions made in accordance with public policy as providing cohesion between “those who are a member of the relevant group, even those who disagree with the decision” (p. 6), acknowledging that policy is rarely neutral and is often used as a tool to find a middle ground. Haigh (2012) provides a helpful insight by suggesting the purpose of policy as being “to ensure that the intervention will actually have an impact on the policy-problem” (p. 79). Considine (2005) reiterates this idea that the purpose of policy is ultimately transformative action, and that “the policies of governments and the counter-policies of agitators and special interest groups each offer to make tomorrow different from today” (p. 1).

Chapter Three

Research Methodology & Methods

Weaving...consists of the interlacing at right angles by one series of filaments or threads, known as the weft (or woof) of another series known as the warp, both being in the same plane (Ling Roth, 1977, p. 1)

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation. This qualitative study was developed around a two stage progressive research program in which data were gathered, firstly, from students and teachers and, secondly, from artists, senior arts administrators and visual arts educators. The study had three aims, firstly to undertake an analytical, empirical, and conceptual study examining the perspectives of secondary school students, teachers, artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators regarding the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation. Secondly, to clarify the conceptual, policy, professional and practical issues relevant to the role of visual arts education in stimulating learning and promoting contemporary society formation in a time of societal transition and change. Thirdly, to generate theory and develop recommendations for theory, research, policy and practice relevant to learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation. The question guiding the research was *What is the nature of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation?*

This chapter begins with a discussion of the elements of the research design adopted in the study, specifically the epistemological framework, the meta-theoretical framework, the methodology, the methods of data gathering, the methods of data analysis. In the second section of the chapter, specific details of the conduct of the research are presented.

3.1 Elements of the Research Design

This qualitative research study adopted an evolutionary epistemology and a meta-theoretical perspective based upon interpretivism. A Grounded Theory Method approach to theory development was chosen. A number of methods to data gathering and analysis were explored in the early stages of the study and after due consideration an adapted version of the Grounded

Theory Method was adopted. The approaches to qualitative data gathering often associated with the Grounded Theory Method were selected and these included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field-notes and the collection of relevant documentation. There were two stages of data gathering. In Stage One, data were gathered from a range of secondary school students and teachers. In Stage Two, data were gathered from artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators. The approach taken to the qualitative analysis of data in this research was substantive coding, including open coding, selective coding, the writing of memoranda and theoretical sampling. The relationships between the broad elements within the research design of this study are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1
Elements of the research design

Research design element	Evolutionary Epistemology	Interpretivism	Grounded Theory Method	Methods
Impact on the study	The notion that the development of knowledge is evolutionary and is constantly evolving	Addresses the character and interaction of the individual and society, both separately and together	Provides for the development of substantive theory grounded in, and derived from, the data	Semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, field notes, memoing, document collection and analysis

3.1.1 The Epistemological Framework of the Study

In this study, epistemology is understood to be “the study of how knowledge is generated and accepted as valid” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p. 9). An epistemological framework is accepted as being a knowledge system through which the iterative gathering of data and the formation of understandings about the world can occur. An evolutionary epistemology was adopted in this study.

3.1.1.1 Evolutionary Epistemology

An evolutionary approach to knowledge has emerged through the work of theorists such as Campbell (1974), Lakatos and Musgrave (1970), Popper (1963, 1972), Vollmer (2005) and Wuketits (1995).

An evolutionary epistemology is a naturalistic approach to the study of knowledge (Appiah, 2003) and it exists within two distinct programs of research (Bradie, 1986). The first of these programs, the evolution of epistemological mechanisms, is concerned to address the evolving “development of cognitive mechanisms in animals and humans” (Bradie & Harms, 2016, para. 6), including their brains, motor systems and sensory systems, through the application of the biological theory of evolution. The second of these programs, the evolutionary epistemology of theories, “attempts to both account for the evolution of ideas, scientific theories, epistemic norms and culture in general by using models and metaphors drawn from evolutionary biology” (2016, para. 6) and to “address questions in the theory of knowledge from an evolutionary point of view” (para. 9). These two programs can be described as being concerned, respectively, with the evolution of cognitive structures and with the evolution of human knowledge.

An evolutionary approach to investigating and understanding knowledge claims is predicated on the notion that truth is never absolute but that it functions as the unreachable end of an asymptomatic process of getting nearer and nearer to it and that all knowledge claims can be formed, defined, refuted, renegotiated and redefined on an ongoing basis. The growth and manner of such knowledge reflects the process of successive evolutionary adaptations in the natural world and so knowledge is understood as constantly evolving. Just as the biological evolutionary processes of species adaptation, extinction and survival are perpetual, so too is the seeking, generation and refutation of knowledge.

This broad evolutionary epistemological approach was ideally suited to this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, evolutionary epistemology underpinned and advanced flexibility in the study’s conceptualisation and development, enabling an evolutionary nature to its purpose and direction, data gathering, data analysis and theory development. Secondly, it offered a complex framework with which to investigate the formation of contemporary society by examining the perspectives of those who live within such a society through an evolutionary lens. Evolutionary epistemology offered a most helpful and appropriate approach to understanding and answering the research aims of the study.

Evolutionary epistemology has its origins in the thinking of pre-Darwinian scientist Herbert Spencer, who had drawn links “between organic evolution and the development of society and culture” (Wuketits, 1990, p. 36). Donald Campbell, an American social scientist, took a lead in the development of much of the early twentieth century thinking on the idea of

an evolutionary epistemology, although it was not until 1974 that he defined the actual term *evolutionary epistemology*. We may note that an evolutionary epistemology is “an epistemology taking cognizance of and compatible with man’s status as a product of biological and social evolution” (Campbell, 1974, p. 413).

3.1.1.2 Adaptionist and Non-Adaptionist Approaches to Evolutionary Epistemology

Original evolutionary epistemology, also known as adaptionist evolutionary epistemology, was framed by the notion of survival of the fittest, a term commonly associated with the later work of Charles Darwin but one that was in fact coined by Herbert Spencer in 1864. This theory of evolution by natural selection suggests that any one individual exists as a consequence of the biological adaptations of its species, which occur over time and as a consequence of the environment in which that species lives. The outside world, or the environment, is considered responsible for the biological adaptations, including cognitive adaptations, of the species. Within adaptionist evolutionary thinking, an individual organism cannot purposefully influence the likelihood of its species biological survival.

In the second half of the twentieth century, a non-adaptionist approach to evolutionary epistemology emerged within the work of European theorists such as Wuketits (1995). In a non-adaptionist approach, adaptation is the consequence of a dynamic relationship between the organism and its environment. The individual organism can influence its species chances of biological survival. This approach to evolutionary epistemology is important to this study because the grounded theory that was generated is premised on the idea that the individual can initiate and bring about change to the society and environment in which she or he finds herself or himself.

Wuketits (2006) provides three indicators with which to understand a non-adaptionist evolutionary epistemology. Firstly, cognition occurs only in mnemonic organisms; secondly, cognition is the consequence of the dynamics between the organism and its environment; and thirdly, “cognition is not a linear process of step by step information accumulation but is a complex process of continuous error elimination” (p. 39).

In this study, the non-adaptionist explanation for the evolution of knowledge and cognition was used as a framework for the advancement of theory. In this approach it is suggested that theory generation is not linear and that within the evolutionary process of

theory development, minor refutations, developments and evolutions, are valid and enrich the process. Through a non-adaptionist lens, the organism, in this case the human, can manipulate and therefore increase the chances for all members of the society to survive. In the process of becoming successful in this adaptation, knowledge, understandings and theory will have adapted, the subsequent adaptations passed onto the next iteration of the same theory and the context or environment in which it exists would have changed.

3.1.2 Interpretivism

In this study, the selected meta-theoretical framework was based on interpretivism. A meta-theoretical framework is understood as being a system of “interlocking rules, principles, or a story (narrative), that both describes and prescribes what is acceptable and unacceptable as theory – the means of conceptual exploration – in a scientific discipline” (Overton, 1998, para. 1). Interpretivism was selected on the grounds of it enabling me to adopt an inductive research program, in which the data gathering and analytical process is iterative, cyclical and ongoing.

The interpretivist approach addresses the character and interaction of the individual and society, both separately and together, accepting the premise that society may be “understood in terms of the individuals making it up, and the individuals are to be understood in terms of the societies of which they are members” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p. 16). Within the interpretivist approach to research the individual and society are inseparable in acknowledging social interaction as a basis for knowledge generation.

A fundamental principle of interpretivism is that all human action has meaning. Interactions between human beings create, and are created by, meaning and in order for an understanding of society or societal practices to form there must be an understanding of such meanings themselves. O’Donoghue (2007) suggests that it is possible to separate the individual and society for the sake of analysis by concentrating on the individual, individuals and groups of individuals, while always remaining cognisant of the societal dimension. Interpretivists are concerned with examining these meanings. Goldkuhl noted,

The core idea of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings already there in the social world; that is to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to

understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building-blocks in theorizing. (Goldkuhl, 2012, p. 138)

Blackledge and Hunt (1985) provide qualitative researchers with five foundations with which to underpin interpretivism as an approach to examining meanings created by way of human interaction. These five foundations are “everyday activity, freedom, meaning, interaction and negotiation” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p. 17).

The first foundation is that everyday activity is a fundamental construct of society and hence every aspect of society is interwoven into the way in which people act in everyday life. When activity is modified, society is modified. The second foundation is that everyday activity is never totally imposed (O’Donoghue, 2007). There exists an autonomy and freedom. What is important to acknowledge with this second assumption is that whilst there will always be influencing external factors on how people act in everyday life, people create their own actions and interactions, and therefore their own meanings. The third foundation is that in order to understand everyday activity, the interpretivist must examine the meanings that people give to their actions and interactions. Such meanings are personal and are constructed from society by people rather than imposed by society on people. The fourth foundation is that everyday activity consists largely of interaction with others rather than acting in isolation. As a result individuals create meaning about their own actions, the actions of others and about their interactions with others, all of which then inform subsequent action. The fifth foundation is that meanings and interpretations of everyday life do not remain static, and that they are modified through a continuous process of reflection and negotiation.

3.1.3 The Grounded Theory Method

In its approach to theory development, this study adopted the Grounded Theory Method. The Grounded Theory Method is “a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area” (Glaser, 1992, p. 16), in which the purpose of the “work is to type behaviour not people” (1978, p. 69). Punch (1998) notes that the Grounded Theory Method provides both a research approach and an analysis tool. Bryant and Charmaz (2011) suggest there is a difference between a grounded theory and grounded theory method, with a grounded

theory being “the result of a research process” (p. 2) and the Grounded Theory Method being the process through which the theory is developed.

The purpose of the Grounded Theory Method is to generate theory through a “systematic, inductive and comparative approach” (Bryant and Charmaz, 2011, p. 1) to data gathering and analysis. The constructed theory “is derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 5). The Grounded Theory Method is an inductive process in which a specific theory emerges from specific data, as opposed to being a deductive process in which an existing theory is verified or refuted. This grounded theory is “generated on the basis of data” and the theory “will therefore be grounded in data” (Punch, 1998, p. 163). Glaser provides four criteria with which to determine the robustness of a grounded theory,

A well constructed grounded theory will meet its four most central criteria: *fit*, *work*, *relevance* and *modifiability* [emphases added]. If a grounded theory is carefully induced from the substantive area its categories and their properties will fit in the realities under study in the eyes of the subjects, practitioners and researchers in the area. If a grounded theory works it will explain major variations in behaviour in the area with respect to the processing of the main concerns of the subjects. If it fits and works the grounded theory has achieved relevance. When these four criteria are met, then of course the theory provides a conceptual approach to action and changes and accesses into the substantive area. In this sense it provides control in the substantive area researched. (Glaser, 1992, p. 15)

In this study, Grounded Theory Method is used to describe the process of data gathering and analysis in Stage One and Stage Two. The grounded theory is understood to refer to the theory that emerged from the data gathering and analysis and that is described in Chapter Six. When drawing upon the literature about grounded theory methodologies and grounded theories, there were variances in the use of nomenclature. In these instances, I have remained true to the terminology used by the respective authors.

3.1.3.1 An Historical Overview of the Grounded Theory Method

Two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, formally described grounded theory in their 1967 publication *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, although the fundamental

tenet of grounded theory, the analysis of data to generate theory, had been a recognised research approach since the 1930's (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory emerged as a social research strategy following work conducted by Glaser and Strauss that resulted in the publication of two seminal studies about dying in hospitals in 1965 and 1968 (Punch, 1998). Both Glaser and Strauss were experiencing death within their immediate family environments whilst undertaking research and this lent an experiential and relational element to the substance of the grounded theories to emerge from these studies. *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, the second major methodological text about grounded theory, was published by Glaser in 1972. In 1987 Strauss published the third major methodological grounded theory text, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, which positioned grounded theory within the qualitative analysis arena more broadly. The publication of this book brought about the end of Glaser Strauss collaboration. Strauss and his new collaborator, Juliet Corbin, published the fourth major grounded theory text, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, in 1990. Glaser responded in 1992 with the fifth major grounded theory text, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*. These five texts present developments in grounded theory research and analysis and form the basis for the grounded theory “family of methods” as described by Bryant and Charmaz (2011, p. 11).

Nearly fifty years after the grounded theory method was first formally described, three main identifiable trajectories of it have since emerged, namely: *Glaserian*; *Straussian*; & *Constructivist*. It is important to be aware of the subtleties of these three main trajectories in order to address the question ‘what is grounded theory?’ in the context of the aims of this particular study and its methods of data gathering and analysis. The selection of the appropriate approach to the Grounded Theory Method also affords a researcher the opportunity to become familiar with specifics of the chosen process as a way of ensuring robustness and to “engage more actively with the methodological foundations of the approach and to be more transparent about how they inform their particular use of the method” (Locke, 2001, p. viii).

The Glaserian trajectory emphasises induction and emergence, and the individual researcher's creativity within a defined sequence of stages. The Glaserian Grounded Theory Method can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative data. In his 1978 publication *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Glaser put forward a series of theoretical guidelines, which allow the researcher “room to breathe whilst developing categories and the emerging theory” (Bryant &

Charmaz, 2011, p. 198). These analytical guidelines include substantive coding, open coding and selective coding, and within these, coding families, incidents, concepts, concept properties, categories, category properties, theoretical codes and core categories.

The Straussian trajectory is one of validation and adherence to a strict collection and analysis regime, and was developed by Strauss and Corbin. They “advise the researcher to use one general model of action rooted in pragmatist and interactionist social theory” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2011, p. 202). Their approach is seen as being more instructive for researchers with step by step guidelines in how to be a grounded theorist. Glaser attacked the Straussian structure of coding paradigms, arguing that they minimised the likelihood of categories naturally emerging from the data. In addition to the aforementioned analytical tools, the Straussian trajectory is underpinned by open coding, axial coding and selective coding, as well as the paradigm model (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Researchers aligned with the Constructivist trajectory of the Grounded Theory Method seek to understand difference and variation among research participants and to co-construct meaning with them.

An adapted Glaserian Grounded Theory Method was adopted in this study because it employed induction, emergence and the individual researcher’s creativity within a clear frame of stages. In the following sections, a Glaserian Grounded Theory Method lens is used to present elements of the research design, specifically the research question, the review of literature and researcher capital.

3.1.3.2 The Grounded Theory Method and the Research Question

Whilst in many research studies the research question is the driving factor from the outset, with the researcher striving to formulate an answer to a carefully crafted question, in the Grounded Theory Method a wide research range provides the springboard for the research. The specific research question emerges once the study has begun to mature. By acknowledging that the final research question emerges at a later point in the study, the researcher starts with the wide research range. Glaser (1992) reminds the researcher that this is not to be seen as being problematic and to “remember and trust that the research problem is as much discovered as the process that continues to resolve it, and indeed the resolving process usually indicated the problem” (p. 21).

In this study, the key research question was developed and refined once open coding had been completed and the emergent categories had been identified. Selective coding then began, with theoretical sampling being used to identify participants who were best placed to provide additional perspectives to deepen conceptual thinking, to further enrich these categories and to assist in identifying a core category. At this point, the development and the refinement of the research question came into focus. I believe that by adhering to this process I allowed the generation of substantive theory grounded in the data, rather than the generation of a theory that was limited by an allegiance to a preconceived question and outcome.

A wide research focus and fluidity in the development and refinement of a research question in the initial stages of the study are linked closely to the approach adopted to the conduct of the review of literature in the Grounded Theory Method, as discussed in the following section.

3.1.3.3 The Grounded Theory Method and the Review of Literature

Glaser suggests that in order to preserve the authenticity of the data analysis and theory generation, and to reduce the influence of preconceived ideas, the review of literature in the Grounded Theory Method should be completed once data analysis has been finalised. In the very early stages of this study, a review of literature was undertaken for the purposes of the university's institutional processes associated with the acceptance of a research proposal and confirmation of candidature. In keeping with evolutionary epistemology and the Grounded Theory Method to this study, the final review of literature was significantly revised and refined when compared to this initial review and moved considerably beyond the themes which were within the original review. This final review of the scholarly literature and visual practices within which this study is located was not completed until such time as all data had been analysed and the theory grounded in the data had become evident.

3.1.3.4 The Grounded Theory Method and Researcher Capital

It is important at this point that I make reference to researcher capital within the context of this study. Researcher capital is understood to be the knowledge that the experienced voice of the researcher brings to the study, the roles the researcher fulfills within the study and the manner in which the researcher develops a research practice along the lifespan of the study. Whilst

the Grounded Theory Method literature often suggests that any preconceived understandings a researcher may have, must not be imposed on the data or on data analysis, it should be noted that this is not a universally held understanding amongst those who write about the method. The common denominator is that the theory generated must come from the ground up and must be based upon the data.

I acknowledge I came with personal and professional capital that significantly informed the conceptualisation of this study. Blumer (1954) describes such capital as being the “sensitizing concepts” (p. 8) that become the shapers of research topics and conceptual emphases. Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest that “any researcher, no matter how unstructured or inductive, comes to fieldwork with some orienting ideas, foci, and tools” (p. 27). Such concepts provide a starting point for a Grounded Theory Method study but they should not, unless they are ultimately grounded in the data, be the presumed end point, in other words, the substantive theory. Glaser adds to the definition of what research capital may be with his discussion about theoretical sensitivity as being,

the researcher’s knowledge, understanding, and skill, which foster his generation of categories and properties and increase his ability to relate them into hypotheses, and to further integrate the hypotheses, according to emergent theoretical codes. Accomplishing this result in relevance, fit and work are the criteria of grounded theory. (Glaser, 1992, p. 27)

Here Glaser (1992) notes that theoretical sensitivity is more than just prior knowledge – it also encapsulates the actions of the researcher. Glaser goes on to suggest that a researcher may be able to acknowledge his researcher capital, “but if he does not have theoretical sensitivity, he will not end up with grounded theory. His result will be a combination of empirical description with some preconceived conceptual description” (p. 27). This approach is reiterated by Strauss and Corbin (1990) who describe theoretical sensitivity as referring to a “personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of the researcher” (p. 41), adding that it is,

The attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t. All this is done in conceptual rather than concrete terms. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one

to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated – and to do this more quickly than if this sensitivity were lacking. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 42)

I believe that my formative years spent living in the Middle East and Africa, in particular Zimbabwe and Libya, as well as my education in the UK, have imbued me with a sense of the global that was, and remains, very much at the forefront of my research. I also believe that my training as an artist at the Slade School of Fine Art and my appreciation of, and practice in, artistic endeavours, have enhanced the conceptualisation, conduct and fulfillment of this study.

3.1.4 Methods of Data Gathering

The following section discusses the qualitative methods of data gathering employed in the study. A consideration when selecting appropriate methods for a study is that the method is the tool used to initially gather and to then shape and reshape data gathering, and it is the skill of the researcher that then allows for the interpretation of the data collected. The manner of gathering affects what will be seen, how it will be seen, where it will be seen and what will emerge from it. For example, in the data gathering from the practising artists there is a richness in the researcher interacting with a participant artist in their art studio that one could argue is missing if the same participant is interacted with elsewhere.

Drawing on a review of the literature on research methods, firstly the qualitative approach to data gathering used in this study is presented and justified. Secondly, the selected methods of data gathering are described, including intensive interviewing and semi-structured interviews, participant observation and field notes. The specific application of these methods in the conduct of the research is detailed later in this chapter.

3.1.4.1 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods were carefully selected as being appropriate to this study as they have the capacity to extend and broaden what we learn and know about social life and interactions that take place within it. The purpose of qualitative methods is to enable researchers to begin to more deeply understand and acknowledge the world as their participants do. This does not mean that researchers replicate the experiences and meanings that their participants hold for things, but they are able to enter the participants' world on a deeper level. Qualitative methods

allow greater flexibility throughout the lifespan of data collection that quantitative methods do not afford the researcher. Bryant and Charmaz (2011) eloquently describes qualitative methods as being “like a camera with many lenses, first you view a broad sweep of the landscape. Subsequently, you change your lens several time to being scenes closer and closer to view” (p. 14).

3.1.4.2 Intensive Interviewing

Lofland and Lofland (1984) describe interviews as being directed conversations, and as Cresswell (2013) points out, interviews “play a central role in the data collection in a grounded theory study” (p. 131). Building upon this understanding, intensive interviewing permits an “in-depth exploration of participants’ experience and situations” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 56) and as such is pertinent to the study of individuals about their perspectives on the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation. Intensive interviews can be conversational interactions but it is important to note that they are different to an everyday or unstructured interaction. Instead, the purpose of such interviews is to allow the interviewer to understand everyday actions as the participant experiences them. The role of the researcher during intensive interviewing is to assist the participant in locating and expressing her or his meanings and intentions. Charmaz (2014) notes that the researcher “can shift the conversation and follow hunches. An interview goes beneath the surface of ordinary conversation and examines earlier events, views, and feelings afresh” (p. 69).

3.1.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Creswell (2013) identifies five major types of interviews to be considered when designing a research study: unstructured with notes taken, recorded unstructured with transcription, recorded semi-structured with transcription, recorded focus groups with transcription, and variable that may include email, online and telephone interviews.

Digitally recorded semi-structured interviews, during which accompanying notes were taken, were selected for the majority of data gathering in this study. A list of guiding questions was drawn up to aid the interview process. The development of these guiding questions was done in keeping with Glaser’s insistence that “the researcher never, never asks the (research) question directly in interviews as this would preconceive the emergence of data” (1992, p. 25).

3.1.4.4 Participant Observation

The techniques of participant observation were also employed during the data gathering of this study. DeWalt and DeWalt characterise participant observation as,

A method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture. (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011, p. 1)

Cresswell (2013) writes that in a participant observational approach, “the researcher is immersed in the day to day lives of the people or through one to one interviews with members of the group” (p. 58).

Zahle (2012) characterises the approach a little more definitively, noting both the narrower understanding of theorists as exemplified by Spradley (1980) and the contrasting broader approach as indicated in the work of Jorgenson (1989). Spradley described participant observation as having a differential degree of interaction depending on the context. Thus the researcher might be present only in the environment observing or they may themselves carry out the activities of their participants. The objective is to intervene as little as possible. Jorgenson also accepted the same objective but operationalised a much broader understanding of the method. Zahle summarises the different approaches to participant observation,

It may be narrowly identified with participants in the ways of life under study combined with observations of what goes on –or- it may be taken more broadly to involve not only participant observation but also the use of interviews, life stories, document analysis and the like. (Zahle, 2012, p. 54)

DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) describe the goal of interviews in a participant observation method as participation in naturally unfolding events. They advise “observe carefully and objectively... follow the lead of the informant, get out of the way and let them talk” (p. 137).

3.1.4.5 Field Notes

Field notes are notes written throughout the data gathering processes, including prior to, during and after interviews. The use of field notes ensures the researcher is retaining as much of the data as possible, especially any conceptual ideas that form during the interview

process itself. Field notes are also written during the analysis of supporting documentation. As the interviews progress, participants frequently refer to additional sources of information that support their perspectives, such as curriculum documentation and works of arts. These documents are accessed and analysed at a later date so as to provide both context to the interview as well as supporting secondary data.

3.1.5 Methods of Data Analysis

The following section describes the qualitative methods of data analysis employed in the study. Firstly, the underpinning Glaserian approach to qualitative data analysis used in this study is presented. Secondly, the decision to use manual analysis techniques rather than digital analysis software is explained. Thirdly, the selected methods of data analysis are described, including substantive coding, open coding, selective coding, theoretical sampling, the writing of memoranda and the analytic protocol.

3.1.5.1 Glaserian Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis

The work of Glaser was drawn upon extensively to inform the data analysis process. In his 1998 book *Doing Grounded Theory*, Glaser provided a framework for the Grounded Theory Method that is based on a four level conceptual perspective analysis. This framework informed the methods of data analysis used in this study. In regard to this framework, Glaser stated,

The first level is the data. The second level perspective is the conceptualization of the data in categories and their properties. There are sub-levels exist (sic) within this level. The third level is the overall integration through sorting in a theory. A fourth level perspective is the formalization of a substantive theory into a more general conceptual level by constantly comparing substantive theory articles. (Glaser, 1998, p.136)

Of particular significance in this study is Glaser's acknowledgement that there are sub-levels within the second level of analysis. As the analysis progressed, the nomenclature used in this study was continually refined and revised, which ultimately led to the development and use of an adapted version of Glaser's Grounded Theory Method in this study.

3.1.5.2 Manual vs. Software

At the outset of the study, the intention had been to use NVivo for the analysis of data. NVivo is a computer based software package that assists the researcher in organising and managing qualitative data, and in preparation for the beginning of Stage One data analysis, I attended an NVivo training course in Melbourne. At around the same time I also attended a writing retreat with colleagues, during which I worked with my supervisor in learning how to manually open code the Stage One data. This allowed for a comparison between the two techniques to be made and it was my sense that I formed a closer understanding of the data during the manual coding process. The analysis process using NVivo was very much focussed on an adept use of the software and I found that this detracted from comprehensively engaging with the data and the emerging themes. I made the decision to complete the analysis of all data manually. Whilst this meant that the analysis process took longer than anticipated, it is my belief that as a result I developed a comprehensive understanding of the data, which enabled me to return quickly to specific illustrations within the data as and when required.

3.1.5.3 Substantive Coding

The overarching method of analysis used was substantive coding, which conceptualises the “empirical substance of the area of research” (Holton, 2011, p. 275) and enables the discovery of codes within the data. Substantive coding is comprised of two methods of coding, namely open and selective. As some of Glaser’s Grounded Theory Method naming conventions were amended for the purposes of the study, the nomenclature used during the actual analysis process of this study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Coding nomenclature

Substantive Coding Stage	Glaser’s nomenclature	This study’s nomenclature
Open Coding	Indicator / Incident / concept property	Theme (<i>TH</i>)
	Concept / category property	Concept (<i>CON</i>)
	Category / Subcore property	Category (<i>CAT</i>)
	Tentative Core category	Tentative Core category (<i>TCC</i>)
Selective Coding	Subcore	Sub-core category (<i>SCC</i>)
	Core	Core category (<i>CC</i>)
Theoretical Sampling	Theoretical sampling	Theoretical sampling (<i>TS</i>)

Each coding stage is now detailed with an accompanying diagram so as to provide an in-depth and clear understanding about how the data were analysed. It should be noted that whilst the describing of these qualitative methods of data analysis is linear, the actualities of the analysis process itself were more fluid and cyclical.

3.1.5.4 Open coding

Open coding is the first step in the coding process. The aim of a grounded theorist is to generate a set of concepts and categories. In order to achieve this, the grounded theorist begins with the open coding of all gathered data. During open coding the gathered data are fractured into broad conceptual themes (TH).

Glaser (1978) provides the grounded theorist with six rules of engagement when open coding. These rules are: “(i) ensure use of the three guiding questions, (ii) analyse data line by line, (iii) the analyst does their own coding, (iv) interrupt coding to memo the idea, (v) stay within the confines of the substantive area and field of study, and (vi) do not assume the relevance of face sheet variables such as race, gender and age until they emerge as relevant” (p. 57). An adapted version of these rules was used during open coding in this study. The adapted version was as follows: (i) ensure use of the three guiding questions, (ii) analyse data by section, (iii) the analyst does their own coding, (iv) memo after each code is identified, and (v) ensure the substantive area of the study remains paramount.

During open coding, a set of three questions guides the analyst. The three questions used in this study were adapted from those suggested by Glaser in *Theoretical Sensitivity*. The first, and most general, question is ‘What are these data a study of?’. This question “reminds the researcher that his original intents on what he thought he was going to study just might not be” (1978, p. 57). The second question is ‘What concept does this theme indicate?’. By asking this question, the analyst minimises the risk of “getting lost in the re-experiencing of his data by forcing him to try and generate codes that *relate* to other codes” (p. 57). The third question is ‘What is actually happening in these data?’. These three questions help to keep the analyst theoretically sensitive and they “force him to focus on patterns among incidents (themes) which yield codes, and rise conceptually above fascinating experiences” (p. 57). These three questions were continually revisited during open coding in this study.

Open coding enables the development of conceptual codes and gives the research both

direction and a more specific investigative focus within the wide research range. In order to assist with the open coding process, I developed a sequence of three models representative of the adapted Grounded Theory Method used in this study.

The first model, the Theme / Concept Model (see Figure 3.1), illustrates the process of fracturing the raw data [D] into themes [TH_#]. The data are read and themes identified using notations and keywords until all the data have been addressed. The themes are compared and similar themes collated. These collations of similar themes are called concepts [CON_#]. The selected themes are also referred to as being the properties of the respective concepts. Certainly in the first sweep of the data, these initial conceptual codes can prove to be thin in complexity and relevance to the study and so during open coding the researcher frequently returns to, and compares, emergent themes and concepts. By repeatedly returning to the data, the themes and concepts, by engaging in frequent memoing of ideas and insights, and through a continual process of comparison of that which is emerging from the analysis process, the conceptual codes begin to find form, fit and relevance.

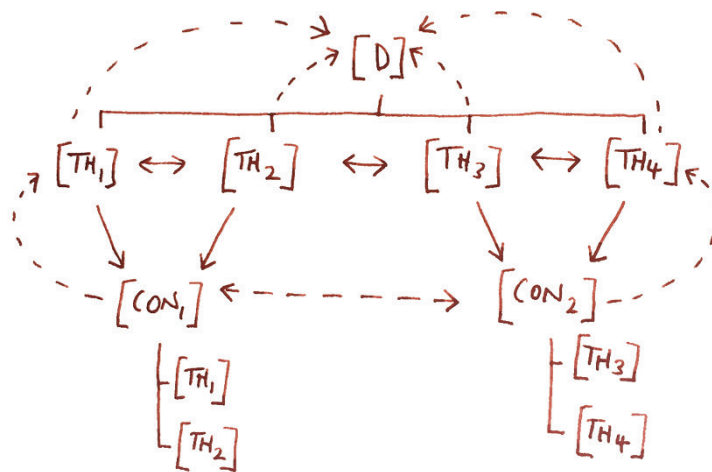


Figure 3.1: Theme / Concept Model

The second model is the Concept / Category Model (see Figure 3.2). After the initial fracturing of the data into themes and concepts, the tentative codes are revisited for further analysis. The emergent concepts [CON_#] are examined and compared in a similar process to that of the Theme / Concept Model until, with collations of similar concepts forming categories [CAT_#]. The selected concepts are the category properties. During this stage of analysis, the emergent categories are compared and the concepts are continually revisited. In addition, the extensive memoing of ideas and insights continues. With the emergence of these categories comes a firmer understanding of the theoretical ideas grounded in the data.

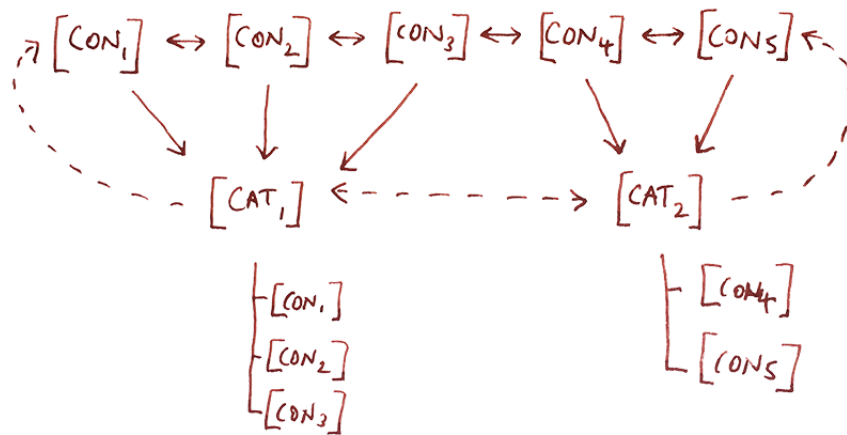


Figure 3.2: Concept / Category Model

The third model is the Category / Tentative Core Category Model (see Figure 3.3). The process of “iterative coding, conceptual memoing, and theoretical sampling” (Holton, 2011, p. 279) continues with the comparison of category to category. As a consequence of this aspect of the analysis, a tentative core category [TCC] emerges, with the categories forming its properties. This tentative core category begins to illuminate the researcher as to how the main concern of the research is resolved in the perceptions of the participants.

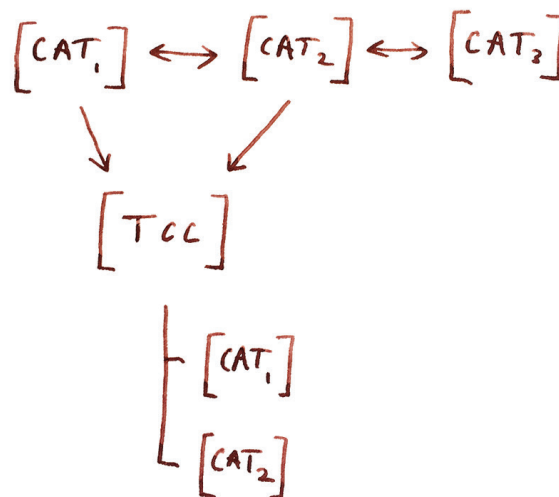


Figure 3.3: Category / TCC Model

The tentative core category gives the research a very particular focus that is now explored further. As with the earlier stages of data analysis, the iterative and cyclical nature of selective coding is significant. In order to verify the potential of the tentative core category, the researcher revisits the analysed data and identifies further opportunities for data gathering.

This data gathering intends to further enhance the existing core category and is not designed to reveal new research trajectories. This is the process of theoretical sampling [TS], which is described in the following section.

With the identification of a tentative core category, the next stage of substantive coding begins. In the following section, the analysis method of selective coding is presented.

3.1.5.5 Selective coding

Selective coding provides the opportunity for a deeper analytic focus on a tentative core category, its categories and the conceptual relationships between them. At this stage of the analysis process, any “subsequent data collection and coding is delimited to that which is relevant to the emerging conceptual framework” (Holton, 2011, p. 280). Further data gathering may be deemed appropriate but unlike initial data gathering, during the selective coding stage it is likely to be quick and of a clarifying nature only. Selective coding allows the researcher to fine tune the emergent theory. Through the gathering and analysis of new and original data, sub-core categories [SCC] emerge. These sub-core categories represent another layer of conceptual coding that underpins the grounded theory. It is from the sub-core categories, categories and concepts that the core category emerges.

The TCC / SCC / Core Category Model assists in understanding selective coding process (see Figure 3.4). The purpose of selective coding is to focus the data analysis so that the core category [CC] is identified. It is through the core category, and its sub-core categories, categories and concepts, that the grounded theory can be richly described.

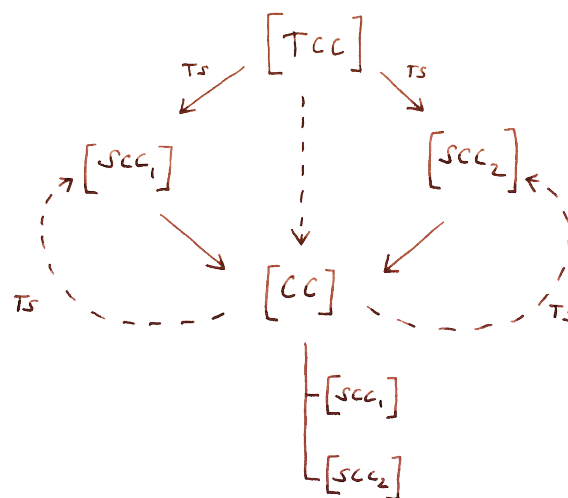


Figure 3.4: TCC / SCC / CC Model

3.1.5.6 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is a targeted data gathering and analysis process that the researcher uses during selective coding to fine tune the theoretical substance of the study. Glaser suggests that more data may need to be collected, “especially near the end of your study when your analysis tells you there is a hole in your theoretical formulations that needs closing in and that further data collection is needed to close it” (1990, pp. 30-31).

3.1.5.7 The Writing of Memoranda

The writing of memoranda (memos) is a critical interpretive and theoretical component of a Grounded Theory Method study (Hood, 2011). Memos are written as and when the data are read and analysed. This writing can be formal or informal, depending on the researcher’s preference. By engaging in the process of memo writing, conceptual ideas emerging from the analysis begin to take shape. In this study, extensive memos were written using the analytic protocol.

3.1.5.8 An Analytic Protocol

An analytic protocol was developed to assist in the manual organisation and analysis of data through the use of memos (see Appendix C). After the initial open coding of a transcript, during which the data are fractured into the themes, the next stage of open coding begins using the analytic protocol. The coded transcript is photocopied and multiple copies of the analytic protocol are printed in A3 size. The purpose of the analytic protocol is to categorise and organise illustrations of data so that they can be returned to quickly and efficiently. It is important that the original coded transcript remains intact. Additional annotations may be added to the original during the ongoing analysis process and new photocopies made.

An illustration of a theme identified during the initial open coding process is cut from the photocopy of the coded transcript and glued into the *Illustration* column (see Figure 3.5). The memos written about the theme are also cut from the transcript and they are pasted into the *Theoretical meaning making* column. Each instance of a theme is processed in this way, which means that a substantial body of organised fractured data begins to collate rapidly.

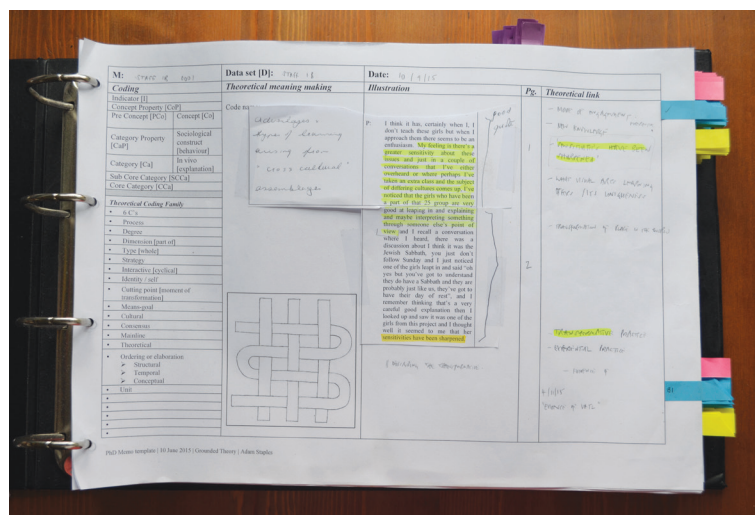


Figure 3.5: Grounded Theory Method Analytic Protocol

Each analytic protocol is given a sequential memo code [M], a reference to the data set the theme is taken from [D] and an initial processing date (see Figure 3.6). A note is made in the *Coding* column on the left to indicate the progress of coding. The page number of the transcript is also recorded on the protocol so that the original data can be revisited with ease at any stage of analysis. Emerging theoretical links between themes are added as a memo in the *Theoretical link* column.

M: STAFF 18 0001	Data set [D]: STAFF 18	Date: 10 / 9 / 15
Coding	Theoretical meaning making	Illustration
Indicator [I]		
Concept Property [CoP]		

Figure 3.6: Analytic Protocol (detail)

All transcripts, once coded, are processed in this manner. The memos are then filed in an A3 landscape ring binder in participant and memo order for easy reference. The ring binder holes in each memo are reinforced to minimize the chance of memos ripping and coming loose during the analysis process.

As open coding progresses, concepts are identified and categories begin to emerge. The categories are colour coded using colour sticky notes and this provides a visual means of reading and categorising the data (see Figure 3.7). The sticky notes are kept aligned by colour. When an illustration of fractured data is incorporated into the analysis, the corner of its respective sticky note is cut to indicate to the researcher that the data has been used. As the conceptual codes gain traction, the *Coding* column is updated to indicate the type of code emerging.



Figure 3.7: Analytic Protocol (detail)

3.1.6 Generation of the Grounded Theory

In this study, theory is understood as the conceptual relationship between perspectives and ideas that is arrived at after the evidence has been gathered and analysed. In seeking to understand the nature of theory, O'Donoghue (2007) suggests it to be an “integrated framework of well-developed concepts and the relationship between them that can be used to explain or predict phenomenon” (p. 51). Glaser (1992) provided further insight into the adaptable nature of theory, stating it “should be readily modifiable when new data present variations in emergent properties and categories. The theory is neither verified nor thrown out, it is modified to accommodate by integration the new concepts” (p. 15). A grounded theory is grounded in the gathered data and it emerges through the use of grounded theory methods during the analysis process. Such a grounded theory “exists at the most abstract conceptual and integrated level” (Glaser, 1990, p. 14).

3.2 Conduct of the Research

What follows now is an exposition as to how the research was conducted. The methods employed in the study have been outlined and now the particular characteristics of how these methods were applied and enacted are presented. The linear and descriptive nature of outlining these methods has the potential to belie the fluid, rich and exciting actualities of the conduct of the research as it was undertaken and so where applicable these more fluid and adaptive moments of the research program are also described.

Firstly, an overview of the two stages of the research is presented so as to provide a context for the conduct of the research. Secondly, Stage One of the study is detailed, in particular regard to its genesis, the selection of participants, the gathering of data and the analysis of data. Thirdly, the nexus between Stage One and Stage Two is addressed. Then, Stage Two of the study is detailed, with particular regard to its genesis, the selection of participants, the methods of interviewing influentials in society, the gathering of data and the analysis of data. Fourthly, the organisation of data and the visual presentation of the data and findings are presented. Finally, the ethical dimensions of the study are detailed.

Table 3

An Overview of the Two Stages of the Research

	Stage One	Stage Two
Participants	11 students and 3 staff at a Catholic Secondary School in Victoria, Australia	6 senior Australian arts advocates: Michael Brand, Blair French, Richard Leonard SJ, Ben Quilty, Khaled Sabsabi and Tamara Winikoff
Mode of participation, activities and tasks	Face to face workshops, discussions, art making activities, reflective practice and interviews at the school	Face to face interview and discussion between the researcher and each participant in their place of work
Timeline	2008 – 2012: data gathering and analysis	2013 – 2016: data gathering and analysis

3.2.1 Two Stages of Research

There were two distinct stages of the study's research program. At the start of the study, multiple stages of research had not been a consideration and the emergence of a second stage was very much in keeping with the evolutionary epistemological framework of the study. Stage One of the study began with the identification of the wide research range, which had taken form as a consequence of my work with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster and from my participation in the international history of art conference, *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence*, in 2008. In Stage One, data were gathered from students and teachers from the Catholic secondary school, which had organised and hosted that aspect of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster work on the visual arts. Stage Two of the study began with the identification of a need to deepen and enrich, extend and complement the findings

of the initial Stage One data gathering and analysis. As a consequence of attending the *Future / Forward: The National Visual Arts Summit* in 2014, the unique characteristics of a visual arts practice emerged as a potentially important aspect of this study and so a second phase of data gathering, this time from artists, senior arts administrators and visual arts educators, began.

3.2.2 Stage One of the Study

At the start of Stage One, the study's research focus was in its infancy and the guiding research statement was *Identity, Cross-cultural Understanding and Learning in the Visual Arts*. This tentative research direction had its antecedents in the Commonwealth Government funded Australian Values Education Project, and in particular in the activities of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural cluster for which I was an academic advisor and critical friend. The activities of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster relevant to this study are detailed at the beginning of Chapter Four in the section entitled *The Story of a Journey*. Five schools from the Melbourne area were involved in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural cluster's engagement in the Values Education project and over the eighteen-month duration of the project I formed strong professional relationships with the staff and students involved, particularly in the school where the intensive experience of engaging students in visual arts activities relevant to the aims of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster took place. After the conclusion of the Values Education Project I embarked upon this study and this particular school formed the basis for providing the participant set for Stage One of data gathering for this research.

3.2.2.1 Stage One Participants

At the outset of the research the principal of the school was contacted and a face-to-face meeting was organised so that the study could be explained, and initial permission to work with students and to interview students and staff in the school was gained. Contact was re-established with the year level leaders and an appropriate cohort of students identified as being suitable to be part of the study. Ethics approval was sought from and approved by the University Ethics committee, with approval granted for the information letter (see Appendix D) and the consent form (see Appendix E). The selected students and their parents or guardians were contacted by letter via their year level leader. The signed consent forms were returned to the year level leader, who then returned them to me. In total data were collected from eleven students and three staff.

One student decided to withdraw from the study twelve months after data gathering had been completed and all pertinent data were withdrawn.

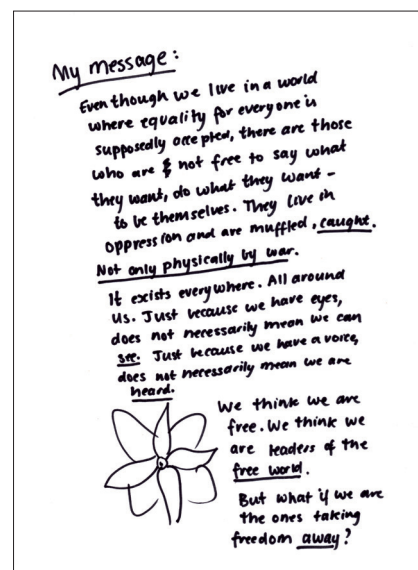
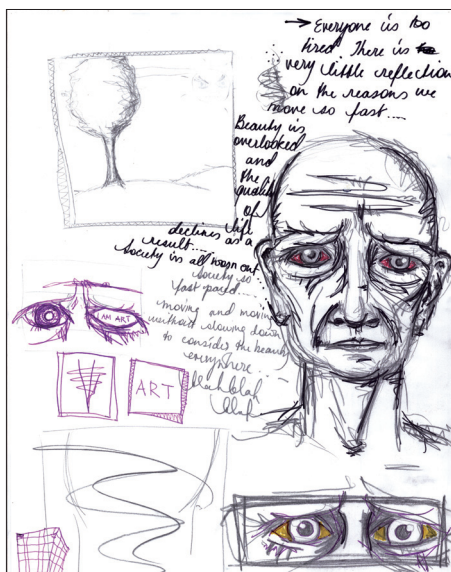
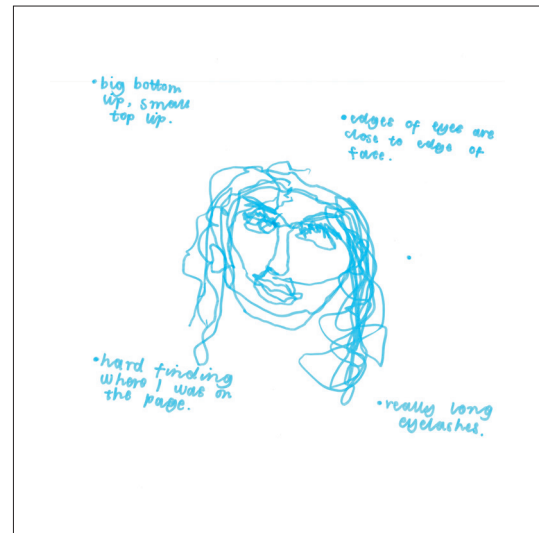
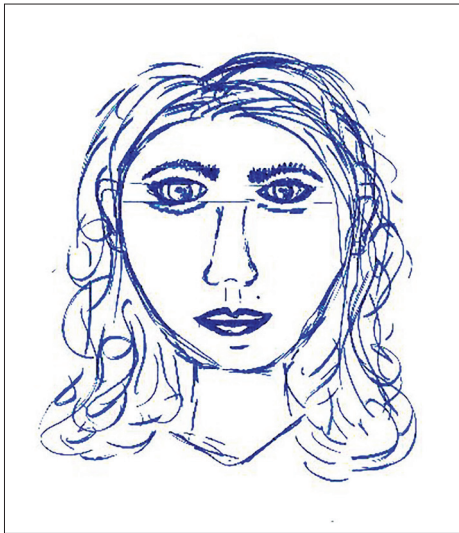
3.2.2.2 Stage One Data Gathering

Once the consent forms had been returned, two immersion days were organised on site at the school as a precursor to the interviewing of participants. The purpose of these days was to enable me to build a deeper understanding of the students in their own school environment, to further develop the relationships that had begun during the Australian Values Education Project and to engage the students in visual arts activities that could inform considerations of questions and issues that were central to the aims of this study. The building of rapport was seen as important for the gathering of rich, meaningful and insightful data.

During the onsite immersion days, the students were engaged in a series of visual arts activities. The homeroom teacher was present and participated in the workshops. The focus of these activities was to use learning in the visual arts experiences as a way of engaging in thinking, art making and reflection around the themes of identity, cross-cultural understanding and multiculturalism.

The first workshop began with the development of a mindmap about identity and what it meant to be a young person in Australia. This activity quickly led to lively conversation about what identity may be and what aspects of identity were considered important. Working together in small groups, the students mapped their thinking on A3 sheets of paper, using both images and text (see Figures 3.8 and 3.9). The first workshop concluded with a self-portrait activity inspired by the work of American artist Alexander Calder. The students were first asked to draw a self-portrait from memory (see Figure 3.10). The students were then asked to close their eyes, hold their pen in their non-dominant hand and explore their face with their other hand. When they were ready to draw, the students drew the contours they could feel on their face. This exercise focused on connecting the students to what they can feel as they draw rather than to what they perceive themselves to look like (see Figure 3.11).

The focus of the second workshop was to reflect on the first, in particular how the students now understood identity to be and how such an exercise allowed them to challenge societal preconceptions. The students responded with art making and text based artefacts (see Figures 3.12 and 3.13). The artefacts were collected and field notes were taken during and after



these sessions.

After the immersion days, semi-structured interviews were organised with the students and staff at the school in order to discern their thoughts on issues relevant to the central themes of the study. A list of guiding questions was provided to each student an hour before the interview (Appendix F). Students were interviewed in pairs, with an audio recording taken of each session and field notes kept. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour. At the start of each interview, the students were shown their drawings and asked to reflect on them and any change in their thinking over the course of the immersion days. Three teachers who had been associated with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster project were also interviewed. These teachers shared observations of the students involved in the project and later in the workshops and discussions of the current research. These interviews were audio recorded and field notes were taken.

3.2.2.3 Stage One Data Analysis

The audio files recorded during the Stage One interviews were sent to a professional transcription service provider to be transcribed. The interviews were transcribed within forty-eight hours of being recorded. Both the transcripts and the audio files were stored on my password protected university computer in my secure office.

The Stage One data were extensively coded twice. In the first iteration, the transcripts were read, emerging themes underlined, memos made and similar themes assigned a code. The transcripts were then cut up and similar themes collated in A3 envelopes. The conceptual codes and memos were written on the front of each envelope. This initial phase of open coding resulted in the emergence of a Tentative Core Category and the identification of a need for further data gathering. This method of open coding is not described in detail as it was a precursor to more advanced and comprehensive open coding undertaken in the latter part of Stage One and in Stage Two.

The second iteration of the open coding of Stage One data occurred once open coding had started on the Stage Two data. Both my confidence in open coding and the use of coding strategies had improved and I felt it would be worthwhile to revisit the Stage One data. A review of the initial analysis suggested that the identified codes had a tendency to be descriptive rather than conceptual. The formatting of the transcripts is an example of how analysis processes were improved. Each transcript was divided into two columns of equal width, with the left

hand column remaining blank and in the right hand column appeared the text of the transcribed interview, which was doubled spaced. The columns had borders. This format allowed for both memoing during early analysis of the transcript and cutting of pertinent extracts during the later analysis. The name or pseudonym of the interviewee, the name of the interviewer, the date of the interview, the time of the interview and the place where the interview took place were listed at the top of each page. Each page was also numbered.

The three coding models presented earlier in this chapter were used in this second round of coding, resulting in the identification of core category, sub-core categories, categories and concepts.

3.2.3 The Nexus between Stage One and Stage Two

From the Stage One activities and discussions, and from the tentative findings from the first analysis of Stage One data, it was evident that the students did not need to be taught *about* policies and issues such as identity and cross cultural understanding and multiculturalism in Australian society, which was an original concern of this study. Instead as young Australians they wanted to consider ways to effect and bring about change in the process of society formation. This move in direction had significant implications for the study and I believe caused it to evolve and develop into an enquiry that became more original, emancipatory and transformative in focus and scope. This new trajectory is consistent with the assertion of Miles and Huberman (1984) that in social research “the conceptual framework should emerge empirically from the field in the course of the study; the most important research questions will become clear only later on” (p. 27).

The Stage One analysis had identified that there was indeed perceived by students and teachers to be a relationship between learning in the visual arts and society formation. But it was deemed that a deeper, wider and more conceptually rich analysis could enhance the empirical and conceptual understandings emerging from this study, so further data gathering was deemed necessary from senior arts advocates with particular knowledge, experience and understanding in the visual arts.

3.2.4 Stage Two of the Study

Stage Two of the study was located in the professional visual arts sector in Australia and it was designed to examine the perspectives of senior arts advocates, including artists, arts administrators and arts educators about the wider, deeper and more conceptual elements of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation.

3.2.4.1 Researching Influentials

Those interviewed in Stage Two of data gathering are people widely considered to be *influentials* in the Australian arts community. There is a proven track record of researching influentials using a grounded theory methodology (Kogan, 1994). Kogan suggests that “regarding the interview as a dynamic and not a stable and clinical experience” (p. 73) is an important adaption to standard semi-structured interviews. This is relevant to interviewing influentials as it assists in making the interviewee feel like “an important contributor to a worthwhile cause” (p. 73) who is able to articulate their substantial high-status experience in the area. Kogan notes that high research quality is to be found in keeping “a balance between structured and controlled enquiry and dynamic interaction with the matter being researched” (p. 79).

The individuals who participated in Stage Two of data collection spoke with great authority and so keeping them on track as far as the conversation questions were concerned could at times be challenging. As Seldon & Pappworth (1983) suggest “Every interview is unique; some informants will expect and need constant questions; others will not allow you to get questions in” (p. 75). This potential for deviation from the planned interview meant that I needed to be as well prepared as possible. It was important to the success of the interaction with the participant that I was knowledgeable and informed.

Among the many considerations to be taken into account when interviewing influentials, it has been highlighted that “one has to take care to reassure the interviewee on the precise use to which the material will be put” (Kogan, 1994, p. 73). Negotiating the relationship with those interviewed was an important part of the research process.

3.2.4.2 Stage Two Participants

Negotiation to secure participants’ involvement in Stage Two was often a lengthy process. Some participants had diaries that were free in the immediate future whilst others needed four

or five months in order for a mutually suitable time to be arranged. In most cases initial contact was made with the participants through mutual acquaintances in the visual arts community. It was at times a challenge to construct appropriate messages when making contact. Very formal language worked with some participants whilst a more relaxed turn of phrase worked with others. My background as a graduate of the Slade School of Fine Arts in London and my experience as an academic working in the field of visual arts education gave me credibility, which appeared to play a significant role in gaining access to Stage Two participants.

Ethics approval was sought from and approved by the University Ethics committee for an amendment to the original information letter and consent form to include the option for participants to agree to be named in the data analysis or to remain anonymous (Appendix G). All Stage Two participants agreed to their name being used in the study.

3.2.4.3 Stage Two Data Gathering

Whilst the procedural elements of Stage two data gathering are now detailed, it is worth noting that contextual profiles of the individual participants are presented at the beginning of Chapter Five. The participants were interviewed on an individual basis in an environment familiar to them. Michael Brand was interviewed in his office at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Blair French in his office at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Richard Leonard at St Mary's Presbytery in North Sydney, Ben Quilty in his art studio, Khaled Sabsabi in his office at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and Tamara Winikoff in the National Association of Visual Arts office. A week prior to their interview, each participant was emailed the information letter, the consent form and a list of guiding questions (Appendix H). I took hardcopies of all three documents to each interview and the formal completion of paperwork was finalised before the interview started. It was important to respect time frames. An hour-long interview was acceptable for some, whilst an hour and a half was acceptable for others.

3.2.4.4 Stage Two Data Analysis

The Stage Two data analysis began with the transcription of the interviews. I transcribed the recorded interviews within seventy-two hours of the interview taking place, whilst the conversation remained fresh in my mind. Completing the transcribing myself allowed for a much deeper connection with the data and an ability to generate concepts during the process of

transcription. Strauss and Corbin support this notion, noting that “listening as well as transcribing is essential for full and varied analysis” (1990, p. 31). In Stage Two, the transcription process was acknowledged as being an initial open coding analysis.

In order to minimise the time spent transcribing, I purchased speech-to-text software called *Dragon Naturally Speaking* and downloaded it onto my laptop, thereby giving me access to it at any time and in any location. This software allows the user to talk into a microphone, and the spoken word is then converted into text using the Microsoft Word processing function. In the first iteration of an interview’s transcription, the audio file was listened to at half speed through earphones and at the same time I repeated the words spoken by both the participant and interviewer into a microphone, with the *Dragon Naturally Speaking* software transcribing what I was saying. Each interview was transcribed in this manner in fifteen minute segments. The software is very capable but not perfect, so immediate editing was required to ensure accuracy. During the second iteration of an interview’s transcription, punctuation, grammar and content were attended to and refined. A third iteration allowed for finalisation of the transcript in readiness for dispatch to the participant for verification. As a result of this process, I became very close to the data, sensitive to nuances and complexities in the responses of interviewees and was continually involved in a cyclical process of reflection and tentative analysis as the data were transcribed. In readiness for the data analysis process, the transcripts were prepared in Microsoft Word using the format described in Stage One data analysis. The Stage Two data were analysed using the sequence of models presented earlier in this chapter.

3.2.5 The Presentation of the Data Analysis from Stage One and Stage Two

The cornerstone of this study has been the visual and as I analysed the data, in my mind I saw the findings emerging as a series of artworks. I understood the process of analysis as one of art making and I, as an artist, was making an image of the findings. In the following section, the visual response to the presentation of the data analysis for Stage One and Stage Two is detailed.

3.2.5.1 The Data as Artworks

I wanted to present the sub-core categories, categories and concepts as emerging from their core category, with the core category at the centre of the artwork. This design allowed me



Monochromatic Sectors from Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Colour Ring, Light Centre, 2012
© Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2016. Photo: Prudence Cumming Associates Ltd



Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Colours: Concentric Spin, 2012
© Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2016. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd

to illustrate the different levels of coding and the nature of the interconnected relationship that existed between them by using both shape and colour in each artwork. I drew upon the practice of the British artist Damien Hirst to inform the design of my visual response. The two Hirst artworks of particular interest to me were *Monochromatic Sectors from Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Colour Ring, Light Centre* and *Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Colours – Concentric Spin*. From the analysis of Stage One data, I created a collection of artworks called *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1* [#1-16], from the Stage two data a collection of artworks called *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [# 1-33] and *Colour Enmeshment | Series 3* [#1], which represents the entire study.

Hirst's *Monochromatic Sectors* inspired the overall structure of my own artworks, including the shape and colour. My design took the form of four concentric circles with a common centre, with the region between each circle being representative of the coded data (see Figure 3.14). The region formed between each concentric circle is called an annulus (de Klerk, 2008). The centre of each image represents a core category (CC). The first annulus is representative of the sub-core categories (SCC) underpinning the core-category. The second annulus is representative of the categories (CAT) underpinning the sub-core categories. The third annulus is representative of the concepts (CON) underpinning the categories.

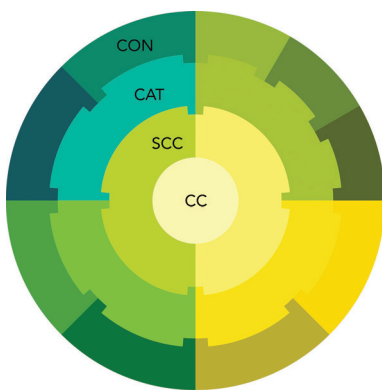


Figure 3.14: Four concentric circles



Figure 3.15: Illustration of a Sub-core category (SCC)

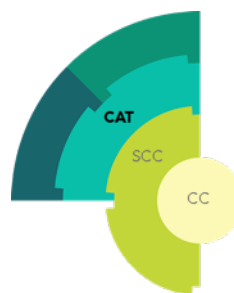


Figure 3.16: Illustration of a Category (CAT)

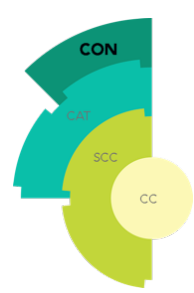


Figure 3.17: Illustration of a Concept (CON)

The colours used by Hirst in *Monochromatic Sectors*, and the sequence in which he puts them together, also informed the design of my own artworks. The name of each colour was identified, as was its CMYK colour. CMYK colours are explained in the following section.

Hirst's *Concentric Spin* inspired the way in which I represented the interconnectedness between the sub-core categories, their categories and concepts. In his painting, Hirst interlocks his coloured shapes, thereby suggesting that there is a relationship between them. In the *Colour Enmeshment Series*, I have used a similar design to denote where a relationship exists between the different codes.

An illustration of a sub-core category is provided in Figure 3.15. This sub-core category is underpinned by two categories and four concepts and itself underpins a core category. An illustration of a category is provided in Figure 3.16. This category underpins a sub-core category and is underpinned by two concepts. An illustration of a concept is provided in Figure 3.17. This concept underpins the category, which in turn underpins the sub-core category.

Each sub-core category artwork is accompanied by a legend (see Figure 3.18). The legend lists, by name, section number, CMYK code and colour, the sub-core category and its categories and concepts. These are presented in relevant sections of Chapters Four and Five.

Core category (CC)	CMYK	Sub-core category (SCC)	CMYK	Category (CAT)	CMYK	Concept (CON)	CMYK
Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant (4)	1%,0%,40%,0%	The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students (4.2)	31%,2%,100%,0%	Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative (4.2.1)	75%,1%,47%,0%	Seeing Self, Others and Society (4.2.1.1)	86%,24%,705,8%
						Considerations of Cultural Identity (4.2.1.2)	92%,49%,52%,27%
				Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind (4.2.2)	54%,2%,100%,0%	Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice (4.2.2.1)	73%,14%,100%,1%
						Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice (4.2.2.2)	90%,29%,98%,18%

Figure 3.18: Legend with CMYK colour

3.2.5.2 CMYK Colour Model

Each core category, sub-core category, category and concept is represented by an CMYK colour in the artworks, tabulated findings and the legends. The CMYK colour model (Adobe Systems Incorporated, 2015) is a four ink system used for professional colour printing. The four colours are cyan, magenta, yellow and key (black). CMYK colours are a combination of one or more of the four inks, with each combination represented as sequence of four percentages. For example, the CMYK colour assigned to the Stage One sub-core category *The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students*, is a mid-tone green with a CMYK code of 31%, 2%, 100%, 0%.

3.2.6 Ethical Dimensions

Ethical issues are an underlying feature of all research studies. During the course of this study the researcher liaised closely with Human Ethics Research Committee of the university and followed their protocols throughout.

In Stage One direct correspondence was entered into with the principal of school where interviews were conducted. Direct correspondence was entered into with senior arts advocates with whom interviews were conducted in Stage Two.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the process should they wish. Throughout the study all data were stored in a secure environment at Australian Catholic University.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed and described the epistemology, meta-theoretical perspectives, the methodology and methods employed in this thesis. After outlining the aims of the study a justification was provided for the adoption of an evolutionary epistemology informed by the theoretical perspective of interpretivism. The Grounded Theory Method was selected as the study's approach to data gathering, data analysis and theory generation. Details were provided of methods of data gathering and analysis, in particular the qualitative approaches to data collection in Stage One and Stage Two of the research. The research issued in a rich set of data for analysis and theory generation. The outcomes of the analysis of the findings are presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant

I am the weaver. The one who warps the weft of life with her threads. (Tamayo, 2008)

Introduction

The core-category of *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* is grounded in the data gathered from students and teachers during Stage One of the study. The overall purpose of this chapter is to examine the perspectives of these students and teachers about the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation. The analysis of findings discussed in this chapter will show how learning in the visual arts can transform young people's understanding of self, others and society and how learning in the visual arts itself can be transformed as a mode of learning. Such a transformative and transformed mode of learning can provide something different and significant both in stimulating learning and in contributing to society formation in a time of considerable societal transition and change.

The findings from this first stage of data gathering and analysis, in keeping with the evolutionary nature of the study, provided crucial threads of insight, direction and meaning, and a theoretical sensitivity with which to design the gathering and analysis of data from senior arts advocates in Stage Two. The findings of Stage Two are reported in Chapter Five.

Underpinning this core category of *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* are two sub-core categories, namely (i) *The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students*, and (ii) *Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers*. It is suggested visual arts transformative learning provides a new kind of conceptual and practical link between learning in the visual arts and experiences that are transformative in nature. There are two dimensions to visual arts transformative learning. The first dimension is that students are in some way transformed with regards to their understanding of self, others and society through an engagement with learning in the visual arts. The second dimension is that this form of engagement with visual arts learning is itself a transformed approach to established modes of learning in the visual arts. The manner and form of these two dimensions are illustrative of that which is different and significant about the potential of visual arts transformative learning.

Before each of these two categories is discussed and the findings of the data analysis provided, the background to, and context of, this stage of the study are presented in the following section entitled *The Story of a Journey*.

4.1 The Story of a Journey

This study had its provenance in the experiences of the students and teachers who participated in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster of the Australian Commonwealth Government's Values Education Good Schools Practice Project (2005 – 2008), which had been established and managed by Curriculum Corporation (Curriculum Corporation, 2008). At the time of Stage One data gathering, Curriculum Corporation was a not-for-profit partnership of Australian education ministers, with its role being to support the work of the education system and sectors. Education Services Australia, as Curriculum Corporation became known, was discontinued in July 2015. Of particular significance to this thesis was that aspect of the student experience in the Values Education Project that focussed on opportunities for students to learn to value and share cultures and contribute to the discourse and enhanced understanding around Australian society formation through learning in the visual arts.

The particular purpose of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster was to present opportunities for students from Catholic, Islamic, Jewish and Government secondary schools to consider pertinent issues about values, national identity and citizenship through collaborative learning activities. The hope was that the work of the cluster might “contribute to fostering positive relationships among young people of different cultures and faiths and in doing so contribute to the development of a stronger sense of community, social cohesion and well-being among the students and within society more broadly” (Staples, Devine, & Chapman, 2010, p. 768).

The students met on a number of occasions during a series of interschool gatherings. The first of these gatherings was at a Jewish School and it coincided with the important Jewish festival of Purim, which commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia. On this occasion the students grappled with important questions such as “How as young people do we combat racism in the community?” (Staples, Devine, & Chapman, 2010, p. 768). The Immigration Museum in Melbourne hosted the second interschool gathering, the purpose of which was to explore migration and immigration through artworks and artefacts from the

museum's collection. It should be noted that at this stage the participating students had started to form friendships with those from other schools as a consequence of being able to learn *with* each other rather than solely learning *about* one another.

A Catholic Secondary College hosted the third interschool gathering. The focus of this gathering was exploration of self and society through learning in the visual arts, with students responding to various visual stimuli as a precursor to creating their own group artworks that addressed contemporary issues. *Cultural Jigsaw* and *Interfaith Australia* are two examples of the artworks created. In *Cultural Jigsaw*, the format of a jigsaw was drawn upon to connect the seemingly disparate cultural perspectives that exist in Australia and in doing so, suggests to the viewer that a new and emergent vision of Australia is a possibility. Similarly, in *Interfaith Australia*, the artists' intention was to represent the diversity of faiths as being representative of contemporary Australia. These artworks were subsequently exhibited in the art gallery at Australian Catholic University's Melbourne campus. It was from this school that the students and teachers who were interviewed for Stage One of this research study were drawn.



Cultural Jigsaw



Interfaith Australia

A number of student gatherings were held over the duration of the project. At its culmination, those students involved in the Australian Commonwealth Government's Values Education Good Schools Practice Project from Victorian primary and secondary schools came together in a showcase of learning called *Day of Understanding* at the Melbourne Exhibition and Conference Centre. The day ended with the students from the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster presenting an on-stage dramatisation and art exhibition entitled *A Story of a Journey*.

My role as a member of the Curriculum Corporation's team serving as an academic advisor and critical friend to the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster, especially in

regard to the visual arts activities of the cluster's work (Staples, Chapman & Devine, 2010), inspired my interest in pursuing many of the learnings brought about by the activities of the cluster. It was this experience that laid the basis for the generation of the initial question and lines of enquiry for subsequent research and data gathering for this thesis. The relationship between contemporary society formation, and what was to emerge later in the thesis as visual arts learning, was of particular interest.

These initial insights and the tentative identification of research questions and lines of enquiry were further developed and enriched by the conceptual and aesthetic concerns addressed at the *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence* international conference convened by The International Committee of the History of Art at the University of Melbourne in 2008. The intent of this international history of art conference had been to provide a platform for debate about the nexus between cultural exchange and the visual arts. The conference highlighted "a common thread in art from prehistory until the modern era in which exchanges between cultures and societies in visual imagery and art history" (Staples, Devine and Chapman, 2010, p. 771) had occurred. Through such exchanges "cultures are crossed and reinvented" (Anderson, 2009, p. 3) and "fluid borders" (p. 3) negotiated by practice, practitioner and artefact.

The conference provided important conceptual foundations for this study, in particular the nature of the role of learning in the visual arts in a time of societal transition and change, whilst the work of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster provided the practical experience and context. From this were laid the foundations for Stage One of the study, in which data were gathered from students and teachers of the school that organised and hosted that aspect of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster activities related to learning in the visual arts.

The analysis of data gathered from these students and teachers is presented in the following sections of this chapter. Underpinning this core category of *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* are two sub-core categories, namely (i) *Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students*, and (ii) *Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers*.

The reader is reminded of the data analysis and reporting structure described in Chapter Three and presented in this chapter and also in Chapter Five. The first stage of data analysis

generated concepts. Groups of similar concepts were then collated into categories and in turn, similar categories were collated into sub-core categories. Two sub-core categories underpin the core category, which represents the overarching conceptual interpretation of the respective data. In reporting on the analysis, the overarching core category is described through a systematic examination of its sub-core categories, categories and concepts. Each identified aspect of data is accompanied by a digital artwork.

4.2 The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#1]

Core category (CC)	CMYK	Sub-core category (SCC)	CMYK	Category (CAT)	CMYK	Concept (CON)	CMYK
Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant (4)	1%,0%,40%,0%	The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students (4.2)	31%,2%,100%,0%	Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative (4.2.1)	75%,1%,47%,0%	Seeing Self, Others and Society (4.2.1.1)	86%,24%,705,3%
						Considerations of Cultural Identity (4.2.1.2)	92%,69%,52%,27%
				Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind (4.2.2)	54%,2%,100%,0%	Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice (4.2.2.1)	73%,14%,100%,1%
						Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice (4.2.2.2)	90%,29%,98%,18%

Grounded in the data gathered from students during Stage One, the first sub-core category to be described in this chapter is *The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1* [#1]). Eleven secondary students were interviewed for this component of data gathering. These students had been selected on the basis of their participation in, and their knowledge of, the visual arts activities undertaken as part of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster in the implementation of the Australian Government's Values Education Good Practice Schools Project. As part of this study, in addition to their participation in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster, these students had been invited by me to participate in three days of school based visual arts workshops, discussions and interviews, which had been designed to provide them with the opportunity to engage in deeper and further reflection.

In their interview responses, students revealed the ways in which learning in the visual arts could potentially be both transformative for young people and transformed as a practice. In particular, the students' reflections illustrated the ways in which learning in the visual arts had provided opportunities for young people to more deeply understand, value and share culture with other young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Their experience also showed how the exposure to a new type of learning and practice could be transformative. The students reflected on the valuable things that they had learned through their engagement in the visual arts activities and which had allowed them to explore new ways of communicating about culture, identity and belonging. Emerging from these reflections came a sense of there being the possibility of stimulating new ways of imagining society and empowering young people with a new engagement on issues relevant with the formation of contemporary society. The benefits of individual and collaborative modes of aesthetic practice, and innovative forms of learning associated with the visual arts, were important aspects of the findings to emerge from the analysis of the Stage One data.

Underpinning this sub-core category are two categories, namely (i) *Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative* and (ii) *Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind*. In the first category, the nature of what it was that had been transformed in students is discussed. In the second category, the nature of how these experiences had come about is discussed through illustrations of a transformative practice. These two categories are examined through their respective concepts and themes.

4.2.1 Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#2]

The first category to be described is *Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#2]*). The analysis of the students' perspectives provided evidence of the ways in which learning in the visual arts had the potential to be transformative. The experiences in which these students engaged during the activities associated with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster, the workshops associated with Stage One data gathering and their subsequent reflections on these experiences, were designed to explore the visual arts as a way in which and with which the students could learn about themselves, their peers and society, rather than being predicated on meeting the outcomes of the visual arts curriculum more specifically. What emerged as significant to the transformative experience was the opportunity for an opening up about and recognition of self, and a fresh willingness to share stories and cultural histories amongst each other.

This category is underpinned by two concepts, namely (i) *Seeing Self, Others and Society* and (ii) *Considerations of Cultural Identity*.

4.2.1.1 Seeing Self, Others and Society

The first concept is *Seeing Self, Others and Society* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#3]*). An examination of the data gathered from students revealed ways in which the students' perspectives about how they saw themselves, their peers and society, had been transformed as a

consequence of learning in the visual arts. The students offered insights into the manner and form of these new understandings about self, others and society, which had been transformed by learning in the visual arts undertaken in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster activities and the workshops conducted as part of the study.

When reflecting on how they might now see *self* after the visual arts experiences, the students referred frequently to the notion of identity. Student 1 provided an insight into how she understood her identity in saying, “I don’t think what you look like or anything like that actually matters, it’s what your personality reflects” (Stu1 0011, p. 3). Student 11 observed, “I think there can be two types of identity, your physical identity and then what’s on the inside” (Stu11 0010, p. 9). It seemed that the opportunity to explore self through the visual arts activities, and the opportunity to reflect on the experience, had prompted these students to better understand who they may be and what they considered as important and valuable to their sense of being and their identity.

Some of the students reflected on this notion of identity in regard to relationships with others. Student 1 said,

I try and look at their personality rather than what they look like on the outside, I think that’s the best thing to do. I try my conversation with them and be friendly towards them and then try and open up and get to know them more (Stu1 0003, p. 4).

Student 2 commented, “identity is what you value in someone and how you treat other people in your actions and words” (Stu2 0002, p. 5).

The students placed a strong emphasis on personal values, especially in regard to understanding self and others, as being of more importance than physical identities. Student 7 commented, “one of the things that I really look for is intellect. People don’t have to have the same cultural background to me or anything like that” (Stu7 0010, p. 8). When reflecting on her artwork created during a self-portraiture activity, and on what been learned during the experience, Student 11 said, “It shows me the physical aspect of someone but I don’t think it can portray the person himself or herself” (Stu11 0009, p. 9). These were realisations of a personal kind.



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#3]

The students also reflected on their actual interactions with others during the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. Student 5 noted, “we got to talk to other students from different cultures and found that we did not know more about them than they knew about us” (Stu5 0006, p. 9). Student 6 spoke of the same experience, saying she had learned “they were pretty much like me” (Stu6 0007, p. 8). The same student commented,

it was strange to think they have, well not strange, but it was nice to think that they had common views to me as well. They had different religions and different beliefs but some of their views were just like me, just like mine. (Stu6 0008, p. 9)

The point here is that whilst difference was recognised, the students did not see it as, or needing to be, a barrier. On addressing these barriers, Student 7 commented,

I have never really had a chance to get to know someone from a different Muslim culture and that kind of just broke down the barriers between us and it just made me realise that we’re all the same. We were just talking about what music we like and all that kind of stuff and it was all the same and it’s like you think they’re so different but it’s not really, it’s only culturally, everything else about us is the same. (Stu5 0004, p. 6)

This examination of the concept *Seeing Self, Others and Society* revealed some of that which had been transformed, as a consequence of learning in the visual arts, in students in the context of knowing self, others and society. The focus on these deeper aspects of self, others and society suggests that they offer the opportunity for further exploration and learning. Students also identified a perceived need for more learning and pointed to transformation that could be brought about by such learning.

4.2.1.2 Considerations of Cultural Identity



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#4]

In the second concept, *Considerations of Cultural Identity* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#4]*), the students offered their reflections about how they understood their own culture and identity, and that of their peers. These reflections had occurred as a consequence of the students’ involvement in both the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster and

the workshops associated with Stage One data gathering of this study. It became clear from the analysis of these data that among young people there was no single perceived way of seeing and understanding what it is to be a citizen of Australia. Student 11 pointed to this notion of a cultural heterogeneity when she said, “I think Australians can’t really be stereotyped because there are so many different types of Australians” (Stu11 0003, p. 2).

A differentiation in cultural identity was of no concern to a number of the students and they did not consider it vital to identify strongly with a particular cultural identity, in this case what it meant to be Australian. On this, Student 2 said,

this is not something that I really think about but I suppose I just think of myself as an Australian. I don’t have any reason to feel that it’s all that important. I mean I just think of myself as a person and everyone else in the world as a person. I don’t feel that defined by an Australian identity. (Stu2 0001, p. 4)

For others, a forthright statement of allegiance to a cultural identity was important. Student 11 said, “I see myself as a typical Australian teenager. With an English background” (Stu11 0002, p. 2).

Whilst all the students identified themselves as being Australian, the manner in which they identified with cultural backgrounds varied. For some, their Anglo-Celtic background meant they were *just* Australian. For others, their connection to cultures beyond the shores of Australia imbued them with an added cultural capital.

Many of the students spoke of their English or Anglo-Celtic heritage. Student 3 reflected that “My great grandparents came from Ireland and then my grandparents from my mother’s side, one is from America, one is from England” (Stu3 0003, p. 4). For some of the students, it appeared that being Australian was associated with not having a rich culture. Student 6 spoke of such a perceived lack of cultural capital when she commented that whilst she was happy to be called Australian, her engagement in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster activities made her realise she might have possibly been missing out on something culturally,

I see myself as Australian. I feel like I’m part of Australia and I feel part of everything that Australia is. But I have really no background like other people. My parents didn’t come here from anywhere so sometimes I felt a little bit left out because other people

have all their stories and my friend and I had nothing. We were just Australians. But I see myself as part of Australia and part of society. (Stu6 0003, p. 5)

Student 6 continued in her considerations about the lack of a *real* culture and cultural background when she said,

all these other students had their stories, had a background that they really knew about... it's like they had a real background and traditions from another country that they were proud about. I have no other traditions, no other culture and they did. (Stu6 0005, pp. 6–7)

The perception among some students of having or not having a 'real culture' has significance for the role of arts educators in Australia. In particular it highlights the need for arts educators to help young people recognise that all cultural traditions do underpin and enrich their lives regardless of what that culture might be.

The students with a cultural background from a country other than Australia considered that their continued connection to this other culture was of significant importance. The richness and distinctive influence on life that this other cultural identity bestows was highlighted by Student 3, who said, "I do count myself as an Australian but I do have a very big cultural background. It definitely impacts on my everyday life. Greek and Italian" (Stu3 0003, pp. 2-3). Student 7 also spoke of the importance of being able to enmesh two different cultures, when she said "I would like to be identified as a 'Leb' (Lebanese) or a 'wog'". However, the same student went on to express a slight regret in saying that she did not "always fit in with (her) family", and nor did she "always fit in with (her) friends", but instead she found herself "somewhere in between" (Stu7 0003, p. 3).

Student 3 indicated the extent to which diverse culture and society is already in existence and flourishing in Australia, saying,

one of my friends is Tongan and one of my friends is Lebanese but to me they are both Australian because this is where we live and you walk along the streets and you don't see what sort of nationality someone is, I just see it as part of the whole culture in which we are living. (Stu3 0004, p. 4)

In this regard there was an acceptance of a range of cultures as being a fundamental aspect

of modern Australian society. Student 2 said, “I’ve got my cultural background. I have all the different things about me but I still see myself as one of many. We all fit in” (Stu2 0002, p. 2), whilst Student 3 observed that “a whole lot of being Australian is the fact that it is multicultural” (Stu3 0003, p. 4). The same student went on to clarify her stance, saying “it’s the way we have been brought up, and the society in which we have been brought up in because overall Australia is quite multicultural and accepting” (Stu3 0005, p. 5).

Student 10 indicated the importance of having a broad knowledge and perspective by saying, “We accept more in society, so we understand more, just understanding everything about people and their culture and their religion and everything, that just means so much” (Stu10 0007, pp. 5–6). At the same time as acceptance was put forward as an important feature of contemporary society, it was also suggested that multiculturalism often took perseverance and was not to be expected as something easy to achieve or as a fait accompli. Student 1 added,

you need to go out into the world and understand all these cultures, and if you don’t, there will be like a dead end because you see on the news that things have been happening but the people don’t really understand their way of life. (Stu1 0009, pp. 11–12)

Through the concept of *Considerations of Cultural Identity*, an examination of the students’ reflections and considerations on the learning experiences associated with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster activities revealed an acknowledgement of the importance of being aware of the cultural heritage of self and others. Importantly, these experiences had enabled the students to *see beyond* their existing perspectives on identity, self, others and society.

The category of *Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative* encapsulated two particular forms of transformation experienced by the students as a consequence of engaging in and with the visual arts. These experiences had been the catalyst for an opening up about and recognition of self, and a fresh willingness to share stories and cultural histories amongst each other.

4.2.2 Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#5]

The second category to emerge from the Stage Two data gathered from students is *Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#5]*). The young people interviewed in this study drew particular attention to the approaches and the manner of learning in the visual arts that might lead to different ways of seeing, thinking and behaving and in doing so play a role in and enable the students' ongoing participation in the formation of the emerging society of which they are members.

This category is underpinned by two concepts, namely (i) *Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice*, and (ii) *Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice*. These concepts are now discussed.

4.2.2.1 Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#6]

The concept of *Individual and Collaborative Modes of Practice* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#6]*) revealed the different mode of practices through which the transformative had occurred. The students perceived that their engagement with the visual arts activities associated with both the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster and the reflective visual arts workshops gave them the opportunity to reflect on, and effect

some change in, their thinking about self, others and society. Their engagement in learning through the visual arts had stimulated new ways of seeing themselves and others, and it was learning in the visual arts that had offered a distinct way of doing so. An important link had emerged between learning in the visual arts and transformative experiences about how students saw themselves and thought about themselves, their place in society and their potential contribution to society formation.

Student 2 observed about learning in the visual arts that “it brings out something that often isn’t expressed in words or in everyday life” (Stu2 0005, p. 13). It was perceived that the chance to express themselves through visual arts and artistic practice could lead to the students having deeper understandings of themselves and others. These deeper understandings, and the capacity to express those understandings, were deemed to be made possible through visual expression. Both individual and collaborative modes of aesthetic learning and practice made such expression possible.

For some students an individual approach to engagement was vital to new ways of seeing, thinking and believing. Student 2 stated, “there are lots of people who aren’t quite sure what makes them or what they believe or what they are” (Stu2 0009, p. 11) and Student 7 commented “I don’t think we are taught to see ourselves clearly” (Stu7 0022, p. 27). By engaging in learning in the visual arts, it was perceived that one of the outcomes could be to “understand yourself better” (Stu1 0012, p. 8).

Whilst learning in the visual arts was seen as one way to learn new things about oneself, learning in the visual arts, in turn, was seen importantly as an opportunity for *learning with oneself about oneself*. On this point, one student commented, “I see art as my mind” (Stu4 0020, p. 21). For these students this learning and expression in the visual arts could only be done individually. As Student 4 continues in regard to her preference for creative expression, “I guess it depends on the people, their personality in particular, because I know I am uncomfortable with drawing around other people, because it’s people I don’t know” (Stu4 0010, p. 11). When asked, “Could you create with other people?” she replied, “Yeah, I guess. It depends. It wouldn’t be as personal because we have different views and then, it would just be like a jumbled up type of artwork I guess” (Stu4 0019, p. 21).

Student 8 also highlighted the potential of the visual arts to enable young people to express their thoughts, feelings, and stories in a unique and individual way, when she said “I

think you can portray a lot through picture or an image. And if they all had their own thing to tell, in a unique way, then find a way to portray it in each individual image” (Stu8 0016, pp. 19–20). For some, the visual arts are also valued, in so far as,

it’s an outlet, it’s something that I don’t have to think about and I think it’s fun for me, it’s not for everyone but it’s fun to me and I enjoy it, I enjoy sitting down and doing something. Paintings and mosaics. (Stu6 0020, p. 22)

For others, “it’s a way to get images out, instead of just having them in your head” (Stu4 0007, p. 9) and the value lies in “not thinking about it, just being in a different world, just do whatever you want, painting, drawing” (Stu5 0002, p. 3).

In addition to acknowledging the value of individual expression, for most students who participated in this study, learning in the visual arts was also seen as an effective way to better understand and relate to other people. Student 7 said, “I think it (learning in the visual arts) will push everyone a bit closer, so they will have that understanding. The persons themselves will be able to see into themselves a bit deeper as well” (Stu7 0009, p. 12). The visual arts activities of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster provided new opportunities for collaborative and social modes of engagement, which informed the development of relationships and deepened understandings of others. “I think that if people got to know each other then they would understand that they, we, are all the same” (Stu6 0017, p. 16).

The students involved in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster consistently highlighted the importance of learning through collaborative modes that enhanced the development of relationships and enhanced deeper understandings of other people. One student commented, “once I got talking to them (students from the other schools involved) I noticed that they are exactly the same as me. There were no differences. We have the same interests and everything” (Stu11 0005 p. 4). Student 3 observed, “it means you can relate to those people because you found you had similarities, you found that you know they play whatever sport you play and they’ve got younger brothers” (Stu3 0010, p. 9).

Learning *with* rather than learning *about* was deemed as being particularly important, as Student 5 indicated in regard to the value of getting “to know the people more than just knowing about the cultures” (Stu5 0014, p. 10). Moving beyond superficial judgements about other people by being involved in collaborative experiences of learning was seen as particularly important and

was an important aspect of bringing about enduring habits of mind, as illustrated by Student 11,

I think that you have to get below just what you see. I think you have to spend the time together to know that people aren't what you just see. People are more underneath and what they think is different to what you visualize. I think that you have to be with someone else. (Stu11 0017, p. 19)

The value of bringing students from a variety of cultural backgrounds together in collaborative learning experiences was consistently highlighted. As one student commented, "they should really organise lots more days because you need to be able to understand all the cultures, otherwise you will just be living in the same environment and you won't ever learn about any other culture and other people" (Stu1 0008, p. 11). Students suggested a number of ways in which this more collective approach to learning through the visual arts could be brought about. For example, Student 5 suggested,

I'd really like to see our school have a particular school that we could have in almost a sister school way, that we could come together and have activities or whatever, not just a particular group of students but everyone would be able to get involved in it because I found that by doing this experience I've learnt so much. (Stu5 0007, p. 11)

Drawing from their experience in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster, students highlighted the transformative nature of the collaborative experiences in learning in the visual arts. On this, Student 7 said "We all mingled and we all had to work together towards this artwork that we're making at the end of the project. And everyone's kind of happy. No one is like, "let's not do it"" (Stu7 0018, p. 16). Student 8 added,

It comes through from each culture, so I think if everyone were to bring one little bit of their culture to a piece of art, they'd be able to try and explain what's happened to them or where they are headed, otherwise we just keep misjudging them the whole way through. (Stu8 0008, p. 11)

Adding to this understanding, Student 6 commented,

I think it makes people enjoy it, enjoy learning, their learning about different cultures and I think maybe if our generations do these things then older generations and younger

generations will understand, because they have seen the artworks and visual design and they like it, it draws them in, it stands out to them and they take notice. (Stu6 0011, p. 12)

As one student insightfully concludes, “because the arts are so universal, it’s not like only one group of people can do it” (Stu11 0024, p. 28).

The concept of *Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice* revealed two ways of engaging in and with learning in the visual arts that the students had identified as enabling something that was transformative to take place. The two modes, the individual and the collaborative, provided solid underpinnings for students to explore self, others and society. They allowed a practice to develop that might become engrained in the habits of mind and the activities and doings of the students across their lifespan.

4.2.2.2 Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#7]

Through the concept of *Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#7]*), those findings are presented which reveal something about the transformative dimensions and dynamics of learning in the visual arts that the students experienced. The data confirms the significance and value of learning in the visual arts, as illustrated by Student 11, who said “the visual arts are different from learning from a textbook or writing down, it’s a different way of learning, so you learn differently, you interact differently, you learn in a different way and see different things” (Stu11 0014, p. 13). Student 3 understood learning in the visual arts as “mean(ing) you can explore lots of different things and everything that you do, I think, especially art, tells people something about you” (Stu3 0016, p. 16). Learning in the visual arts can be transformative because,

art has the possibility to impact someone’s thoughts or someone’s ideas because it can be so powerful. One piece of art can actually change someone’s ideas. So I think if you use it in the right way, you’d be able to change people’s ideas. (Stu11 0016, p. 17)

But for some students, the findings suggest that transformative learning in the visual arts must begin with assisting them to overcome their lack of confidence in their own artistic ability and with helping them to overcome any preconceived ideas that they might have about their own artistic abilities. This lack of confidence constitutes a fertile ground for transformation. Instilling confidence in artistic endeavours thus becomes an important step in the development of and engagement with visual arts transformative learning.

The learning of skills to express oneself visually is another important dimension of visual arts transformative learning, as is the acquisition of a sense of the meaning and value of visual expression. An appreciation of the personal engagement and joy that can be tapped into within oneself and in connection with others through artistic endeavour. For some students, especially those who might have not been able to find their own place or *métier* in other aspects of learning and school life, learning in the visual arts experiences that are transformative have the potential to allow them to overcome their lack of confidence in themselves and their own capacities.

Comments made by students regarding their perceptions of their own artistic ability in the visual arts furthered this examination of some of the dimensions and dynamics of transformative learning in the visual arts. These self-perceptions had not necessarily impeded the students' willingness to engage in and reflect on the visual arts experiences undertaken in association with this study but it is suggested that such remarks offer important insights regarding the potential for a transformative practice in learning in the visual arts to be better understood and realised.

As indicated, the student data revealed that initially many students experienced a lack of confidence in their artistic ability and that a most critical dimension of a transformative practice in learning in the visual arts involves the instilling of confidence in artistic endeavour. The students' comments revealed the extent to which students were self-deprecating about their artistic abilities and lacked confidence in their creativity, as illustrated by Student 1 who said, "I can't draw at all. It's just a whole bunch of scribble" (Stu1 0001, p. 10). This sense of inadequacy was reiterated by both Student 11 and Student 4 who commented respectively "I am not that good at drawing. I tend to be a perfectionist, so I tend to not like what I do" (Stu11 0001, p. 1) and "I always seem to see what I have done wrong and it's always just trying to go over, go over things make them seem the way I want them to seem" (Stu4 0008, p. 10). Student

5 also identified her perfectionist qualities as being an issue when she reflected,

I am a real perfectionist so everything I do doesn't seem right. I like doing it but I never really liked my end products, I just enjoy doing it but not seeing it, I just find that it's not that satisfying at the end, I just like the process of doing it. (Stu5 0001, p. 2)

When asked what it was that prevented students from enjoying artistic endeavours, self-deprecation was repeatedly evident. Student 9 commented, "I am not much of an artist. I do enjoy drawing, but I am not very good" (Stu9 0001, p. 1), whilst Student 5 put her reluctance down to "probably my preconceived ideas that I am not good at art" (Stu5 0001, p. 2). On this, Student 5 provided insight into why she had more confidence in other areas of learning was evident,

I'm more a maths and science person... I like the actual answer to questions. I like knowing that I'm right or wrong not that there is somewhere in between. I know where things go on everything but I'm not amazing at painting and drawing. (Stu5 0002, p. 3)

The challenge in designing learning in the visual arts experiences that are transformative is to address some of the preconceptions, misconceptions and reservations of some students, at the same time as enabling all students to flourish and find in the visual arts an enriching way of learning, communication and being.

In order to bring this about, some students suggested that skill acquisition was an important transformative dimension of learning in the visual arts, suggesting it would help "if we knew how to draw, if we all knew what we had to do" (Stu10 0017, p. 20).

Students also pointed to the importance of helping students to see the value, distinctiveness and meaning associated with visual arts expression, as illustrated by Student 3, who said "someone who is creative is someone who loves what they're doing and who is able to put forth their ideas and convey meanings on paper" (Stu3 0002, p. 2). It was also deemed important to affirm students and give them the opportunity to enjoy their art making,

if people who don't like the arts, if they were given an opportunity just to draw and just have fun then I think it would be helpful. But if they are told what they are doing is wrong or not good enough then they won't do it. (Stu6 0015, p. 15)

Students offered some very practical approaches to facilitating the transformative in learning in the visual arts activities, when drawing from their experience with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. These approaches could involve giving young people new experiences, actively engaging them with people from other cultures in art making activities and going to museums or galleries with students from other schools. Student 6 said “until you put someone in a situation they don’t know, if you just tell them that’s what you’re supposed to do, they don’t understand, but if you give them the experience they really embrace it” (Stu6 0010, p. 11). And Student 10 reflected “if I could have the opportunities to go anywhere or to meet new people I’d love to do that. I want to” (Stu10 0009, p. 7). Such active engagements are valued in contrast to,

just sitting there with a book reading, about how this culture does these sorts of things. It would be something that would really capture people’s attention and it would probably be a lot more of a successful way of getting the message across. (Stu9 0006, p. 9)

Personal, active engagement was paramount in student perceptions, as illustrated by Student 7, who said “I think if you actually have an interest in these people, rather than being told to have an interest” (Stu7 0020, p. 21). Student 11 reflected in her transformed understanding when she said,

If I hadn’t had that opportunity (of engagement through the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster), I think I probably wouldn’t have the confidence to put myself forward, to go up to a person from a different race that looks different to me. I don’t think I’d have the confidence to do it. (Stu11 0022, p. 24)

Mutual engagement in an active process of art making was particularly valued. When asked what form of visual arts experience might enhance dialogue between young people, Student 11 said, “I think very hands on things. You can’t expect to go and just talk to them and really connect with the person. You have to find things that you have in common” (Stu10 0011, p. 8). Story telling was seen as one way of making such connections by Student 8, who said, “I think the storytelling was really good. Everyone got a fair bit of a say in everything. The art was a great way to portray what you think about yourself or other people” (Stu8 0014, p. 17). Personalising the engagement was deemed a very good entry point by Student 7, who

suggested, “Maybe draw your own eye, draw your own flower. I think it will reflect a person if you tell them to put themselves in it or give their own twist to it” (Stu7 0023, p. 27).

Structuring student interactions in the first instance was perceived as helpful when designing visual arts learning but only as an initial step, as indicated by Student 11, who says “I think you need the structure to begin with but then, after a while, if you drop the structure and then it’s not forced. So then people interact differently” (Stu11 0019, p. 20). Student 11 went on to suggest that,

you definitely need the structure to begin with, even though it changes the way people act. I think you need it because without it people don’t want to get to know each other. They kind of just stand back and feel it’s awkward and they don’t try. (Stu11 0021, p. 210)

Student 10 provided insightful commentary in saying that “It needs to be regular too. So if you see someone, for one day and then see them a few months down the track you do definitely lose everything that you ever had” (Stu10 0015, p. 9).

It was thus apparent from these data that transformative learning in the visual arts is meaningful, based on experience, and building on and developing prior knowledge, interest, understanding and a frame of reference that students see for themselves as being of value, or related to an issue that they consider important and which they want to explore. It has to be meaningful to the individual and provides an opportunity for the individual to put something of herself or himself into exploring. It needs to be challenging and provide an opportunity to form new relationships, views, opinions and ways of relating to themselves, others and the broader society. It can be engaged in individually or it can be part of a collaborative or social experience giving the opportunity to see self, others and society in new ways, providing opportunities to learn with people, not about people, to reflect on new world views, alternative frames of reference. It is often enriched by being part of a community of practice, sharing a mutual interest or concern, and entered into and engaged within a space that can take a person across an initially safe place through to a threshold from which new challenging, thoughts and experiences can be explored and transformations in thinking and action can occur.

From such experiences students can develop new *habits of mind* and expression, new ways of thinking and learning about the world and their place within it, new ways of engaging

with others and society. As a result, they have the opportunity to come to know new things, learn how to come to know and relate to the world in new ways, learn how to have confidence in these new ways of knowing, being, and relating to others and thus becoming part of the evolving self in community with others, in a society which is also constantly evolving and in transition and change.

4.3 Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers



Colour Enmeshment | Series I [#8]

Core category (CC)	CMYK	Sub-core category (SCC)	CMYK	Category (CAT)	CMYK	Concept (CON)	CMYK
Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant (4)	1%,0%,40%,0%	Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers (4.3)	2%,4%,71%,0%	Something Different and Significant (4.3.1) 39%,7%,100%,0%		From Learning in the Visual Arts to Visual Arts Learning (4.3.1.1)	46%,10%,100%,0%
						Visual Arts Learning as Experiential and Experimental (4.3.1.2)	64%,27%,100%,10%
						Visual Arts Learning as a New Way for Exploring and Contributing to Society Formation (4.3.1.3)	65%,40%,99%,27%
				Realising the Potential of Visual Arts Learning (4.3.2) 2%,8%,95%,0%		Valuing Creativity (4.3.2.1.)	2%,12%,100%,0%
						Addressing Challenges in Traditional Approaches to Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (4.3.2.2)	30%,25%,99%,1%

Grounded in the data gathered from teachers during Stage One, the second sub-core category to be described in this chapter is *Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series I* [#8]). Three teachers, including a school principal, were interviewed for this component of data gathering. These teachers had been selected on the basis of their participation in, and knowledge of, the visual arts activities undertaken as part of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster in the implementation of the Australian Government's Values Education Good Practice Schools Project. The teachers articulated that *something different and significant* had happened during the course of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster, with particular reference to the impact on the students' understanding of and engagement with sharing culture and contributing to contemporary society formation through the visual arts activities.

Underpinning this sub-core-category are two categories, namely (i) *Something Different and Significant* and (ii) *Realising the Potential of Visual Arts Learning*. The first category describes the mode of learning that had occurred and which the teachers saw as having been something different and significant as a consequence of the students' engagement with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster visual arts activities. This something different and significant was pivotal to the emergence of visual arts learning as a transformed mode of learning in the visual arts and to its being central to the theory that emerged in this study. The second category describes the teachers' perspectives about concepts and concerns relevant to the realisation of visual arts learning. These two categories are now examined through their respective concepts.

4.3.1 Something Different and Significant



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#9]

The first category to emerge from the analysis of the data is *Something Different and Significant* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#9]*). The teachers perceived that a re-imagined approach to what is usually referred to as learning in the visual arts had taken place during the activities of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. They believed this learning had the potential to be transformational in its capacity to contribute to student learning, in particular to student explorations about self, others and the re-imagining of contemporary society formation. It was acknowledged that this constituted a transformed approach to an established way of understanding learning in the visual arts.

This category was formed around three concepts: (i) *From Learning in the Visual Arts to Visual Arts Learning*, (ii) *Visual Arts Learning as Experiential and Experimental* and (iii) *Visual Arts Learning as a New Way for Exploring and Contributing to Society Formation*. These three concepts and the findings are now presented.

4.3.1.1 From Learning in the Visual Arts to Visual Arts Learning

Key to the concept *From Learning in the Visual Arts to Visual Arts Learning* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#10]*) was a transition in terminology as it pertained to learning in the visual arts, and which was of significance to the development of the theory generated in this study. The teachers were focused on what they saw as having been unique learning experiences

for students during the visual arts activities of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. The teachers acknowledged something different as having occurred as the students engaged in these particular experiences, and it was their conclusion that a different and significant form of learning had taken place. The notion of such learning as being something different was seen as being a consequence of a particular shift in learning. This shift was that a form of learning, which centered on the visual arts, had occurred and that this particular form of learning was something different to the standard visual arts education experience. This shift constituted a change in the mode of engagement with both the visual arts and the purpose of learning. This learning was considered to be something new and fresh in the eyes of the students in so far as it provided opportunities for students to transform, deepen and enrich existing perspectives of themselves and others from different cultural, social and religious backgrounds. This new mode of learning was also seen as having a relevance and longevity across the lifespan. Henceforth, and in order to signal the shift from visual arts education and learning in the visual arts, this something and different will be referred to in this thesis as *visual arts learning*.



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1
[#10]

Visual arts education is a standard component of most curricula and as such its inclusion in a new learning program would not be considered innovative per se. Most, if not all, students in Australia have exposure to visual arts education experiences at some stage during their schooling. However, Teacher B observed that the visual arts activities at Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster had provided students with a different kind of experience to that of the more standard classroom based visual arts education when she reflected that “this notion keeps coming through that the students enjoy(ed) doing something different and they associate the creative arts as doing something different” (Staff B 0023, p. 22). The important insight here is that visual arts learning can be considered as having the potential to offer something different and innovative as well as maintaining a strong pedagogical alignment with the familiar discourse of the visual arts education discipline.

The teachers were positive in their reflections concerning the visual arts activities associated with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. They identified the inherent power the activities had as a means of motivating students and their learning in a different way.

Teacher C, in her observations of these learning experiences, reflected, “I think it just reinforces that with a lot of these students if we give them something a bit different to do they just run with it” (Staff C, p.2). Teacher C suggested that the students had approached and accepted the challenge of the learning focus in regard to learning about self, others and society, rather than being concerned primarily with showcasing and acquiring the artistic skills that might have been developed during the activities. Teacher C recognised and articulated that something different and significant exists between understanding the visual arts as being primarily a skill based discipline within education and understanding the visual arts as providing an innovative, transformative and enduring mode of learning. This brought to the fore the importance of the nomenclature of visual arts learning as both distinctive from the standard visual arts curriculum language and as a contributory theme in the development of the thesis.

The distinctiveness of visual arts learning resonated with the teachers as being an exciting approach to learning, which if nurtured appropriately had the potential to open new opportunities to transform and invigorate student learning. When reflecting on what may be unique about this mode of learning, Teacher B, a program director in the school, said “it’s the one way in which you see students’ values and beliefs change rather than just learning (about) something” (Staff B 0011, p. 11). When considering what type of change and transformation it was that had occurred through the engagement with the visual arts activities, Teacher A highlighted an enhanced respect and awareness of other cultures, saying, “my feeling is there’s a greater sensitivity about these issues” and, when commenting on the impact on one of the students, observed that “I saw it was one of the students from this project and it seemed to me that her sensitivities had been sharpened” (Staff A 0001, p. 2). Teacher B went on to suggest that as a consequence of being involved in these visual arts activities, students had been made to “think about things that they’ve never had to think about before” and to consider “questions that we’re not asking and that’s terrific” (Staff B 0012, p. 13).

Not only did the teachers observe that an alternative to the standard, and generally classroom based, learning had occurred and that this had impacted positively on the students, they also observed that as teachers themselves, they had been able to reflect on the impact about what they had learned about visual arts learning in their classrooms. Teacher A provided an illustration of such a reflection when she observed the outcome of the visual arts activities as being “as if the lights are switched on and these kids were relaxed and each other, they were

joking, they were working feverishly at the project, they are exchanging views, ideas” (Staff A 0016, p. 14).

The teachers saw the practice of visual arts learning as having the potential to transform, particularly when conceived of as being different to the existing practice concerned with addressing the specifics of the visual arts curriculum and an attainment of associated outcomes. As a consequence of the analysis of the data gathered from the teachers, both the emergence of the notion of visual arts learning and the identification of its transformative qualities led to a consideration of the distinctive characteristics of visual arts learning as being central to the theoretical direction emerging in this study.

4.3.1.2 Visual Arts Learning as Experiential and Experimental



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#11]

The teachers were excited by the pedagogically rich link between visual arts learning and the provision of learning opportunities that they understood as being experiential and having an experimental orientation and this forms the basis for the second concept now under consideration (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1* [#11]). Learning classified by the teachers as being experiential and experimental included the activities that had taken place beyond a classroom environment normally inhabited by themselves and the students, even if these activities were undertaken within close proximity of the classroom. In addition, the teachers identified there to be value in visual arts learning experiences being available to students that involved engagement with someone who is *new* and from outside the everyday school environment.

When reflecting on the visual arts learning that students in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster had experienced, Teacher B pointed to its experiential nature as being transformative in value. Teacher B suggested that as well as being different and significant, the experiential component increased the likelihood of attitudinal and values based change in students, and that such change contributed to their learning being transformative in nature. It was believed that the experiential component of visual arts learning elevated the learning experience from one in which students might be inclined to express worthy but obvious views and opinions, to instances where their existing knowledge and opinions were deepened and

potentially changed. As observed by Teacher C, “I suspect the experiential learning would be quite different for them. I think they know the issues (for example about cultural diversity and multiculturalism) but actually experiencing it might be quite different” (Staff C 0002, p. 4). The value of the experiential aspect of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster visual arts learning activities highlighted that learning *with* can be more beneficial than learning *about* in the context of self, others and society.

The teachers placed significance on the experiential as having the potential to be transformative when incorporated into learning engaged with in another space or place, other than in classrooms. The notion of learning beyond the classroom as an enabler of visual arts learning was aligned closely with the experiential orientation of the learning. Learning beyond the classroom can be formal or informal, with the former relating to organised and scheduled off site learning opportunities and the latter relating to learning that occurs outside the organised and scheduled off-site activities. An example of the former were the visual arts activities held as part of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster and an example of the latter was given by Teacher A, who said, “I really enjoy those train trips home from the Immigration Museum because that’s when we unpack what’s happened” (Staff A 0002, p. 2).

The teachers also suggested that experiencing someone new as a part of visual arts learning provided opportunities for the students to engage in learning in a new, innovative way. The teachers acknowledged that to have a new person involved in the students’ learning was intriguing and inspiring for both students and teachers. Teacher B said “I think that when there is somebody else working with them it also prompts them (the students) to think. It’s different so they invest more, they become quite focussed on the process” (Staff B 0001, p. 1). The someone new could be an artist, a teacher, or a researcher. Teacher C commented “having experiences with other students and working with other students from other schools is essential” (Staff C 0015, p. 14). Teacher B suggested those opportunities to work with someone new and with students from other schools as being enactments of “the *cool factor* [emphasis added]” (Staff B 0024, p. 23). Whilst this cool factor may not be a required component of every visual arts learning experience, it should not be disregarded as an aspect of learning that can be very motivational for young people.

The value of the experiential was also linked to the value of the experimental, as illustrated by Teacher A, who commented that,

I think the word experimental is the key one there. I think that's the really attractive factor the creative arts give them. These kids are not physiologically designed to sit and listen for hour upon hour or take notes or write essays. They are so much better when they are asked to dance it or sign it or play it or make it. (Staff A 0025, p. 23)

The relationship between experimental learning and visual learning supports Teacher C's belief that such learning opportunities had great innovative merit and the potential to motivate and transform learning. Teacher C reflected "to see those kids here the day they did all that artwork, they just ran with it" (Staff C 0015, p. 15). A link between experiential and the experimental, which had the potential to be innovative, thus came to emerge as important to the development of the theory in this thesis.

4.3.1.3 Visual Arts Learning as a New Way for Exploring and Contributing to Society Formation



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#12]

Through an examination of this third concept, it is possible to acknowledge the potential of visual arts learning as a way of exploring, understanding and contributing to contemporary society formation. The following examination is formed around the themes of *Exploring Society Formation* and *Contributing to Society Formation* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#12]*).

This concept emerged from data based on the perspectives that the something different and significant offered by visual arts learning had the potential to have a direct impact on learning about, and contributing to, society formation, thus enabling a more active and change oriented process of learning.

The diverse and changing nature of contemporary Australian society makes it appropriate that the exploration of diversity remains paramount in current student learning experiences. The responses from the teachers indicated that they considered cultural and societal exploration among students to be an acutely important concern and that visual arts learning was as effective, if not more effective, than traditional text based learning as a method to enable such explorations.

The teachers reflected on the interactions between students from different schools and

cultural backgrounds during the visual arts activities. They identified that a unique interchange of information had occurred between the students during the collective undertakings of students from different schools and religious backgrounds associated with the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. This notion of interchange highlighted the extent to which opportunities for learning and for sharing knowledge, and experiences of culture and identity, can occur in a social context. As an illustration of such an interchange, Teacher A quoted an overheard conversation between two students in which the first student commented “I’m putting this symbol down here because in my religion this is what this means” and the second student responded by saying “Oh does it, tell me more”. In reflecting on this interaction, Teacher A said,

It was perfect, you couldn’t have had a better interchange and it’s the arts that does it, and I was trying to think about what it is and I haven’t fully unpacked that, but I think these kids had done the talking, and bit of writing... and it had all seemed to be, they had really struggled with that I felt, but the artwork. It is something that one can elaborate on so much more easily I think than writing or talking. (Staff A, pp. 14-15)

Teacher A continued about what she recognised to be the link between the arts more broadly and the sharing of culture and the exploration of society formation. Given that the diverse society in Australia is, in part, a combination of cultures, languages and religions, Teacher A’s subsequent observation added to her conviction about the visual arts,

I think all of the arts tap into a deeper emotional level in sometimes subconscious perspectives on things or perceptions and I think it speaks to people in different ways particularly where language might be a barrier and that could be quite a significant barrier in terms of multicultural understanding. So I think it overcomes language barriers and I think it’s a way for people to express things that they may not be able to articulate always. (Staff A 0004, p. 4)

Teacher A certainly believed that the students had a different kind of experience whilst learning about identity, cultures and society through visual arts learning, and that in order to understand and forge a future role in society formation, the students needed to acquire both knowledge *about* that society and a confidence in *how* to engage in learning processes and activities that encourage respect and willingness to learn more about oneself and with people

from different backgrounds.

These experiences addressed more than religious or cultural questions. The students had been able to look at their own lives and identity through a different lens. The interesting factor with this self-exploration is that it identified the need that young learners in today's society be able to learn about and with themselves as well as their ability to learn about and with others. As Teacher C reported,

and one of the students said, "oh it was wonderful because it strengthened my own faith". One of the girls was saying that she's still agnostic really, but what it did was to help her understand why people will have, have to, or need (to have) some sort of faith. So she wasn't necessarily, as some of them were, talking in terms of the experience of their own faith, but she was definitely saying "it helps me understand people". (Staff C 0014, p. 13)

Visual arts learning was thus perceived as offering something different and significant in that it presented another way of engaging with issues of cultural, religious, societal and identity concerns, with the potential of moving forward towards deeper, shared understandings and more common goals. The teachers were suggesting that for something to change, or to be viewed in another way, a new practice needed to emerge. This new practice was in contrast to current considerations and classroom practices of such issues in which teachers identified a danger of participants "trot(ing) out what's politically correct" (Staff B 0005, p. 5).

The teachers believed that visual arts learning enabled practices that might ultimately have the potential to contribute to society and future society formation. Making a contribution to society and society formation suggests a concern with an enhancement of the existing society and an improvement of it in some way. Teacher A voiced a concern that whereas in past generations the family home was the place where conversations about the world took place, in modern times this had become less of a feature of family life. More and more it has fallen to the schools to engage young people in these considerations. The visual arts activities at Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster were perceived to have provided an opportunity for students to engage in these important conceptual conversations and considerations. The suggestion being made by the teachers is that by having such opportunities, foundations are being laid to assist students in understanding and forming society, especially in building students' capacity

to contribute to their society in the future. Teacher B reflected that,

there are many times when you do question I suppose the social and political awareness of students and you wonder about the level of conversation that happens at home and that sort of social capital, there is some but you hear a lot of stories about students not having in-depth conversations around the dinner table anymore and at times they can be quite naïve in their political and social awareness. So it's been good to hear that they've made some perceptive comments and been able to ask some questions that have shown they're thinking. (Staff B 0001, p. 2)

Also to emerge were indications of the qualities or values that can themselves be the contributions made to society and in turn form the basis on which to form new society. In Chapter Five, the universal value of honesty emerges powerfully from the data from senior arts advocates and is discussed in detail as being a fundamental building block of society formation and the aesthetic re-imagining of society. So too, honesty was an important concern that was also evident in the Stage One data. The notion of visual arts learning enabling honest practices was highlighted by Teacher A, who suggested that such a practice “is the sort of thing you get when kids come in at Year 9 and you work all year to try and get them to have some honesty, some truth to their work” (Staff A 0028, p. 26). Teacher A reiterated her belief in the potential of an honest practice when she went on to say “I think with art it forces you to be honest, you just have to put down what you see” (Staff A 0035, p. 26).

The teachers also provided insights about potential ways that visual arts learning could assist students in developing the ability to contribute to society through their actions. The teachers believed that students who were exposed to the visual arts learning experiences were enriched with a lived knowledge, which could then build upon and be expanded by their classroom acquired knowledge. The teachers attached value to this lived knowledge that had been created through engagement with the visual arts activities as it provided the students with a way of understanding what the notion of leading and leadership may look like and entail. Transformative visual arts learning allows its participants to draw upon their existing perspectives and frames of reference, to configure new perspectives, to express these perspectives, and to develop qualities and strategies that may emerge under the banner of leadership at some point in the future.

The teachers identified the beginnings of such leadership qualities in some of the students who had been involved in the visual arts learning experiences as part of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster. Teacher A described one instance in particular. Recounting how these students had offered an explanation about a recently considered and alternative perspective as their peer group grappled with a cultural concept,

My feeling is there's a greater sensitivity about these issues and just in a couple of conversations I've either overheard or where perhaps I've taken an extra class and subject of differing cultures comes up, I've noticed that those who have been a part of that 25 group are very good at leaping in and explaining and maybe interpreting something through someone else's point of view. (Staff A 0001, p. 2)

The potentiality of leadership opportunities come to the fore of the students' minds and taken up as a consequence of engaging in such visual arts learning activities was a significant finding. This happened as a result of the real and sustainable nature of their experiences that lay beyond the conventions of a classroom-based curriculum. The students' new perspectives had been put into action. They were enacting knowledge in a process that was both affirming for themselves and for their peers. The challenge of bringing this about in current school environments and approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning is now addressed.

4.3.2 Realising the Potential of Visual Arts Learning



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#13]

The second category that emerged from the analysis of data gathered from the teachers is *Realising the Potential of Visual Arts Learning* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#13]*). The insights provided by the teachers highlighted some of the opportunities and challenges that exist and which need to be built upon or challenged if the potential of visual arts learning is to be realised and thrive in the school setting. It is helpful to see these findings as component threads of the weave that underpins the generation of theory and the development of recommendations in final chapters of this thesis.

Two concepts form the basis for this examination, namely (i) *Valuing Creativity* and (ii) *Addressing Challenges in Traditional Approaches to Curriculum, Teaching and Learning*.

4.3.2.1 Valuing Creativity



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#14]

In the concept *Valuing Creativity* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#14]*), some of the insights of the teachers about what they understood to be creativity are examined. The analysis suggests ways in which to view the link between creativity and visual arts learning. Four themes emerged in the analysis, namely perceptions of creativity, qualities of creativity, creative practice, and visual arts capital.

The first theme which emerged from the insights provided by the teachers concerned their perceptions of their own creativity and that of their colleagues. Teacher A stated, “I am a very creative person. I know it’s something that really speaks to young people” (Staff A 0006, p. 6). Teacher C had a slightly different but equally as positive an understanding of her creativity when she said “I would have said a few years ago I’m not creative because I can’t express things on paper in terms of drawing etc. But then I realise I am actually very creative in a whole lot of other ways” (Staff C 0005, p. 9). Teacher A was also able to comment on the practice of a colleague who taught other more traditional subjects. In this case Teacher A noted “we have a very creative RE (Religious Education) program, a lot of the RE program is making and creating things because the RE coordinator is very like that” (Staff A 0005, p. 5).

It should be pointed out that while creativity was valued and recognised as a vital part of the implementation of visual arts learning, some comments by teachers also identified concerns that need to be addressed if this nexus between creativity and visual arts learning was to be appreciated. Teacher C said “give me something to draw and I just freak out because it’s just not my skill” (Staff C 0004, p. 8.) There was a sense that creativity unnerved some people and this in part related to their own low self-esteem regarding creative ability. Teacher A highlighted this when she observed, “I think our experience here is if you ask most teachers to do anything slightly creative, they get really nervous” (Staff A 0019, p.16). Overcoming this apprehension about, and in some cases fear of, creativity must be an important part of the considerations of recommendations arising from this study.

The emphasis on the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) requirements also imposes a competitive aspect to visual arts learning, which was deemed by the teachers interviewed in this study as problematic. Teacher B stated “I suppose most of us learn any creative arts through a classroom experience or a class experience and you sit in there and you’re given some project or some task and then you automatically compare your product with somebody else’s” (Staff B 0017, p. 18). Perhaps the issue here, and one that needs further consideration, is the assumption that artistic competency is something that one is born with and that cannot be enhanced along the lifespan. Teacher B suggested “most of us have a bias that we see artists as being born” (Staff B 0006, p. 6). In the same vein, Teacher A suggested that when describing and evaluating creative practice, “people think of Einstein or something” (Staff A 0034, p. 18), and in doing so they were equating it to being an almost unobtainable goal.

Teachers also identified some of the unique qualities of creativity that would enrich visual arts learning. As a way of learning, creativity was perceived as being able to transcend normal or accepted modes of learning. Teacher A said “I think when you represent something visually or in a creative way it taps into ideas that you may not even realise you hold’ (Staff A 0007, p. 8), and further added, “I know it’s something that really speaks to young people’ (Staff A 0006, p. 6). These two insights about creativity point to a link being made that key aspects of visual arts learning can enable a transformation in young people, and that it is a mode of learning appropriate to and engaging for young learners.

Another theme emerging from the insights the teachers identified was the need for changes to be made to current practices that would enable creative learning and practice in schools to be valued. Teacher A set a broad challenge by suggesting “I think there needs to be a lot more (creative) opportunities like that (when referring to the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster visual arts activities) in other aspects of the curriculum” (Staff A 0005 p. 5). Such change to practice, according to Teacher B, needed to involve more than simply providing additional creative lessons and advised “you wouldn’t be doing this as just an art elective” (Staff B 0015, p.15). Teacher A identified that there existed an open-minded attitude to change in the minds of many teachers about curriculum, in this case referring to the enthusiasm with which Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) had been taken up, and that there was no reason as to why creativity could be not be adopted in a similar manner. Teacher A said “I think people are becoming much more receptive to ICT so why aren’t we accepting other forms of expression as well?” (Staff A 0020, p.18). Teacher A further elaborated by observing “I think just as there is a computer in the classroom, there needs to be the opportunity to have access to art materials in the classroom” (Staff A 0018, pp. 15–16). Teacher B suggested that the development of a creative practice was another component that needed to change,

I suppose really it’s practice, isn’t it or the more you experience something the more confident you become about it, so I suppose one way would be make it a regular activity within the curriculum in areas other than a subject tagged art. (Staff B 0017, p. 18)

The fourth theme the teachers addressed was the benefit of understanding and knowing about the visual arts as something that had a key place and role in valuing creativity. Recognising and possessing visual arts knowledge was seen as being an enabler of visual arts learning. A

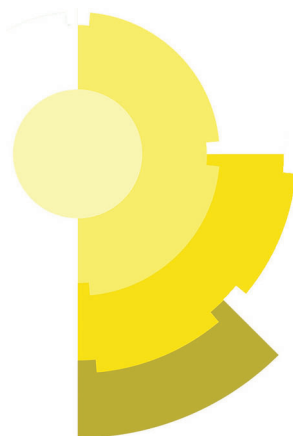
lack of such knowledge and a lack of interest in acquiring such knowledge were perceived as being potential barriers to the implementation and appreciation of visual arts learning. This notion of an accumulated knowledge is understood as *capital*, and for the remainder of this study is described as *visual arts capital*. Visual arts capital is the accumulation of knowledge that one has about the visual arts.

It is often argued that a detachment from culture and the arts exists in Australia, as suggested by Teacher A, who said “I think there is a great cultural cringe about arts in Australia” (Staff A 0015, p. 13). The notion of having visual arts capital was commensurate with being able to enjoy the visual arts, which Teacher A observed as being an important capacity to have as “there is a language of art, there is an appreciation of art that Australian society as a whole doesn’t have” (Staff A 0015, p. 13). However, the teachers were able to enrich conversation by using their own visual arts capital in reference to art and artist. Indeed, a comment such as “I was listening to John Olsen yesterday being interviewed” (Staff B 0007, p. 7) suggested that in the mind of Teacher B visual arts capital includes both knowledge about the world of art and a willingness to interact with it. Being able to refer to artists was evidence the teachers were engaging with the visual arts and their visual arts capital. Teacher B spoke of how “Picasso might have represented them (ideas) or (how) Dali” might have represented them (Staff B 0017, p. 19). Teacher C also referred to the work of Picasso, in particular his painting *Guernica*.

The provenance of the artists mentioned by the teachers highlighted an important concern that informed the generation of recommendations arising from the research. In this element of Stage One, all mention was of Western artists and works of art associated with established western canons. In the diverse and multicultural Australian society of today and the future, there is a need to ensure that in the education of both young people and of members of the education profession the broad range of artistic traditions from across the world are known and valued.

4.3.2.2 Addressing Challenges to Traditional Approaches to Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

In the concept of *Addressing Challenges to Traditional Approaches to Curriculum, Teaching and Learning* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1* [#15]), the teachers identified a number of barriers that had the potential to impact upon the valuing of creativity and the



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1
[#15]

implementation of visual arts learning. These challenges were perceived by the teachers as being associated with traditional approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning. These included the hierarchical nature of the existing traditional curriculum, the dominance of university entrance requirements, aspects of teacher practice in line with traditional approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning, pre-service teacher education and parental attitudes. When combined with negative perceptions held by some teachers regarding their own creative ability, these serve to militate against

the implementation of new approaches to visual arts learning.

It was perceived the traditional curriculum currently in place in a majority of educational settings in Australia does not operate in such a way as to always promote creativity beyond the creative arts curriculum. Teacher A noted “I guess there’s not much emphasis on creativity in the rest of the curriculum” (Staff A 0004, p. 4).

It was argued the curriculum is underpinned by a hierarchical subject order that does not favour the visual arts, but instead places intense focus on subjects such as Mathematics and Literacy. This reliance on the traditional curriculum continues to perpetuate a resistance to the emergence of approaches to creative practice and the Arts. Teacher A illustrated the problematics of such a reliance in saying, “I think sometimes teachers are just so busy trying to teach the curriculum that the more creative approaches fall away” (Staff A 0011, p. 10). Moreover, Teacher C noted that “There is still a pocket of people who believe that the only decent VCE is maths, physics etc. And they will argue long and loud against anything else, without considering that any other subject is just as rigorous” (Staff C 0018, p.19). The allegiance of many staff to delivering the traditional curriculum has resulted in them as being perceived as limiting their pursuit of creative practices and retreating from creative enterprise. Teacher B commented “to get staff to accept that that (creativity) ultimately will enhance their teaching and the learning and not just be something that’s going to take time away from the curriculum is a real battle” (Staff B 0007, p. 7).

It was suggested that many teachers with a anxiety about creativity tended to be practitioners in the subjects found to be most highly valued in the curriculum hierarchy. Teacher A observed “I noticed (it’s) the maths and science teachers who get very nervous when you talk

about creativity” (Staff A 0021, p. 19). The teachers also noted that this sense of anxiety was not limited to experienced and established teachers but also applied to recently graduated teachers, who as part of their teacher education would have been exposed to the latest in creative pedagogy. Teachers were perceived as being reticent to embed what they see as creative opportunities in their classroom practices because of both a self-perceived lack of creativity and a curriculum that does not require creativity in order for much of it to be met. It is clear that the nature of creativity and its place in the curriculum and in the school needs to be further explored if visual arts learning is to find its place in school learning.

The more immediate needs of university entrance and the Victorian Certificate of Education, as opposed to the potential long term gains of learning in the broader arena of the arts, were highlighted by Teacher B when she commented that “we always look at the terminal behaviour and what tends to govern curriculum in a lot of areas ends up being the VCE” (Staff B 0006, p. 6), adding there is “a national way of ranking students for university entrance and for teachers and parents that’s a priority when you get up that end” (Staff B 0014, p. 15). Teacher A also illustrated the role that the Victorian Certificate of Education has in learning when she said “if you go to any primary school in Victoria, it’s very art focussed. You draw things, you colour things, you cut things out and you make things, and then you suddenly get to secondary school and all that stops” (Staff A 0005, p. 5).

The teachers’ concern that the traditional curriculum had imposed a dominant subject hierarchy that often took precedence over what might be considered as being best suited to the learning interests and needs of individual students will be a matter that will be further considered in the recommendations discussed later in the thesis.

It was clear from the teachers’ comments that an allegiance to the requirements of the curriculum in place at the school impacted on the interactions, or the lack of them, that staff had with creative teaching practices. In describing the missed creative opportunities, the teachers acknowledged that creativity was not always evident in the day-to-day practices of their colleagues. An observation by Teacher B suggests the willingness of a mathematics teacher to use more creative approaches to learning because “I’d love to do it” but a reluctance to follow up on this “because I’ll never get through the curriculum” (Staff B 0007, p. 8). Consistently throughout the interviews, it was argued that the allegiance to the current curriculum means that many teachers focus on Victorian Certificate of Education requirements and are not inclined to

explore alternatives in their practice.

The teachers believed the dearth of creativity was symptomatic of the dogmas associated with the traditional curriculum, as evidenced in one of their perceived purposes of this curriculum, namely that its subject-hierarchical nature is constructed to ensure students are prepared to successfully undertake examinations, in this case the Victorian Certificate of Education, with a view to entering the tertiary system. Teacher B suggested,

I mean we're set in a system and the system does dictate a lot of what you do and like it or leave it, we're stuck with the VCE, with tertiary entry rankings and a national curriculum....and a national way of ranking students for tertiary entrance. (Staff B 0014, p. 14)

This reliance on the curriculum to secure a pathway into tertiary studies then impacts on the decisions made by students about the subjects they select for Victorian Certificate of Education. One teacher described a very bright student who had chosen to study science over visual arts despite the rich observation that “creativity just sort of oozes out of her” (Staff A 0030, p. 9). The most obvious explanation is that students select subjects they feel are more likely to both gain them entry to the university system and gainful employment post-university. The point being made here is that in order to maximize the chance of entering university, the student is reliant on choosing the subjects that appear at the higher end of the subject-hierarchical ladder, namely literacy, numeracy and science.

The teachers then went on to express their concern regarding the reluctance of many of their colleagues to engage in creative teaching practice in the school setting, even among newly graduated teachers. The teachers alluded to contemporary pre-service teacher education as not helping the situation when referring to the younger teachers as being “a little stiffer if anything” (Staff A0019, p. 17). The newer education graduates of teacher education were also described as being unwilling to operate beyond the bounds of their method and preferred to operate within the context of their subject specialization. “I think these days it's I am an economics teachers or I'm a maths education professional and I don't know anything else” (Staff A 0020, p. 18).

The final theme that emerged from the analysis of data gathered from the teachers in respect to the barriers to implementing visual arts learning relates to Recognising the Importance of Parental Influence. The teachers provided insights into what is an interesting component of

the data. They identified that the parents of students had a significant influence over the subjects their children chose to study and the academic, professional and personal interests they pursue. More often than not such parental influence is not in favour of the visual arts. There seems to be no dislike or disregard of the arts as such, but instead parents are perceived to focus on the sciences and more traditional aspects of the curriculum as these are seen as offering more educational and employment opportunities for their children. In the final chapter of this thesis these perceptions present the basis for a recommendation to ensure that visual arts learning can become more highly valued among parents as well as teachers and their students.

Teachers highlighted the very obvious concern parents had with regard to their children studying arts based subjects to Victorian Certificate of Education. The barrier imposed by parental attitudes stopped many students continuing with arts based subjects. The teachers all articulated a concern that parental influence had the potential to stop students from furthering their studies in the visual arts and constituted a barrier to the implementation of new approaches to visual arts learning.

The lack of visual arts capital in parents was one explanation given by teachers for negative parental influence. In particular, the teachers were concerned that parental influence had the potential to impact upon the successful implementation of new approaches to visual arts learning. This influence was strong and it had the ability to stop even committed students. The teachers highlighted parental perceptions regarding the need to conform to more academic units than the need to engage in more artistic units. On this, Teacher B said ‘we have at times had a very confident creative gifted student and when it comes to choosing subjects for their final years the parents will say not a good option, pick sciences or a more secure pathway’ (Staff B 0019, p. 20).

It is paradoxical that these parental views regarding the creative arts often change in the light of experience. Teacher A commented, “You’d say ‘why aren’t you doing theatre studies’, ‘oh mum and dad didn’t think there was any future’. But then I have adults who stop me on the street and they ‘say I’m a barrister, I am now in court and every time I get and address the Judge, I think about my drama classes’” (Staff A 0009, p. 8).

Conclusion: Drawing of the Threads (Part I)

The presentation of findings discussed in this chapter has shown how learning in the visual arts can transform young people's understanding of self, others and society and how learning in the visual arts itself can be transformed as a mode of learning. Such a transformative and transformed mode of learning can provide something different and significant both in stimulating learning and in contributing to society formation in a time of societal transition and change. Both students and teachers had engaged positively with the opportunities presented to them and from these experiences, their understanding of self, others and society had been transformed. These experiences were not the standard visual arts classroom endeavour concerned with elements and principles, colour and composition, or Victorian Certificate of Education results. Instead the concern had been to re-imagine what society could look like and to re-imagine their part in that new society. From the analysis data gathered during Stage One of the study emerged the theoretical construct of *visual arts transformative learning* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 1* [#16]).



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#16]

Chapter Five

Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice

*The river glides along, one thread
In nature's mesh, so beautiful!
The stars are woven in; the red
Of sunrise; and the rain-cloud dull. (Larcom)*

Introduction

The core category of *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* is grounded in the data gathered from senior arts advocates during Stage Two of the research. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the findings of the analysis of the perspectives of these senior arts advocates about the relationship between the visual arts and contemporary society formation, in particular the distinctive manner and form in which a visual arts practice might enable contemporary society to be re-imagined.

In keeping with the study's evolutionary epistemological framework, the findings of data gathered from students and teachers in Stage One provided critical insights, direction, meaning and a theoretical sensitivity with which to design this second stage of data gathering and analysis. The findings of Stage One, *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant*, were presented in detail in Chapter Four. In these findings, the notion of visual arts transformative learning was proposed as a conceptual and practical link between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation. Two dimensions of visual arts transformative learning were identified. The first dimension related to its potential to transform young people's sense of self, others and society. The second related to the nature, dimensions and dynamics of the transformed approach to learning in the visual arts that could bring this about.

The data gathered in Stage Two of the study sought to more deeply understand and extend the findings from Stage One. As this study was concerned with establishing ways of understanding the relationship between visual arts learning and re-imagining society I wanted to locate modes of thinking and understanding that had the potential to shift or reconfigure current frames of reference. Delving into the perspectives of those who play a significant role culturally, aesthetically and educationally in our society was deemed a way of doing this. In examining the perspectives of senior arts advocates, who include artists, senior arts administrators and

arts educators, the intention was to broaden and enrich the insights offered by the students and teachers about the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation. Emerging from this analysis of data from the senior arts advocates, the distinctive contribution of a visual arts practice in the re-imagining of contemporary society formation was highlighted as being of particular importance in considerations of the central theoretical and research issues addressed in this thesis.

The core category of *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*, which is grounded in the data gathered from artists, arts administrators and arts educators in Stage Two of the study, is underpinned by two sub-core categories, namely (i) *Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society* and (ii) *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*. An examination of the former describes what the qualities and characteristics of a thriving and contemporary culture and society might be. In the latter, the distinctive role that a visual arts practice may have in the formation of society through the re-imagining of contemporary society is examined.

Before the findings and analysis of data gathered in Stage Two of the research are presented and the two sub-core categories and their related categories and concepts are discussed, the senior arts advocates interviewed in Stage Two of data gathering are presented in the following section entitled *Australian Arts Advocates: Portraits of Participants*. It will be revealed that the lives of these arts advocates are in themselves evidence of the contribution that can be made to contemporary society by those associated with the visual arts.

5.1 Australian Arts Advocates: Portraits of Participants

The senior arts advocates who participated in the study expressed very complex concerns and paradoxically, but not surprisingly, the ideas drawn from these highly original thinkers did not always fit neatly together. The range and depth of these ideas were illustrative of the notion that considerations of contemporary society formation are not formulaic. The tensions and ambiguities inherent in the analysis of Stage Two data are seen as deepening and enriching contributions to the development of the substantive theory put forward in the following chapter of this thesis.

Six senior arts advocates participated in Stage Two the study, namely (i) Dr Michael Brand, Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, (ii) Dr Blair French, Director, Curatorial

and Digital at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, (iii) Fr Richard Leonard SJ, Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, (iv) Mr Ben Quilty, artist, (vi) Mr Khaled Sabsabi, artist, and (vi) Ms Tamara Winikoff OAM, Executive Director of the National Association for the Visual Arts.

5.1.1 Michael Brand

Michael Brand is an art scholar and senior arts sector leader and administrator. His area of interest and expertise is the art of Asia, in particular Indian art. Brand's formative experiences growing up often straddled the nexus between the arts and cultures that lay beyond the shores of Australia, in places such as Mexico, Italy, Egypt and Borneo, and these experiences continue to inform his practice and interests today.

Graduating from Australian National University with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in 1980, Brand then studied at Harvard University in the United States of America, graduating with a master's degree in 1982 and his doctorate in 1987. Brand's doctoral thesis is entitled *The Khalji Complex in Shadiabad Mandu* (1987). His doctoral research "documented a complex of 15th century monuments built in the now-ruined fortress city of Mandu in Malwa, one of the independent sultanates that flourished in India between Timur's invasion of 1397 and Babur's Mughal conquest in 1526" (Robb, 2014).

Currently serving as Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Brand has had a prestigious and influential career as a senior art curator in, and director of, art museums around the world. Following time spent on the Indian subcontinent, Brand became the Founding Head Curator of Asian Art at the National Gallery of Australia in 1988. He left the National Gallery of Australia in 1996 to become Assistant Director, Curatorial and Collection Development, at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, Australia. In 2000, Brand accepted the role of Director of the Virginia Museum of the Fine Arts and in doing so he made a return to the United States of America. Five years later, in 2005, Brand was appointed Director of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, a position of great significance. During his time at the Getty, Brand pursued a personal academic research agenda addressing the role that the collecting of art might have within the modus operandi of contemporary art museums and galleries worldwide (Robb, 2014).

Brand authored a paper, entitled *Home and Away: Works of Art as Citizens and Migrants*, for the *Crossing Borders: Conflict, Migration and Convergence* conference held in Melbourne,

Australia in 2008. In this paper Brand (2009) explored the “movement of artworks between cultures and continents” (p. 21) and the notion that on leaving their country of provenance, these artworks can become “cultural migrants” (p. 21). Such cultural migration, noted Brand,

can evoke ideals of enlightenment and cosmopolitanism, but can also reflect the darker forces of imperialism and colonialism. While, as we all know, migration can be an agent of great inspiration and transformation, it can also fuel the politics of nationalism. (Brand, 2009, p. 21)

My reading of this paper, and in particular of Brand’s ideas around artworks as cultural migrants, proved to be both an important entry point into what became the wide research range of this study and a significant underpinning of the substantive theory that was ultimately generated. Of this paper, Brand reflected “I am actually quite proud of the idea. But it’s a bit sad that no one has ever raised the issue with me since” (M. Brand, personal communication, February 18th, 2015). On the possibilities associated with migration of the visual, Brand wrote,

We should be pleased that some works of art leave home and migrate to other lands. What we have to ensure is that they do so under reasonable circumstances and that the movement is not all in one direction. What strikes me as critically important is that these works be seen in new cultural and intellectual contexts, with new points of view and new research – in other words, with new art history. (Brand, 2009, p. 25)

5.1.2 Blair French

Blair French is a curator and writer whose “curatorial and writing practice has ranged over the development of art practices from the 1960s through to the present day in Australia, New Zealand and the surrounding region, the intersections of photography and contemporary art, performance and moving image practices” (MCA, 2016).

French joined the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney as Director, Curatorial and Digital, in 2003. In this role French runs “the artistic programs for the museum, so that includes the collections, exhibitions, touring programs” (B. French, personal communication, October 29th, 2014). French is also responsible for the development and delivery of the Museum of Contemporary Art’s digital programs. Before joining the Museum of Contemporary Art, French

was Executive Director of Artspace Visual Arts Centre in Sydney, a role he assumed in 2006. Prior to this he was Program Manager at the Australian Centre for Photography, where he started in 1996.

Graduating from the University of Canterbury with a Bachelor of Arts (English and Art History) in 1988, French then studied at the University of Sydney, graduating with a Fine Arts Master's degree in 1995 and a Doctor of Philosophy in Art History and Theory in 2003 (French, 2016). French's doctoral thesis is entitled *Picture this: the photographic image as contemporary art* (French, 2003).

French reflected that during his doctorate he developed a "particular interest in how artists working with photographic images sought to engage social and material experience through photography's close association to our understandings of reality and the real" (2006, p. 7). French has been described as "an incisive, questioning thinker" (Handran, 2008, p. 258) and he describes his own practice as thinking about art through writing, "spurred by the desire to think and write in more fluid ways, more immediately responsive to and directly engaged with the activity of art" (French, 2006, p. 8).

5.1.3 Richard Leonard SJ

Richard Leonard SJ is an author, film critic and, as a consequence of what he describes as being "the best discernment of his life" (Australian Jesuits, n.d.), he is a Jesuit priest, joining the Society of Jesus in 1987.

In 1981 Leonard entered the Toowoomba seminary and began studying to be a diocesan priest. After four years, he left and graduated with his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Queensland in 1986. After joining the Jesuits in 1987, in 1992 Leonard graduated with a Graduate Diploma of Education from the University of Melbourne, going on to complete a Master of Theology in 1993 at the Melbourne College of Divinity. His thesis, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women* was published as book in 1995 (Australian Jesuits, n.d.). Leonard was sent by the Jesuits to London, where he studied at the London Film School, graduating with a Graduate Diploma in Film and Television Production in 1998. He graduated from Melbourne University with a Doctor of Philosophy in cinema studies in 2004 and is one of two priests worldwide to be awarded a degree in this field. The title of his thesis, which was published in 2009, is *The cinematic mystical gaze: the films of Peter Weir*.

Leonard has authored eight books, including *What Are We Doing On Earth For Christ's Sake?* (2015), *Why Bother Praying?* (2013), *Where the Hell is God?* (2010), *Preaching to the Converted* (2006) and *Movies that Matter: Reading Films Through the Lens of Faith* (2006).

Richard Leonard has been Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting since 1999. Leonard is a member of the Australian Catholic Media Council and contributes to all major Australian newspapers as a film critic (Australian Jesuits, n.d., p. 1). Following time as an apprentice at Albert Street Film and Television Productions, Melbourne, Leonard has been a producer, writer and director for major Australian media outlets.

Leonard says his relationship to film “came via my religious community telling me to go and study it because the head of the Jesuits in Australia thought the Catholic church in Australia had a lamentable relationship with media and communication and that we needed to be more proactive” (R. Leonard, personal communication, November 4th, 2014). He regards the media as being crucial in modern day life in its role in cultural formation. Interestingly he believes that Christians should not run away from films that may not be traditionally understood as being religious for the very reason that these films are being watched and are in some way forming. His favourite film is *Gallipoli*, and he particularly identifies with its message that trying to be the best human you can be is pertinent in today's world.

5.1.4 Ben Quilty

Ben Quilty is an Australian artist, whose practice is predicated on his “belief in the social role of art, a persuasive power of commentary that derives from the artist's imperative to imagine the dreams of society and prompt eventual responsibility” (Desmond, 2007).

Quilty's practice early on his career focused on the “destructive nature of youth masculinity” (Messham-Muir, 2014) and explored “what it means to be a man in contemporary Australian culture – cars, drugs, drunken holidays in Fiji” (Messham-Muir, 2014). In her essay written for the *Ben Quilty: Ache* exhibition, Clare Lewis observed Quilty's practice as a “form of social critique” (Lewis, 2007), suggesting that Quilty “often depicts subjects which refer to much broader themes of cultural identity and the strange ways in which we construct meaning and individuality in our post-colonial habitat” (Lewis, 2007). Michael Desmond, an independent art critic, also takes up the social critique within Quilty's practice, writing that “his social critique may not offer redemption but there is at least recognition – of the troubled, riven

self – and perhaps there is something epic in that” (Desmond, 2007).

Graduating from Sydney College of Arts in 1994 with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Painting), Quilty then completed a Certificate in Aboriginal Culture & History at Monash University, Melbourne in 1994. Quilty graduated from the University of Western Sydney with a Bachelor of Visual Communications in 2001 (Jan Murphy Gallery, 2016).

Quilty has been the recipient of a number of awards, including a Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship (2002), the National Artists Self Portrait Prize (2007), the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize (2009), the Archibald Prize (2011) and the Prudential Eye Award for Contemporary Art (2014). Quilty has been a finalist in the Wynne Prize (2004) and the Archibald Prize (2012) (Jan Murphy Gallery, 2016). In 2015 Quilty was presented with an Honorary Doctorate of Creative Arts by Western Sydney University.

A number of official appointments represent significant milestones in Quilty’s career. In January 2013 he was appointed to the Art Gallery of New South Wales Board of Trustees (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2014), a position he holds until 2018. In October 2011, Quilty was appointed as an official war artist in Afghanistan by the Australian War Memorial to “interpret the experiences of Australian Defence Force personnel participating in Operation Slipper” (Australian War Memorial, 2016). The painting *Lance Corporal M* is one such interpretation. This appointment was to have a profound effect on Quilty and his practice (Messham-Muir, 2014).



*Ben Quilty, 'Lance Corporal M', 2012
oil on linen
courtesy of Ben Quilty*

5.1.5 Khaled Sabsabi

Khaled Sabsabi is a multi-media artist, hip hop performer, community activist and cultural practitioner from South West Sydney (Verity, 2014). Sabsabi was born in 1965 in Tripoli, Lebanon, moving with his family to Australia in 1978 to escape the civil war (Sabsabi, 2016) and settling in Western Sydney, a predominantly migrant area. Significantly, Sabsabi did not return to Lebanon for another twenty-five years. When he did return to his homeland in late 2002, it was to change his life, his spirituality and his practice (Verity, 2014).

In the late 1980's, Sabsabi emerged as a hip-hop recording artist. Sabsabi has written that the hip-hop music movement was “an effective form and tool to communicate with people, using a familiar language and culture” and that it provided “an entry point to deal with community issues in a so called ‘positive’ manner for social change” (Sabsabi, 2007). Jo Bosben wrote that Sabsabi’s “artistic work emerges from the realm of sound and music arts...then through sound design & installation, to finally cultivate a complex encompassing of video media, multimedia installations, theatre and digital interactive media” (Bosben, 2005). In the early 1990's Sabsabi began to incorporate his art-making as a principal component of community engagement, working in detention centres, schools, prisons, refugee camps, hospitals and youth centres. During this time Sabsabi’s performing name was *peacefender* – “peace as in unity and harmony, and fender as in the guitar because I loved Jimmy Hendrix” (Verity, 2014).

At this point in his career Sabsabi worked at the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre, which is located in the Liverpool central business district of Western Sydney. Sabsabi was one of the first Non-English-Speaking Background Outreach Workers, and his role was to work with temporary protection visa holders to seek and find ways to link them to essential services. Sabsabi developed a volunteer run English classes system at the time when temporary protection visa holders were unable to access many services. During this time Sabsabi initiated a project called 2168 Multimedia Van project, which provided mobile digital production facilities for residents within the local area. Sabsabi’s role now transitioned to that of arts worker for the Migrant Resource Centre. Sabsabi says of this role “I became the arts worker for the Migrant Resource Centre and in this capacity my role was to work with artists. All my life I have worked with artists and I am an artist. So I worked with artists in terms of supporting ideas for them” (personal communication).

Sabsabi is currently the Creative Producer (Community Cultural Engagement) at

the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre (CPAC) in Liverpool, Western Sydney. CPAC is an arts organisation, art gallery and cultural facility. In this role, Sabsabi develops “viable and sustainable cultural industries” (Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, 2016) within the Liverpool communities.

Sabsabi has been the recipient of a number of awards, including an Australia Council for the Arts Community Cultural Fellowship (2002), the Helen Lempriere Travelling Scholarship (2011), the 60th annual Blake Art Prize (2011), the Fisher’s Ghost Award (2014), the inaugural Western Sydney Arts Fellowship and a Sharjah Art Foundation Production Programme Grant (2016).

Sabsabi graduated from the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales with a Master of Arts in 2004.

Sabsabi was awarded an Australia Council for the Arts Community Cultural Development Fellowship in 2002 and this enabled him to return to Lebanon. Whilst waiting in Dubai airport on the return trip to Australia, Sabsabi realised that there were issues still to be resolved in Lebanon and he caught the plane back to Lebanon, where he remained for six months.

5.1.6 Tamara Winikoff

Tamara Winikoff OAM is a cultural commentator, advocate, educator and senior arts manager who has been actively involved in arts management for over thirty years. Originally trained as an architect, Winikoff’s practice as an artist is an important component of her life, with this practice encompassing graphic and theatre design, printmaking, photography, film-making and drawing.

Winikoff is currently the Executive Director of the National Association of Visual Arts (NAVA), which is the “peak industry body representing and advancing the professional interests of the visual and media arts, craft and design sector” (National Association for the Visual Arts, 2016, para. 1). Winikoff is also a co-convenor of ArtsPeak, a crucial body which “functions as a confederation of Australia’s peak arts organisations collaborating with other sector organisations and artists” (ArtsPeak, 2016, para. 2).

Prior to her current role at the National Association of Visual Arts, Winikoff worked at the Australia Council, where she was responsible for creating the Community, Environment, Art and Design Program, which recognised the link between the cultural life of communities

and the quality of their environment. In particular, the program aimed to support collaboration between visual, craft and other artists, designers and communities in planning and designing public environments, as well as increase debate about social and cultural issues in the design of public spaces (Australia Council, 2016). Appointed as Director the Australian Centre for Photography in 1982, Winikoff “brought with her a strong educational and communication inflection” (Ely, 1999, p. 121). By the time Winikoff left in 1986, the Australian Centre for Photography had been aligned “more closely to British and European approaches to, and readings of, photography, locating it within a wide range of disciplines such as psychoanalysis, linguistics and political theory, and encompassing various philosophies, including feminism and post-structuralism” (p. 121).

Winikoff is an established academic having taught in universities in England and Australia, and she was chief investigator in three major research projects funded by the Australian Research Council and the Australia Council.

For her work Winikoff was awarded the Australia Council for the Arts’ Visual Arts and Craft Emeritus Medal in 2004 and in 2014 she was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.



Spinifex (courtesy of Tamara Winikoff)

5.2 Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society



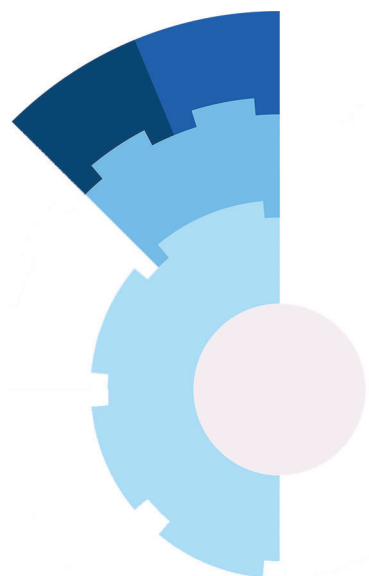
Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#1]

Core category (CC)	CMYK	Sub-core category (SCC)	CMYK	Category (CAT)	CMYK	Concept (CON)	CMYK
Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice (5)	2%, 5%, 0%, 3%	Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society (5.2)	30%, 2%, 0%, 0%	Considerations of Honesty and Practice (5.2.1)	51%, 11%, 60%, 0%	An Honest Practitioner (5.2.1.1)	93%, 67%, 0%, 0%
						An Honest Practice (5.2.1.2)	100%, 78%, 31%, 15%
				The Pursuit of Honesty (5.2.2)	73%, 24%, 0%, 0%	Questioning, Truth Seeking and Facing Taboos (5.2.2.1)	100%, 75%, 5%, 0%
						Acknowledging the Past (5.2.2.2)	100%, 87%, 22%, 8%
				The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Culture (5.2.3)	23%, 17%, 0%, 0%	Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation (5.2.3.1)	49%, 31%, 0%, 0%
						Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance (5.2.3.2)	73%, 60%, 0%, 0%
				Considerations on Society Formation (5.2.4)	12%, 21%, 0%, 0%	Indigenous Culture and Contemporary Society (5.2.4.1)	19%, 33%, 0%, 0%
						An Amalgam of Evolving Identities (5.2.4.2)	32%, 55%, 0%, 0%

Grounded in the data gathered from senior arts advocates during Stage Two, the first sub-core category to be described in this chapter is *Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#1]). Inspired by Ben Quilty when he spoke of the crucial need for the emergence of a “healthy culture” (BQ0006, p. 4), the purpose of the following analysis of data is to describe what the qualities and characteristics of a re-imagined society through a visual arts practice might be.

Underpinning this sub-core category are four categories, namely (i) *Considerations of Honesty and Practice*, (ii) *The Pursuit of Honesty*, (iii) *The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture*, and (iv) *Considerations of Society Formation*. In the following sections, these categories, and their relationship to *Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society*, are examined through their respective and constitutive concepts.

5.2.1 Considerations of Honesty and Practice



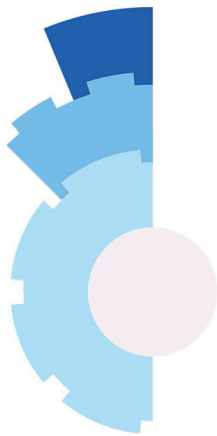
Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#2]

Emerging from the data is the category of *Considerations of Honesty and Practice*, in which the significance of the universal value of honesty is highlighted in relation to practice (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#2]). It is suggested there exists a nexus between honesty and practice that comes *to be* as a consequence of the artistic actions of practitioners with a strong commitment to the value of honesty in their own lives and in their work. The purpose of this discussion is to promote an understanding of the nature and role of honesty in a visual arts

practice, and its place in re-imagining a contemporary culture and society.

Considerations of Honesty and Practice is underpinned by two concepts. The first concept is *An Honest Practitioner* and the second is *An Honest Practice*. When an honest practitioner practices, it may be said that an honest practice is being enacted.

5.2.1.1 An Honest Practitioner



Colour Enmeshment |
Series 2 [#3]

Consideration of the first concept, *An Honest Practitioner*, focuses on the importance of the practitioner being able to be honest to and about herself or himself (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#3]*). When considering the qualities of an honest practitioner, Quilty illustrated this concept in saying “you’ve got to be honest and truthful, so you have to be confident about your own sexuality, you have to be confident about your own morals” (BQ0004, pp. 3–4). By examining her or his own intentions and motivations, the practitioner is then better placed, firstly, to acknowledge the distinctive possibilities and capacities that characterise her or his specific role and métier, and secondly, to enact an honest and better practice that is informed by a process of self-reflection and authenticity to beliefs and commitments, which have been intensively examined and considered.

Quilty continues that in his practice he strives to be honest so he can be the best artist that he can be. Quilty says, “I am going to be honest, that’s my job, to be honest. And as an artist if you’re not honest then you are not an artist, you can be the best painter, the best filmmaker in the world, but without truth and honesty you are nowhere” (BQ0004, pp. 3-4). Here Quilty offers a comparison between someone who might be skilled as a painter and the artist committed to being honest and enacting an honest practice. What is to be surmised here is that the onus is on the practitioner to ensure that she or he is truthful and honest in her or his life and practice. In addition, there is an implication that trying to be an honest practitioner is not an uncomplicated or easily met endeavour, but doing so is vital to making a significant contribution to culture and society. This importance attached to honesty is taken up by Brand, who suggests that the manner in which an artist understands what it is to be an honest practitioner, and the manner in which she or he enacts her or his practice, “gives the artist some sense of integrity” and as such the artist has “credibility when it comes to thinking about tough issues” (MB0025, p.47).

The complexity associated with understanding the concept of *An Honest Practitioner* is also given a counter-dimension by Brand, who raises the notion of the dishonest artist. Brand says, “you could have a dishonest artist and I guess a dishonest artist would be someone who’s just playing the market” (MB0026, p. 48). Brand’s indication that it cannot be assumed that an artist is always being honest echoes Quilty’s belief of there being a diversity of practices and practitioners. The point to be considered here, especially in consideration of the implications of these data for education and the visual arts learning experiences of young people, is that there exists the possibility that a practitioner can be honest or dishonest, and presumably anything in-between. As such, a conscious decision must be made by each practitioner about the values she or he wishes to embrace, about the standards of practice she or he identifies as being important to enact and about what motivates her or him as a practitioner and as a human being. This notion of motive, in the context of *An Honest Practitioner*, should be understood and honestly addressed by the practitioner. Otherwise it runs the danger of potentially compromising the integrity of both the practitioner and their practice.

5.2.1.2 An Honest Practice



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2
[#4]

The underpinning consideration of the second concept, *An Honest Practice*, is the premise that the practice itself be honest (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#4]*). An acknowledgement that an honest practice requires integrity and commitment is evident in Quilty’s comment about the *how* of his practice that “you say it with conviction, and you say this is the way it is and it’s the truth” (BQ0041, p. 45). The implication here, in the context of the relationship between a visual arts practice and the re-imagining of a healthy culture, is that an honest practice is more than the act of creating. An honest practice requires a synergy, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, between the creation process (practice), the artist (practitioner) and the purpose, intention and outcome (artefact). The passion of the artist should be accompanied by the voice of conviction in order for the practice to be accepted as an authentic process for telling a truth.

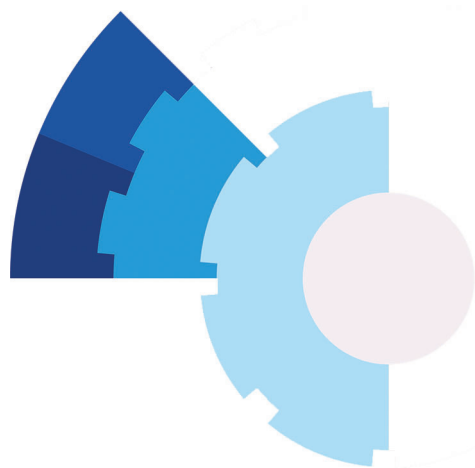
The notion of motive is also relevant when considering other aspects of *An Honest Practice*. When referring to artists from a diverse range of backgrounds who might be

commissioned to create artworks addressing national identity as being representative of social cohesion, Brand suggests that it is unethical “to force artists to contribute” (MB0012, p. 28) if it is not in keeping with the beliefs and practice of the practitioner concerned.

It should be pointed out, however, that it may be possible for motive and practice to be at odds with one another without a dishonest practice being enacted. Tamara Winikoff illustrates this when referring to some contemporary indigenous art practices, by saying “I think that inevitably they [some indigenous artists] are working from an iconographic and story base that is authentic but it’s being translated into forms that have a marketability in our cultural environment, and the European and overseas environment” (TW0020, p. 14). Here the suggestion is that although the manner of an established and authentic practice may in some way have been altered, its substance and intention, and that of the artist, remain uncompromised.

Honest practitioners are concerned with ethical practice and the pursuit of honesty, striving to uphold universal values, amongst them truth and integrity. Such practitioners are also concerned to seek new truths, which contribute to a re-imagining of society. These new truths have the potential to form the new building blocks of contemporary culture and society through the enactment of the honest practice and activity. This has wide ranging implications for education and for the approaches taken to reconceiving visual arts learning.

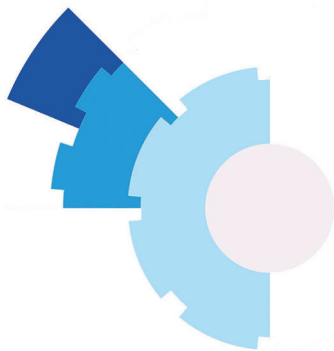
5.2.2 The Pursuit of Honesty in Contemporary Society Formation



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#5]

The second category, *The Pursuit of Honesty*, is the distinctive purpose of *An Honest Practitioner* and occurs during, and as a result of, *An Honest Practice* being enacted (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#5]*). *The Pursuit of Honesty* is underpinned by two concepts through which it is possible to illustrate how this category may be understood in the context of the relationship between the visual arts and contemporary society formation, namely (i) *Questioning, Truth Seeking and Facing Taboos* and (ii) *Acknowledging the Past*.

5.2.2.1 Questioning, Truth Seeking and Facing Taboos



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#6]

Through this concept, the place and role of questioning, truth seeking and facing taboos in the pursuit of honesty are examined (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#6]*). Quilty suggests being able to question, and being able to answer questions, are fundamental when he says that “even if you’re asking yourself the questions, you have to be able to answer all the questions” (BQ0027, p. 23). Quilty extends this understanding of questioning by establishing an interdependence between the importance of questions, a thriving and healthy culture and the attainment of truth, when he says, “this is how you get truth. And the truth is a misused word there’s no doubt about it, but it is the heart about what healthy culture is about. It’s about being able to answer every single question” (BQ0027, p. 23).

This interdependence between the generating and addressing of questions, the seeking

of truth and the re-imagining of contemporary society is illustrated in the body of work Quilty painted of Australian servicewomen and men in his capacity as Australia's official war artist in Afghanistan in 2013. Quilty's focus, whilst he embedded down in the Afghani city of Tarin Kowt, was to ask questions about what he saw happening in front of his eyes, to answer those questions by way of his practice and to tell what he perceived as being the truth. Quilty says of this truth seeking experience,

So it's as simple as that, I just told the truth. I really, really, made an effort not to do anything but tell the truth, and they are straightforward portraits of people. I mean, fuck, there's no sloganism, there are no flags in the background, there is no 'war sucks' written on them, nothing. You know what I mean? I think that's an invaluable thing to have happening when young men are going to war. (BQ0027, p. 27)

Richard Leonard also takes up the significance of questioning matters of importance to human kind through an art practice when he suggests, "at its best that is what art does, it creates a space. It picks up issues of finitude, mortality, meaning and existence. These are very important questions" (RL0024, p. 37).

Quilty articulates a reason for and process of questioning through an art practice when he says, "as an artist that's what you do, you go in there and you pull it apart. You pull the fibre out of it and try to put it back together and work it out" (BQ0029, p. 27). Here, the point being made is that the re-imagining that occurs during the putting back together can produce a new truth, and a new way of understanding. The process of re-imagination comes to be through revisiting, reconsidering, questioning, answering and the interweaving of all these fibres into a new intellectual, aesthetic and social fabric.

Revisiting through questioning affords the practitioner the possibility of exploring the taboo, or the unspoken. The nexus between a visual arts practice and the taboo is given form by Quilty when he says, "as an artist you're meant to be able to respond to anything. I mean that another really important thing about the role of arts and culture is that we absolutely intuitively start looking into what is taboo" (BQ0027, p. 23).

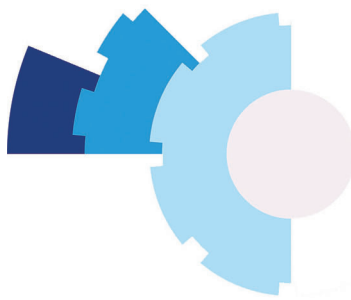
To face a taboo in story, myth and culture involves acknowledging a hidden side of human nature and human activity, and uncovering a masked and hidden knowledge. When re-imagining the nature of a healthy culture, Quilty suggests consideration must be given to these

hidden elements of society, as well as to the more polished and publicly accepted elements. Quilty says,

the fact is there are really dark things in our community. And until we acknowledge and embrace those things, we are nowhere; we are going to stay a two-dimensional shiny polished thing, rather than being a gritty, incredible, exciting, world fabulous culture. (BQ 0033, p. 32)

In other words, a taboo has a history and it is not fiction. By accepting that a taboo has a history and by exploring the taboo, one is also exploring and acknowledging something tangible and challenging from the past. The taboo presents something exciting and challenging, something that needs to be acknowledged and addressed in contemporary society formation.

5.2.2.2 Acknowledging the Past



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#7]

Acknowledging the Past is the second concept associated with *The Pursuit of Honesty* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#7]*). Embracing of the past is a necessary aspect of confirming that there exists a cultural history to be drawn upon, which can enrich the re-imagining of contemporary culture. It is possible to acknowledge the past within culture, in our practices,

practitioners and artefacts. Acknowledging the past can be both affirming and challenging.

Cultural expression represents and acknowledges the past by enabling an engagement with those expressions of culture left behind, with those that exist in the present and with those that remain unseen and yet to be imagined. Tamara Winikoff illustrates the richness to be found in such cultural expression when she says, “the thing that distinguishes any moment in history and any time or place in history is the cultural expression of the people of that place” (TW0016, p. 8). Winikoff prompts us to examine these lasting legacies, to consider what these legacies are able to tell us about what occurred in the past and to imagine in what form they currently exist and might exist in the future. Winikoff goes on to suggest that “the economy disappears, the fabric of what we build disappears and we ourselves disappear, but the ideas that we have articulated have some life that extends after our life” (TW0016, p. 8). What can be surmised here is that artefacts from the past, when seen as cultural expression, represent a perceived truth

or fact of the past about a culture, and that these truths and facts have a role in the re-imagining of that culture and new forms of society.

French adds to considerations of the link between cultural expressions from the past and contemporary culture when he suggests that engaging with cultural expression through a visual practice, and by acknowledging the past enables young learners to,

claim something about their identity, and to convey that and for that claiming to be on the basis of the acknowledgement of the traditions of those stories and some of the visual symbols that come with those histories and stories. It enables them to see themselves in the historical continuum and to make some sort of claim on these in the present day. (BF0004, p. 8)

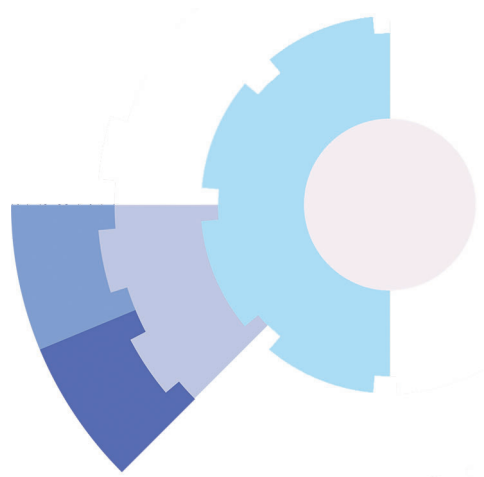
French identifies the importance of revisiting the past in order to inform the re-imagining of a new culture and society. French illustrates this when he says that it is important to look at ways in which “different communities can communicate something of the historical basis to that thinking, and their formation, and their actions and their rituals, but also how in a sense there is an everydayness to that in the contemporary sphere” (BF0006, pp. 9–10).

An acknowledging of the past enables young people to discern who they are, to tell their story and, importantly, to embrace the difficulties, the challenges and the failures of the past as possibilities for the future. A commitment to embracing both the successes and failures of the past in re-imagining contemporary culture, suggests Quilty, provides a way for young people in Australia to move “on to become more than what (they) are” (BQ0003, p. 3). Quilty makes it clear that embracing the failures of the past is a direct and active way of making amends for the less savoury moments in Australia’s past, many of which continue to be problematic.

This notion of making amends points to the need for young people to acknowledge what happened in the past, and to make a conscious effort to do so. Quilty sees this as being fundamental to the formation of a new and healthy contemporary culture. Quilty sees it as crucial in order to,

acknowledge the darkness of the past, to strive to make amends for that and apologise and all those things. Then there are grounds for a very, very, interesting and dynamic culture but that is not happening. It’s just faltering and flawed at the moment. But it will come back. (BQ0008, p. 8)

5.2.3 The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture

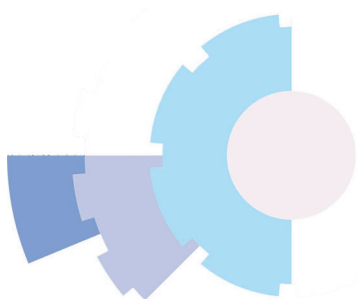


Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#8]

In examining the third category, *The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture*, it is possible to understand and articulate what the origins of a healthy culture may be (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#8]*). *Provenance* was selected as appropriate terminology to use in this study for three reasons. Firstly, provenance usually refers to the origin of the subject in focus. Secondly, it is often associated with the discourse of the visual arts, which underpins this study. Thirdly, provenance is suggestive of there being an allegiance to an authenticity and quality with regards to practice, practitioner and artefact.

The category of *The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture* is formed around two concepts, namely (i) *Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation* and (ii) *Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance*.

5.2.3.1 Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#9]

The first concept is *Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#9]*). Quilty regards the visual arts as being one of the essential ingredients of cultural identity, saying “I think that at the heart of it, out of visual arts is where culture comes from and out of culture is where cultural identity then

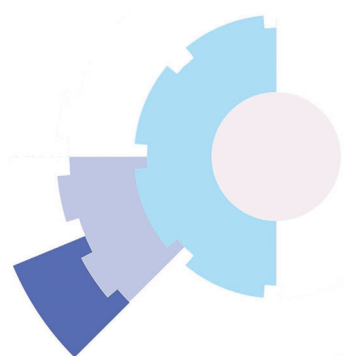
feeds into...identity, and that is the key most important thing for us as Australians” (BQ0002, p. 2). Winikoff provides a very personal understanding of the place the visual arts play in her cultural life when she says “I like to be close to art and artists, and it still gives me, probably apart from my family, the greatest pleasure in my life. It’s an essential ingredient of being alive for me” (TW0001, p. 2). Leonard questions the ability for mankind to exist in a fulfilled manner without a healthy cultural identity, when he says “it’s impossible to live without the arts” (RL0012, p. 19).

These understandings of the visual arts provenance of a thriving culture are important. Quilty suggests a thriving culture “has to be built on the idea that we have to start striving for cultural identity. We have to start to understand who we are” (BQ0006 [ii], p. 6). Winikoff considers the visual arts to be “a critical building block of the social fabric” (TW0015, p. 8) and therefore a fundamental fibre of cultural identity. Winikoff and Quilty are advocating that the visual arts are inherently central to the emergence and substance of a cultural identity.

Cultural identity and identity are not about competition or conflict or how good an individual may be at something in comparison to another. Quilty provides a segue in to the second concept, *Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance*, when he suggests that to have a real sense of our own identity as Australian,

we have to develop a culture in a much more strategic and thoughtful and long-term way. We have to implement strategies to do that. It has to be done at a government level and it starts with children communicating about who they are, not what they can do, but who they feel they are. (BQ0002, p. 2)

5.2.3.2 Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#10]

Competition, conflict and a pre-occupation with winning and losing are deemed to be a flawed approach to building a healthy culture and a thriving society (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#10]*). “Sport gives no sense of cultural identity. It gives no identity. It’s identity about competition, which is a really, actually really fundamentally flawed and negative thing to build the stature and health of the society on. Really flawed” (BQ0011, p. 11).

Quilty sees artist, art and culture as being “one big very heavy, very powerful leveller” (BQ0032, p.29) in societies pre-occupied by competition and conflict, which he suggests have the potential to compromise any pursuit of honesty. He comments that if “you are competitive you are not anywhere near the truth about your own honesty about who you are as a human being because you are competing with someone else” (BQ0032, p.29).

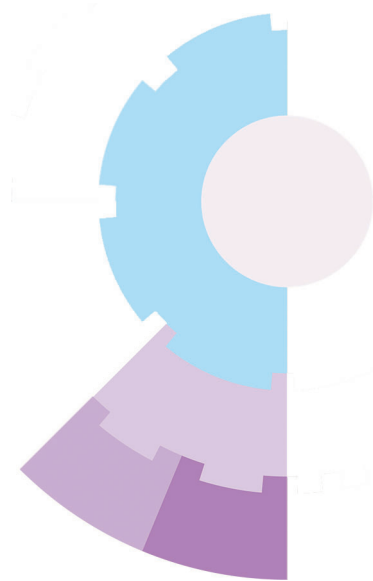
The excessive emphasis on competition and conflict is seen as a significant challenge to the provenance of a healthy culture. Competition may be understood as being a form of engagement between two or more individuals or communities, with the arena of competition ranging from the sports field to zones of war. Competition as a basis for the origin of a healthy culture is contested because, as Quilty suggests,

What is the end result of competition? In the end you’re going to lose or you are going to win, and eventually you’re going to lose and if you keep building that structure, which becomes a sort of fibre of community, it’s really dangerous. (BQ0012, p. 11)

A particularly flawed and problematic pre-occupation with which to build society is the focus on war. Khaled Sabsabi reflected “It wasn’t until the Howard years that this idea of national identity became so important for us to carve identity and to use things like the war essentially as a way to do that” (KS0016, p. 31). Sabsabi identifies different approaches to constructing identity, namely cultural and competitive. He continues, “It’s a joke. To carve an identity based on war, not on culture. I understand this idea in the modern contemporary West to carve your ideal identity based around war but, but come on!” (KS0017, p. 31).

Quilty says, “if you are competitive you are not anywhere near the truth about your own honesty, about who you are as a human being, because you are competing with someone else. If you are honest, then competition just falls away like skin off a fucking snake” (BQ0032, p. 30).

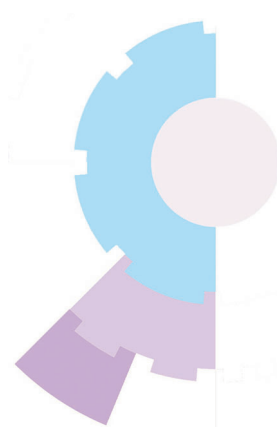
5.2.4 Considerations on Society Formation



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#11]

The fourth category emerging from the analysis of the Stage Two data is *Considerations on Society Formation* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#11]*). Central to understanding this category are the participants' considerations concerning the nature of identity in contemporary society. The following discussion is framed around two concepts, namely (i) *Indigenous Culture and Contemporary Society* and (ii) *An Amalgam of Evolving Identities*.

5.2.4.1 Indigenous Culture and Contemporary Society



*Colour Enmeshment | Series 2
[#12]*

It was generally accepted by the senior arts advocates that the longevity, complexity and beauty of Australian indigenous culture and its underpinning of Australia's identity is central to considerations of contemporary society formation (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#12]*). In keeping with the discussion around *Acknowledging the Past*, a number of advocates interviewed in this study identified that indigenous Australia is an inherent part of considerations of the identity of Australia. Sabsabi states, "I think the aboriginal identity of Australia is a national identity. And that's what it is. I think we are all immigrants here and we are all guests here" (KS0016, p. 31).

But, the indigenous history of Australia also presents a significant problem for modern Australia as Quilty argues,

zealous patriotism of saying that we live in the best country in the world is not just simplistic, it is really ugly because we don't. We live in a very dramatically beautiful landscape that has had people living on it for 40,000 years, who now live in abject poverty. (BQ0037, p. 42)

Quilty goes on to challenge the myth of the lucky country, especially in regard to the indigenous community. He states "see how broken as people they are (yet) how proud they are. How they are trying to desperately stay in contact with their cultural heritage and then say that we live in the best country in the world!" (BQ0039, p. 43). A new approach is needed because at present "we are flawed while we are in denial of it. We are really flawed when we are in denial and when we acknowledge it, we will be a much more well rounded, interesting place" (BQ0035, p. 35).

The manner in which the indigenous culture has been addressed is a matter of powerful and cultural concern to Quilty. He understands indigenous culture as needing to be afforded the same respect as European Australian culture in any deliberations on society formation. Of these injustices, Quilty says,

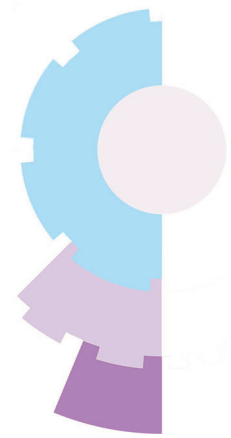
the massacre sites of aboriginal people need to be marked, need to be commemorated. The same as the war memorial commemorates death overseas, well, only just before that, people died here, and it was a war, white against black. And there is no commemoration of that. None. So that means without those footings, that culture has nowhere to grow. (BQ0034, p. 34)

5.2.4.2 An Amalgam of Evolving Identities

The second concept is *An Amalgam of Evolving Identities* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#13]). As Winikoff says, Australia's modern society is an amalgam of "people whose ethnic identities have been forged elsewhere and brought with them to have to be negotiated with very very different ways of thinking and doing things" (TW0017 [i], p. 10).

What were once considered to be the foundations of Australian society is changing and

traditional approaches to society formation are losing traction. Leonard suggests that “the traditional forms of extended family, immediate families, church communities, villages, all those tribal loyalties have broken down, tribal identities have broken down” (RL0028, pp. 42–43). This change in how communities exist certainly indicates that not only are our identities changing, but that we need to evolve new ones, both as individuals and as a society. Leonard goes on to suggest that visual practices are filling the void and provide a new way of identity formation when he says “with the decline of religious collectives I actually think media and visual arts have moved in to take the space” (RL0005, p. 9).



*Colour Enmeshment |
Series 2 [#13]*

In light of Winikoff’s statement, the notion of there being one homogenous and national identity upon which to form contemporary society is made redundant. Winikoff identifies some of the components of contemporary identity that need consideration,

the whole question of Australia’s identity is a very interesting one. We tend to think of it as being about race or culture or ethnicity. But actually it’s about an amalgam of a whole lot of other things as well. It’s about gender and age and religion, physical location, our geography. Our social and economic circumstances and our education. TW0017 [i], p. 9)

This modern culture is underpinned by those citizens who “have had to negotiate their place and the way they interact with what’s already here and influence it and be influenced by it” (TW0017 [ii], p. 11). The point to consider here is that the identity of modern Australia should “not (be) based on any made up myths about where we come from rubbish” but instead “it’s about looking to the future” (BQ0027 [ii], p. 24).

The need to look beyond race, culture and ethnicity in order to understand contemporary Australian society is a concern of Brand’s, who when reflecting on the demographic of visitors at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, makes the astute observation that, “we don’t know who they are. We might think we’re getting Chinese tourists but they could be Chinese families from Western Sydney. Or they could be from Taiwan not mainland China, we just don’t know” (MB0008, p. 18). Not only can the premise of this observation be applied to many aspects of contemporary life, it also has a significant impact on how the institutional infrastructure of Australia has a role to play. Brand comments, “you have a department of Australian Art and a

department of International Art. So where does a Thai Australian artist go? Where does Kate Beynon go? She was born in Australia so she's presumably Australian and one of her parents is Chinese" (MB0010 [ii], p. 10).

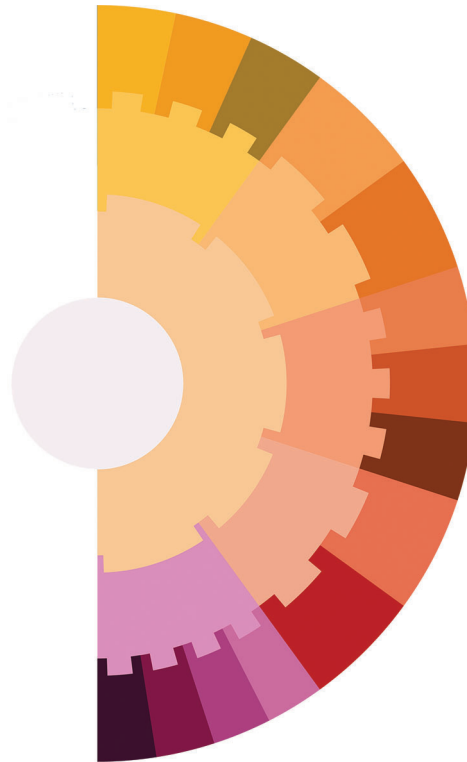
In keeping with this notion of an amalgam of evolving identities, Brand suggests that modern Australia is an example of cosmopolitanism, a term that,

got a bit left behind, and is coming back a bit but to me it seems better than multicultural. It just seems a bit more optimistic. And a little more forward thinking, like enjoying the random nature of what crops up rather than some sort of prescriptive new description that we got to include a bit of this and a bit of that. It (cosmopolitanism) is just sort of like we appreciate each other and it's growing in various random ways. (MB0014, p. 29)

Leonard understands the role of the visual in cosmopolitan society when he says such a society needs "things to be able to bind the tie and I think visual stuff, shared visual stuff, is all about that" (RL0020, p. 31). French refers to the cosmopolitan amalgam of "everyday western Sydney suburbia...mosques and houses, or it might be everyday suburbia in different parts of the Middle East" as a visual language that comes together as a "latticework" (BF0007, p. 11) of contemporary society in Australia. In this evolving society, "each wave (of migration) brings with it its own potency, that then forms a new conversation" (TW0023, p. 16).

The senior arts advocates had demonstrated that by reflecting on their practice and on how they perceive themselves as practitioners, they were able to make significant contributions to the discussions about the re-imagining of contemporary society.

5.3 The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#14]

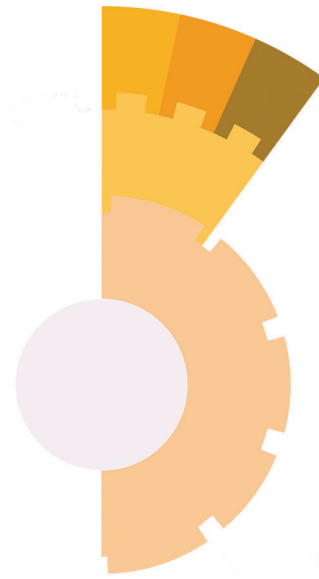
Core category (CC)	CMYK	Sub-core category (SCC)	CMYK	Category (CAT)	CMYK	Concept (CON)	CMYK
Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice (5)	2%, 5%, 0%, 3%	The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice (5.3)	2%, 24%, 43%, 0%	The Nature of Endeavour Itself (5.3.1)	2%, 24%, 78%, 0%	Making, Feeling and Thinking (5.3.1.1)	2%, 33%, 94%, 0%
						The Demystification of Practice (5.3.1.2)	5%, 45%, 100%, 0%
						The Possibilities of Practice (5.3.1.3)	32%, 49%, 100%, 12%
				Communicating in Different Ways (5.3.2)	1%, 30%, 60%, 0%	Visual Communication (5.3.2.1)	2%, 40%, 77%, 0%
						Cultural Discourse (5.3.2.2)	7%, 65%, 100%, 0%
				Providing for Different Modes of Engagement (5.3.3)	2%, 47%, 55%, 0%	An Individual Engagement and the Experience of Self (5.3.3.1)	6%, 62%, 76%, 0%
						A Collective Engagement (5.3.3.2)	15%, 81%, 100%, 4%
						Interweaving the Individual and the Collective (5.3.3.3)	32%, 84%, 100%, 36%
				Enmeshing Imagination and Skill (5.3.4)	4%, 39%, 42%, 0%	The Nature of Imagination (5.3.4.1)	6%, 69%, 72%, 0%
						The Nature of Skill (5.3.4.2)	18%, 100%, 99%, 9%
				The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact (5.3.5)	11%, 52%, 2%, 0%	Non Activist and Activist Practice, Practitioner and Artefact (5.3.5.1)	18%, 70%, 10%, 0%
						Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Ambassador (5.3.5.2)	35%, 89%, 22%, 1%
						The Capacity of Practice, Practitioner and Artefact to Enable and Inform (5.3.5.3)	38%, 100%, 51%, 28%
						Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Social Commentator (5.3.5.4)	61%, 91%, 50%, 62%

Grounded in the data gathered from senior arts advocates during Stage Two, the second sub-core category to be described in this chapter is *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#14]). In the analysis of the chapter's first sub-core category, *Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society*, the findings suggested that in regard to the relationship between a visual arts practice and contemporary society formation, a re-imagining of a thriving culture and society could be enabled and enhanced by a distinctive visual arts practice. The concern in examining this sub-core category is to identify just what it is about a visual arts practice that is perceived to be so distinctive and significant.

The following analysis of the Stage Two data reveals possible ways of understanding *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* in the context of the manner in which it has the potential to be a catalyst in the re-imagining of a contemporary culture and society. It is suggested that considerations of society, the re-imagining of society and the role of young people in that society, can be both an aesthetic experience and aesthetic in form.

The following categories give form and understanding to an examination of *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* sub-core category, namely (i) *The Nature of Endeavour Itself*, (ii) *Communicating in Different Ways*, (iii) *Providing Different Modes of Engagement*, (iv) *Enmeshing Imagination and Skill* and (v) *The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact*.

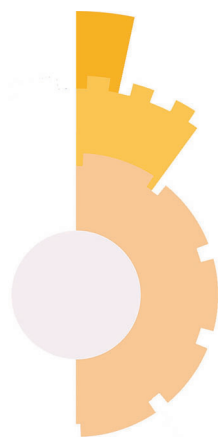
5.3.1 The Nature of the Endeavour Itself



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#15]

The first category is *The Nature of Endeavour Itself* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#15]). The participants in this study perceived endeavour as being a purposeful undertaking in, with and through a visual arts practice and which presents the possibility of enabling individual and collective change at an aesthetic, cultural and societal level. A range of such purposeful undertakings existing within a visual arts practice provide the potential for particular forms of action to occur and in turn for particular kinds of transformation to be enacted. Three concepts underpin the category, namely (i) *Making, Feeling and Thinking*, (ii) *The Demystification of Practice* and (iii) *The Possibilities of Practice*.

5.3.1.1 Making, Feeling and Thinking



Colour Enmeshment |
Series 2 [#16]

Much endeavour associated with *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* can be characterised, suggests Winikoff, by the essential ingredients of “hand, heart and mind, that connection between making, feeling and thinking” (TW0010, p. 6) (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#16]). In offering this insight about endeavour, Winikoff has provided a framework with which to examine and understand endeavour in the context of *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*.

Winikoff’s conception hand, heart and mind is illustrative of the distinctive elements that bind endeavour and visual arts together. The hand

is that by which and through which *making* is facilitated. The heart is an acknowledgement that *feeling*, sense and value are embedded within visual arts learning. The mind is representative of the *thinking*, cognition and knowledge in a visual arts practice. The framework is helpful in describing the nature in which endeavour contributes to *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*.

The first of Winikoff's ingredients is making. Making was understood by Winikoff to be an inherent characteristic of the visual arts, which "epitomize the making principle and translating ideas into tangible form" (TW0011, p. 7). Here Winikoff is celebrating the process of making as enabling the transition of intangible thoughts or imaginings into tangible forms or artefacts. This almost alchemic understanding of the nature of making resonated with Blair French, who said, "I do think that people, particularly kids, want to think of art as something tactile. There's this idea, or maybe it's even magic, of actually being part of the transformation process that you see happen" (BF0016, p. 23).

The second of Winikoff's essential ingredients is feeling. The importance of feeling as an essential component of human existence and expression was highlighted by Quilty, who, when referring to the importance of providing rich opportunities for young learners to express themselves through a visual arts practice, said that all these young learners need "is a wall, a dedicated wall, and a dedicated floor to let children really express themselves" (BQ0021 [ii], p. 16).

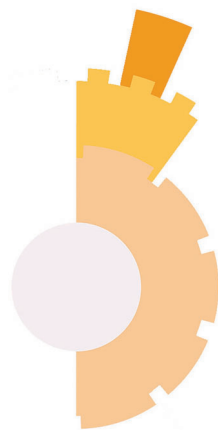
The third of Winikoff's essential ingredients is thinking. Thinking is concerned with the cognitive actions of a visual practice. French described his particular form of this practice as being embedded in a "prism of writing through art" (BF0002, p. 5). French elaborated further by saying that his attraction to, and desire to be involved in, the visual arts had "triggered a fascination with thinking about the visual and thinking through the visual" (BF0019, p. 29). French's practice investigates the visual through thinking and writing. Engaging in this practice of thinking and writing about the visual arts provided French with a different and distinct "kind of...object of contemplation" (BF0001, p. 2).

Winikoff added further dimension to the concept of thinking as being one of the essential ingredients of a visual arts learning practice when she suggested that it is possible to "think with images", rather than it only being possible "to think with words" (TW0030, p. 24). This distinct nature of thinking within a visual arts learning practice was also taken up by Brand,

who suggested that “with the visual arts, you have time for reflection; you have time to think about it. It’s a very time intensive activity” (MB0028, p. 50).

Winikoff suggests it is possible to consider *The Nature of the Endeavour Itself* as “*learning* to understand what making is about, why you want to do something like *making* an artwork. It’s about exploring and conveying an idea that in some way changes people’s *perception* [emphases added]” (TW0041, p. 43).

5.3.1.2 The Demystification of Practice



Colour Enmeshment |
Series 2 [#17]

The second concept is *The Demystification of Practice* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#17]*). Whereas in the past there has perhaps been the view that the visual arts inhabited an elitist position in society, in any attempt to forge a thriving culture, the visual arts must be accessible to everyone and not just certain individuals or groups.

How this concept of demystification may equate to the practice of an artist is explored by Quilty, who indicates that he has demystified his own practice so that his young audience is not left wondering. Quilty says,

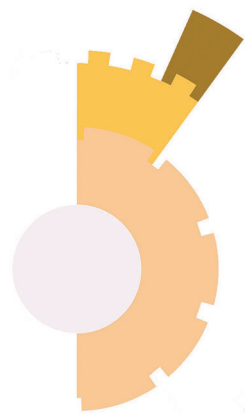
I have demystified my art practice, I have made it look like it’s really hard work so they know that is not just a romantic job with all connotations of drunkenness and debauchery. But I have also really tried to demystify it so that they see it as work. For their own art practice, it is just so crucial to their development. (BQ0001, p. 1).

Sabsabi takes up this concept of de-mystification at the institutional level saying, “an arts centre can get easily disconnected from its community, and it can fly off into the realm of art for art’s sake and art excellence” (KS0002, p. 6). Here the message is that if the art offered to the public does not strike the appropriate chord, some of the purpose of the institution is lost, and a vital relationship between the institution and the public fails to materialise. The institution and its art remain distant and the intentions of its collection fail to hit their mark. However, Sabsabi also acknowledges that mystery and magic are beguiling characteristics of the visual arts and as such they should not be revealed in their entirety. Sabsabi perceives demystify is a big word and that there is a danger of it being misinterpreted and misused as to demystify a

practice, practitioner or artefact is akin to “disempowering something, taking the magic out of it” (KS0011, p. 20).

The need for a visual arts practice, its practitioners and its artefacts to be accessible by an audience is identified by Brand, when he says, “if you are going to address issues through your art, you probably don’t want your audience to need a PhD in art history to be able to get the message” (MB0025, p. 45). Brand is suggesting that it would be a disadvantage for an artefact, and the intention with which it is imbued, to be impenetrable by its audience. It is as though the elitism that so characterised the visual arts in the past is now understood to be an obstacle. Brand goes on to say that “the more relevant the art becomes, the less interpretive skills they need” (MB0025, p. 44), and in doing so is reiterating the understanding that a contemporary practice and a relevant practice should not be opaque to the general population.

5.3.1.3 The Possibilities of Practice



*Colour Enmeshment | Series
2 [#18]*

The third concept is *The Possibilities of Practice* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#18]*). Brand provides an insight into the manner in which a visual arts practice exposes young learners to the possibilities of something new and the opportunity to almost become more of who they already are. When referring to the opportunities of exhibiting in the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ ArtExpress show, he reflected, “you are an Afghani Australian, you get into ArtExpress, your artwork is shown in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and your confidence, self-esteem, valuing your own culture, all of those things that have to be good” (MB0015, p. 31). In this instance it is through a visual arts practice that a sense of cultural identity is affirmed and strengthened, and young Australians from diverse backgrounds’ unique place in contemporary Australian society formed. Brand goes on to identify the role of a visual arts practice in discussing matters of importance such as identity,

It’s a sort of platform or a forum for discussing those areas. And so even if your art isn’t that great in the end, but if your body of work is about identity, you are spending a year of your life talking with your teachers’ and classmates about identity. (MB0016, p. 32)

A visual arts practice is providing the opportunity for a voice to emerge and the means to

become, and hopefully to flourish, in contemporary society.

The senior arts advocates perceived that a visual arts practice presents possibilities of understandings one's place in the world. Quilty suggests that by providing the opportunity to engage in a visual arts practice it is possible that,

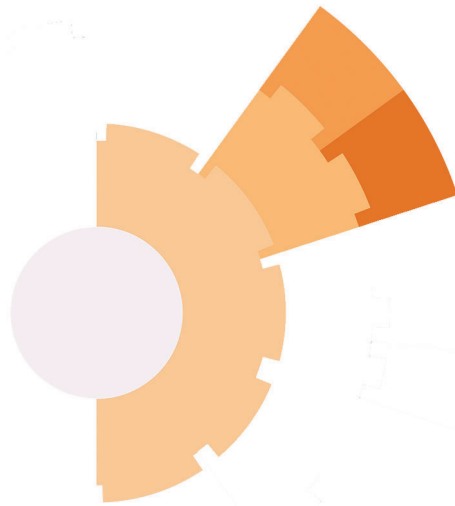
within fifteen minutes you can get one little child to suddenly, their little mind visually expands, and it's profound to see it happen. And every single child can do it. You just suddenly conceptually expand and it means that your ambition grows as an eight-year-old. You suddenly have ambition. (BQ0022, p. 17)

What is important here is that it is through a visual arts practice that not only has a mind changed but the new possibilities of one's place in the world have been expanded.

Leonard suggests that the visual arts provide young learners with "the eyes to see culture, and a bit of intelligence to tease it out, and to make some links about how we don't have to be frightened about the culture. We just have to get clever about dealing with it" (RL0002, pp. 5-6). A visual arts practice provides opportunities to see things in new ways and to create with new solutions. French understands a visual arts practice as being fundamental to the way in which contemporary Australia can be explored, saying "the visual becomes a kind of first formal encounter with a range of different cultural perspectives and backgrounds, that's really pertinent in Australia today" (BF0003, p. 7).

Winikoff provides a final clarification when she says "I think that transposing people out of the security of words opens new possibilities of thinking" (TW0034, p. 55).

5.3.2 Communicating in Different Ways

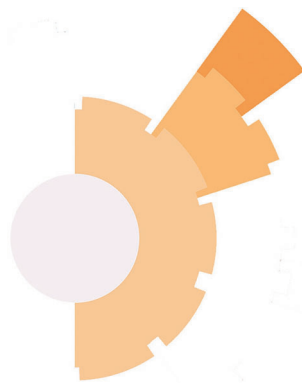


Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#19]

Communicating, states Quilty, is “at the core of a visual arts practice, which itself is a form of communication, a very nuanced, interesting way of communicating” (BQ0024, p. 20) (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#19]). This statement about communicating being central to a visual arts practice sets such a practice and its particular forms of expression as distinctive ways of communicating. As Quilty elaborated, “the arts are broader than painting. It’s all about communicating in different ways” (BQ0030, p. 28).

Two concepts constitute the category of *Communicating in Different Ways*, namely (i) *Visual Communication* and (ii) *Cultural Discourse*. These concepts provide insights with which to consider this notion of there being different ways of communicating through a visual arts practice.

5.3.2.1 Visual Communication



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#20]

The concept of *Visual Communication* is given purpose and form by Winikoff when she suggests “everybody needs to be able to understand the language of visual communication, and to use it with potency and elegance” (TW0005, pp. 4–5) (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#20]). This reference to potency and elegance is wonderful as it imbues visual communication with a sense of the different and to a pursuit of quality. Winikoff goes on to suggest that visual communication is “a fundamental form of communication

that has become increasingly essential” (TW0005, p. 6). French suggests that the “visuality, or the image, (is) a very simple, direct, communicative device” (BF0009, p. 2). Whilst visual communication is a familiar concept in contemporary curriculum, it remains a different form of communication to more standard verbal and text-based forms of communication, thereby contributing to the distinctiveness of the visual.

This notion of there being something other than verbal and text-based forms of communication is explored further by Winikoff, who in saying “if you don’t speak a language there is no communication, whereas with the visual there is still communication” (TW0026, p. 19), gives credence to the visual arts as being a channel for a distinct form of communication. French suggests that some of this form of communications is an “ability to decode visual signs” (BF0009, p. 1). To speak a language suggests a verbal exchange by way of a common and mutual language. Without such a common language there is unlikely to be an effective verbal communication or exchange. By way of contrast, Winikoff’s suggestion that “with the visual there is still communication”, invites us to consider and understand the visual arts as both being communicative in nature and being able to provide a different form of exchange when other forms of communication may be absent or insufficient.

The concept of visual communication being an effective and distinctive way of communicating is taken up by French, who suggests that “the visual has an accessibility, a better word might be recognisability, for example, when we are dealing with symbiology that we don’t necessarily understand culturally” (BF0003, p. 7). French’s use of the terms recognisability and accessibility adds to our understanding of the distinct nature of communication through the visual arts. Winikoff addresses the notion of there being a distinct form of accessibility through the visual when verbal language might be restricted or challenging in her reflection that, “linguistic barriers...are much more evident than visual representation barriers” (TW0025, p. 18). The implication here is that there are fewer visual barriers and those that do exist are not as impenetrable as challenging linguistic barriers because the abstract nature of the visual arts allows for a broader range of responses to any one question.

Recognisability is taken up by Richard Leonard as a relevant construct when considering communication through the visual. Leonard understands the visual as being a different way of articulating experiences both of ourselves and of our experiences of the world around us. Leonard proffers,

we need symbolism, we need to extract experience, and we need symbolism to be able to take ourselves outside ourselves. We can't possibly express or process our experience, so (the visual) becomes a symbolic way, a symbolic language by which we can do it. (RL0014, p. 20)

Here the recognisability of and accessibility to self by way of a visual symbolism, and the visual, constitutes a different form of communication.

It is unlikely, although not impossible, that impenetrable visual barriers would exist in contemporary society because the nature and value of visual communication in the twenty-first century lies in its propensity towards illuminating a universal commonality, one which if used positively has the potential to prevent a significant or complete communication breakdown. The visual provides a form of communication when more traditional communication channels, such as text or spoken language, are challenged or challenging. Indeed, the visual is a form of communication of equal complexity and rigour, albeit in a different form, to that of linguistic or text communication. In today's society, visual communication is not a stopgap, fill in or an alternative. It is an embedded and vital part of young people's lives across the world.

Visual communication is purposeful and intentional. Winikoff suggested that "visual communication is not neutral but it has an intention to make something happen in the viewer" (TW0040, p. 42). The intentional and the purposeful are sympathetic to each other in their efforts to effect transformation. Quilty talks of the distinctive purposeful and intentional characteristics of visual communication when he said that as an artist and art practitioner, he is concerned with "doing it (art making) to communicate, and doing it for the theatrics of audience participation and audience reaction" (BQ0016, p. 13). The audience is being invited by Quilty to actively participate, react and respond. From this perspective, Quilty reveals the link between communication, purpose and intention. Quilty is making a connection between the distinctive communication characteristics of the visual, which are an intentional part of his practice, and the purpose of eliciting the active engagement of his audience. It could be said that Quilty invites his audience to enter into a conversation. This notion of a conversation as being implicit in the distinctiveness of the visual is of interest to Sabsabi as well.

Sabsabi believes the "important thing" about the distinctiveness of visual communication is that "it is a conversation" (KS0004, p. 9). Sabsabi says,

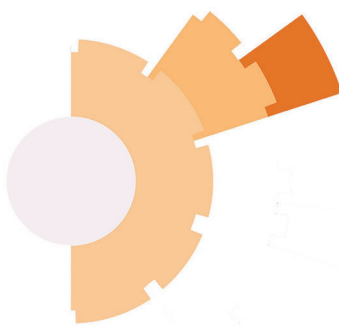
whatever the image may be, whether it's an artwork or whether it may be staring out of the window, it's still very subjective. And when something is subjective, it is open to conversation. We are not dictating what is right or wrong. They (participants in the conversation) are having a conversation within themselves and there is no right or wrong. And that's when the beautiful things happen. That's the impetus for engagement. (KS0012, p. 25)

Thus, it could be said that conversations occur between people and that as a result, a form of engagement, exchange and discourse then emerges between those involved in the conversation.

Sabsabi suggests that visual practice provides entry points of communication. Sabsabi prompts us to consider such entry points when he suggests, “the role of the visual is to give an entry point” (KS0011, p. 20). The entry point is the possibility for communicating to occur. What is important is that the notion of an entry point enables or opens up opportunity to communicate. French understands such visual communication to be a way to “transact imagery” (BF0003, p. 19). Such entry points or possibilities for communication are not necessarily set in stone and perfectly defined, as Winikoff suggests when she said, ‘I think visual representation has a certain sort of abstract quality which words don’t’ (TW0025, p. 18). Here the important observation should be that visual representation, when considered as representation of imagination, is another way of engaging in communicating. In a sense it is not as obvious or as black-and-white as text. This allows and promotes possibilities for entering into new and expanded ways of thinking and expands the possibilities for conceptualising issues and concerns.

5.3.2.2 Cultural Discourse

Quilty suggests, “art *is* [emphasis added] cultural discourse, it’s learning about how to engage with culture, it’s learning how to make up a visual language” (BQ0020, p. 15) (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#21]). There is an invitation in this statement to consider discourse as the potential exchange between the animate, in this case the person engaging, and the inanimate, in this case culture through the lens of the visual. Quilty goes on to state that to “really understand a visual language is a very powerful tool”

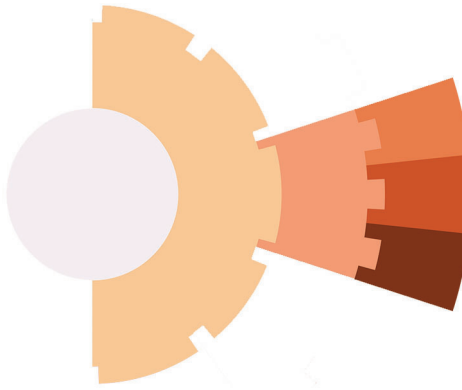


Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#21]

(BQ0026, p. 22). The point being made here is that to understand a visual language as being a powerful tool is to recognise its significance as a different form of communication, engagement and exchange. Quilty went on to say that if “you can understand the tool” that is visual language, using it to engage and exchange with others is like “writing a book for an audience to read’ but in another form (BQ0026, p. 22).

Leonard spoke of a discourse or conversation between the animate and inanimate, by suggesting that art, more often than not a non-mnemonic entity, brings as much to a conversation as that which its audience brings. Quilty and Leonard identified art being as active as its audience because it contributes to conversation. Without the prompt that an artwork provides, the audience would have nothing to interact and exchange with. In this regard Leonard suggested that there exists a relationship between the spectator and the visual. When reflecting on the nature of this relationship, Leonard said, “when people go to interact with any piece of art, how they are sutured into the diegesis, how they are sutured into that experience, depends on what they bring to it as much as it brings to them” (RL0003, pp. 6–7).

5.3.3 Providing for Different Modes of Engagement

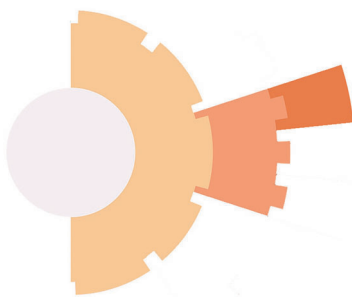


Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#22]

The category of *Providing for Different Modes of Engagement* emerged from the identification of different ways of engaging in a visual arts learning practice (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#22]). Winikoff suggested that a visual arts practice can be enacted “individually and collectively or socially as it were” (TW0011, p. 7). Leonard referred to individual and collective modes of engagement as *trigger moments*. Trigger moments are instances of impact on the individual or collective caused by an exposure to practice, practitioner or artefact. Leonard stated, “art does it (impact) and can do it individually, and then does it collectively” (RL0011, p. 18). The third mode of an interwoven engagement is more than just a combination of the individual and the collective. Through the interwoven mode, it is possible to examine how practitioners negotiate the tension between an individual and collective engagement.

Three modes of engagement were identified, namely (i) *An Individual Engagement and the Experience of Self*, (ii) *A Collective Engagement* and (iii) *Interweaving the Individual and the Collective*.

5.3.3.1 An Individual Engagement and the Experience of Self



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#23]

The concept of *An Individual Practice and the Experience of Self* was indicative of any form of practice undertaken by an individual, whether alone in a studio or contemplating thoughts in a busy and public arena (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#23]). The integration of individual engagement and the experience of self as a concept comprise self-reflection, self-direction and discomfort.

On an individual engagement, French suggests there was a need to be able to detach oneself from the world around in order to experience an individual mode of engagement. French sees this self-reflection as a creative act and an act of self,

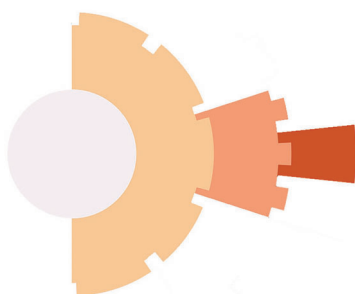
I would say that the capacity to think and act differently from that which is around you, and maybe also the capacity to think and from that thinking, act out of self reflection. I think it is quite a creative act to look at yourself and then do something different, something new or at odds. (BF0020, p. 34)

Leonard also understands self-reflection to be a part of a visual practice. Leonard observed that “I think you’re better off having the experience and reflecting on it later” (RL0021, p. 32). The experience may be individual, collective or interwoven but a reflective process about the experience and about place of self within that experience is an individual engagement. The act of self-reflection does not have to take place in physical solitude even though it is individual in nature and process. Indeed, self-reflection is more of an ephemeral act that can occur anywhere but leaves no trace as to having been there, other than in the mind of the person doing the reflecting.

Engagement in a visual practice can present challenges of experiences of self. When considering the challenges he encounters in his own practice, Quilty said, “sometimes it’s overwhelming and depressing because in the end what I want to do is make work” (BQ0036, p. 40). Winikoff illustrates this overwhelming and depressing sense experienced by Quilty as a distinctive quality of a visual practice when she says, “people get discomforted and that is often when they produce their best work” (TW0036, p. 36).

The outcome of this experience of self is “the gift you bring is what you see, either in your mind, or your actual eye” (RL0030, p. 48).

5.3.3.2 A Collective Engagement



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#24]

The value of a collective mode of engagement was also evident from the analysis of the data (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#24]). Many of the arts advocates touched upon this concept of the collective, referring variously to a social, participative, relational, collaborative and shared mode of engagement. However, the value attached to a collective

practice did not go unchallenged and it was suggested that this mode of engagement was not always appropriate, relevant or preferred in the context of the visual arts.

Whilst reflecting on the practice of some Aboriginal artists, the value and richness of a collective engagement was described by French, who suggested that such a practice comprised of,

learning through doing and through being with each other, the act of sitting around and making the painting is also the act of discussing stories, and discussing the place, and probably quite an informal way of handing over knowledge or sharing knowledge. And all that in the painting. (BF0021, p. 39)

French's description of a collective painting practice is appealing and it aligns with contemporary learning in regard to the perceived value and popularity of collaborative experiences. Notwithstanding this, French goes on to question the extensive applicability of the collective approach. French suggests,

I think there is, it's been around a long time now, the buzzword of collaboration has been so prevalent in contemporary art, and that a particular form of sociology, which is actually almost a managerial sociology. A lot of what gets claimed under the framework of collaboration is actually securing and contracting and managing skills (BF0010, p. 16).

French goes on to point to the ambiguity that exists in regard to group and collaborative engagement, and the assumption of cooperation,

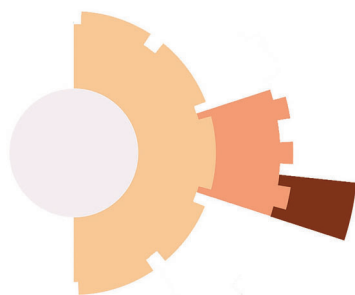
I think there is a social/relational practice that is also quite conservative because it draws on a particular form of people being together. And it can be problematic. But is perceived as being collaborative as you are bringing different skills into play' (BF0012, p. 18).

Quilty was also concerned that an over emphasis on physical and collective participation has the capacity to take away from the intimacy and nuance of a visual arts learning practice. Quilty said,

participation is not about touching. I mean we have this thing that participation in Australia is about hands-on touching because we are so good with the football and therefore it has to have something to do with touching. Participation can be completely

in your head, cerebral, completely about the thought process. We have to realise that so much of creativity, those ideas of creativity, come out of the theatrics of the thought process and these challenge us to think. (BQ0018, pp. 13–14)

5.3.3.3 An Interweaving of the Individual and the Collective



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#25]

A number of the Stage Two participants identified a mode of engagement that enmeshed both an individual approach and a collective approach (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#25]*). This concept of *An Interweaving of the Collective and the Individual* is one where the experience of self and the collective occur sequentially or at the same time. Quilty commented,

The actual act of making is very antisocial. And it's funny, before I came back here, I had had two assistants, a French guy and an Australian woman, living in my studio in Paris, and I realised that when I got back here I was really depressed. I thought, "I can't do it without people here". There was something amazing about it. But really it is the very heart of it, the creation process is a very solo thing. (BQ0015, pp.12–13)

Here Quilty illustrates the unease that can emerge when an interweaving of the individual and the collective is incorporated into visual arts practice. The very human desire to be a part of the social enters into a tension with the act of making that is particular to the practitioner.

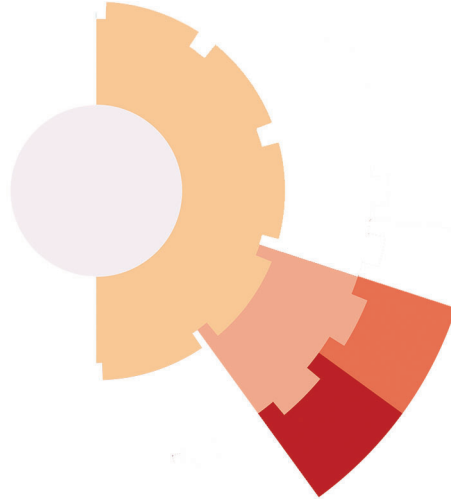
French drew attention to the uncomfortable but necessary tension in an interwoven practice. To French, a collective engagement that exists in 'a strong community and that has a strong engagement in the world often results in the creation of an image that is 'produced in isolation and therefore gets talked about as being quite solitary, antisocial, nonsocial' (BF0014, p. 19). French reiterates this understanding about an interwoven practice when he says,

with that has come the idea that practice itself is a social activity, and of course then there is social practice, there is the whole idea of practice been predicated on a form of social interaction or exchange...but I actually still think there is a fundamental strength that is still quite isolationist in terms of the way the artist approaches it. (BF0011, p.17)

The identification of these different ways suggests that in order to provide young learners

with as much opportunity to be involved in such a practice as possible, each of these different ways need to be considered.

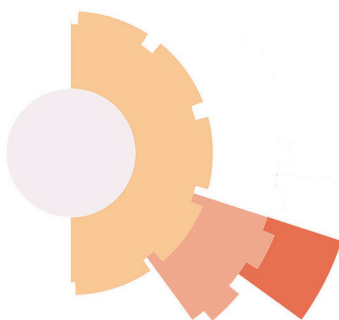
5.3.4 Enmeshing Imagination and Skill



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#26]

The fourth category is *Enmeshing Imagination and Skill* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#26]*). It is suggested that without the ability to imagine, a practice may not be enacted, practitioners could not function and artefacts could not be produced. It is also perceived that without the skills associated with a visual arts practice, it would impossible for a visual arts practice to exist, a practitioner would be unable to enact such a practice and artefacts would remain as intangible imaginings. There exists interdependence between imagination and skill, and this interdependence is a distinctive element of a visual arts practice. The category of *Enmeshing Imagination and Skill* is examined through two concepts, namely *The Nature of Imagination* and *The Nature of Skill*.

5.3.4.1 The Nature of Imagination



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#27]

The Nature of Imagination in the context of this study is understood to be the manner in which imagination has a distinct role in a visual arts practice (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#27]*). Imagination can be translated into tangible realities associated with practice, practitioner and artefact. On this, Winikoff suggested that “it seems that imagination, and its use,

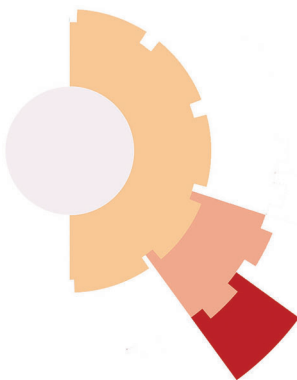
is considered to be a form of thinking into and about the future” (TW0034, p. 55).

Learning and practice as human endeavours, states Leonard, are “about expanding your imagination, as the imagination has no boundaries and what we can imagine is extraordinary” (RL0032, p. 49). Imagining is part of the learning process and as such contributes to the distinctiveness of a visual arts learning practice. Leonard goes on to suggest that there is an inherent nexus between education and imagination and he states that “I think that if education and imagination are not married, we are in serious trouble. We want to explode their [young learners] imagination” (RL0031, p. 49). Leonard provides a warning for us to consider when he prompts a reflection about how imagination is being slowly eradicated from the learning experience. Leonard said,

It is only limited by either the experience or the constructs we put on it because we won’t allow ourselves to imagine something more or greater. In early learning we’ve got to expand all those horizons as much as we can. Because sooner or later we will constrain them for a whole raft of other reasons. (RL0032, pp. 49–50)

An engagement with the visual goes hand in hand with imagination because it is inherently abstract and requires a certain type of interpretation or language in order to be understood.

5.3.4.2 The Nature of Skill



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#28]

The second concept in this category is *The Nature of Skill*. (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#28]*). Skill is understood by the senior arts advocates as being a multifarious entity, whether described as a distinct ability, such as oil painting, or as a broader engagement with the visual arts, such as visits to galleries. Sabsabi suggested that the investment in, and acquisition of, skills with which to make art was crucial, saying,

so I think that the investment is important. In terms of those skills and how they need to be nurtured to be used in the future will be something that is so important in terms of how education, because learning Photoshop, InDesign, Acrobat Pro, Premiere, Dreamweaver

and all these sorts of tools, I see these things as being part of the curriculum in the future. (KS0008, p. 14)

Here Sabsabi illustrates the importance of acquiring new skills that meet the demands of a contemporary visual arts practice and that these skills, and the means through which they are acquired, are an integral component of future curriculum, visual arts learning and society formation. Winikoff supports this relationship between skill and learning when she says, “you can assess according to skill, skill level, intention of the work, sophistication of the idea” (TW0039, p. 40).

Winikoff, when talking about young learners, believed that the skills associated with the visual arts “enriches their practice” (TW0035, p. 36) and “really enriches their capabilities in articulating what it is they want to articulate” (TW0037, pp. 37–38). French suggest that such skills “enable a particular type of engagement” (BF0012, p. 3). What is clear is that skills are indeed an essential component of a visual arts practice. Skill is a tangible entity that can be taught, acquired or passed on. Leonard suggested that skill is of the utmost importance when he reflected that skill is “the greatest gift I (the teacher) can give you (the learner) because it will develop your eye” (RL0030, p. 47). Winikoff understands skill, and its impact, as being a significant determinant in any practice, saying, “people are entitled to be given as much ammunition as possible, to be able to exercise their skill” (TW0037, pp. 37–38).

French suggested that development of a discipline specific type of skill adds nuance to a practice. For French it is important to,

feel like there is some kind of continuum that you are participating in, some field, that’s a little bit special, there a little bespoke or precious order requires a little bit of knowledge or something, as opposed to gain anyone can take a photo iPhone, where you are just part of the mass. (BF0017, p. 24).

It was perceived there was a link between skill and having a practice that is meaningful and believable. Quilty identifies a simple yet powerful quality of skill when he says that a visual arts practice provides its participants with the “skills to communicate” (BQ0024, p. 20). Quilty goes on to suggest that “to be a writer you need to learn English, and need to understand literature, and to be an artist you need to understand our history because that is the language

and you have to understand the language to be able to write something contemporary and interesting” (BQ0025, p. 21). Skill enables an honest making process, which is about “learning to understand what making is about, you know why you want to do something like making an artwork” (TW0041, p. 43).

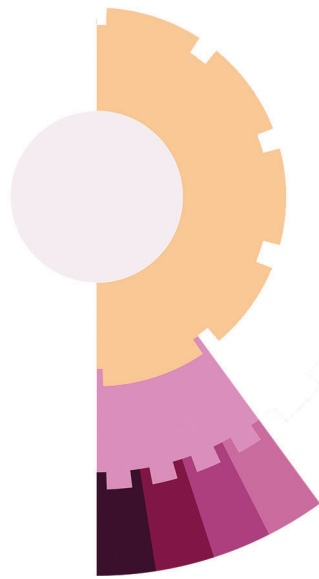
French provides a link between a tangible skill, such as the use of an ICT, and intangible skills, in this case the ability to form knowledge and its importance. French proffers,

I am interested in the way some schools are de-emphasising skills and are meeting resistance from students. It may be that the resistance is twofold; one line is we don’t just want to work with the ideas, we want to make something, we just want to do something, so maybe that could almost be a conservative and anti intellectual push. The other line might involve recognition that “doing” is a form of making knowledge as well. (BF0018, pp. 24- 25)

Whilst skills are an essential ingredient of visual arts learning, they are not the only contributing factor. Skills in the visual arts are necessary but not sufficient to contribute to the re-imagining of a thriving culture and society. Skills must be associated with imagining in order for a rich practice, effective practitioner and impactful artefact to emerge.

A visual arts practice encompasses the cerebral and the manual. Skills can be taught and technical expertise required, but without the ability of imagining, it is difficult to harness these skills with a purpose and intention to contribute to the re-imagining of society as Quilty observes in regard to artists whose impact on culture and society has been profound, “It is where they took that skill, which involved imagination and the discourse of the mind. Simple as that. And they then took that and changed the world. Leonardo was a scientist and mathematician, but he is remembered as an artist” (BQ0019, p. 19).

5.3.5 The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact



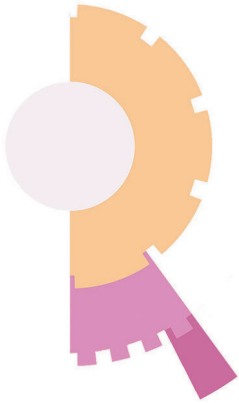
Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#29]

The nature of practice, practitioner and artefact, and the manner in which they may engage and be engaged with contemporary society, are now examined through the category of *The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#29]*).

The terms *influence* and *impact* have particular interpretations in the context of this study. They both intertwine in some way with the three entities of practice, practitioner and artefact. Influence is used with the understanding that suggests it has a gentler, almost subtle effect on change. Impact is used with the understanding that it suggests an element of more assertive change and almost immediate alteration of perspectives and beliefs.

It is suggested that there exists a variety of ways in which practices, practitioners and artefacts, sometimes individually and sometimes collectively, might influence and impact on contemporary society formation. In the presentation that follows, these are discussed around the concepts of (i) *Non Activist and Activist Practice, Practitioner and Artefact*, (ii) *Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Ambassador*, (iii) *The Capacity of Practice, Practitioner and Artefact to Enable and Inform*, and (iv) *Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Social Commentator*.

5.3.5.1 Non Activist and Activist Practice, Practitioner and Artefact



*Colour Enmeshment | Series
2 [#30]*

An assumption cannot be made that being an activist practitioner is a pre-requisite of being a practitioner-citizen of a new and emerging society (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#30]). An artist does not have to be an activist, as Brand suggests when he poses the question, “One very basic question there of course is, should artists be activists?” (MB0025, p. 43). Brand goes on to quite rightly identify that throughout history there have been a vast number of artists who are totally non-activist and that they, their practice and their output are essentially inward looking,

Through the ages there are numerous artists who were totally non-activist and just totally inward looking, and that’s presumably fine. So I think there can’t be an expectation that while you are an artist, and you live in a country with freedom of speech that therefore you’re going to be activating about everything. (MB0025, p. 44)

This reiterates the notion that the practitioner is able to make a choice about her or his practice and modus operandi. In the section about the choice to be an honest artist or a non-honest artist, or at least having a practice that is honest, is mirrored here in the choice about having an activist or non-activist practice. What is also evident is that there is choice about what type of ideals to adopt if an activist orientation is adopted. The practitioner who adopts a non-activist practice is still potentially playing a role in positioning the visual arts and visual arts learning within contemporary society formation in Australia and her or his practice is no less honest or meaningful than an activist practice. It simply has a different orientation and relationship to practice, practitioner and artefact.

The potential impact of an activist practice is also highlighted by Sabsabi. “If I did some of the works that I did and they weren’t in the context of art, I would probably have been locked up by now” (KS0028, p. 33).

Sabsabi is concerned that art institutions remain real. If they do not demystify what they do or the type of art they show, then they disconnect from the community. “It’s about access and linking to our community. An arts centre can get easily disconnected from it community and it can fly off into the realm of art for arts sake, and arts excellence” (KS0002, p. 6). “It’s a balance

between popular culture and stuff that is really critical and needs to be looked, thought about and reflected and to be expanded as well” (KS0005, p. 9).

Student based shows, such as ARTEXPRESS at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, include artworks created by students from all works of life, which means that “their peers, who may come from Eastern suburbs schools, are seeing what students from Doonside or Blacktown are producing. Or what students from regional New South Wales are producing, which has got to be a good thing” (MB0001, p.10).

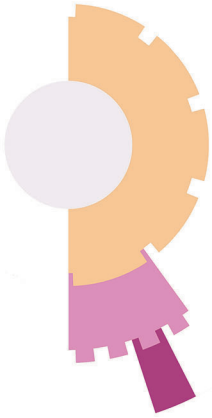
Brand describes the gallery as having “a social role” (MBE 0007, p. 18). So this is about an activist practice in the sense that the gallery is more than a repository for objects, but is a place where perceptions change, a place to value education and learning. The change in role of a gallery from being a space where things are placed to a place where change happens, or has the potential to happen, gives an institution active role in society formation. To what extent the institution decides to adopt a program that can be described as being activist is dependent on the director, staff and artefact collection.

Where a gallery can really come into its own in terms of its impact on society is the trajectory it adopts with regards to exhibitions it shows the public. Brand suggests that in contemporary society the focus should perhaps be on “if there are common issues facing artists around the world” (MB0009, p. 21), and this being the message that the institution is wanting its audience to grapple with rather than grappling with the racial provenance of an artwork or collection of artworks.

Winikoff talks about the danger of there being a visual racism and perhaps exhibitions based upon global issues rather than the race or background of the artist are more in keeping with the hopes of contemporary society. Brand says “artists working in Asia are still in some ways exploring the same issues, just sometimes exploring in different ways” (MB0009, p. 22).

Some work needs the gallery space in order to reach an audience. “Richard Bell could be fantastically activist, and his works could be very, very compelling but if no one shows them publicly” then their power is lost, “and that’s where art has this huge voice” (MB0033, p. 56). Note that the institution does not necessarily have to be big player. The institution as a place with voice can impact on society formation in various ways wherever there is an art centre of some sort, large and small.

5.3.5.2 Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Ambassador



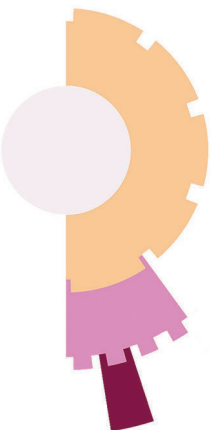
Colour Enmeshment |
Series 2 [#31]

A potential alternative to activism exists in the role of an artist being that of a “semi informal ambassador” (MB0003, p.3) of a given location, or culture and ethnic group (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#31]). The ambassador stands up for the values of her or his country or cultural group. Ambassadors tend not to be agitators in their usual modus operandi, but they still fulfill a role that in some way brings about changes in perspectives of others or agitates the status quo.

In his article *Home and Away* (2009), Brand spoke about art and artefact as migrant, and the notion of the capital and influence that an artefact can have. He talks about Guernica as having a power and presence beyond explanation. He poses a questions about whether a painting is activist or is it more of a case of activist artist producing an activist painting. He says that it is about “the lingering value or the clarity of message that doesn’t need explanation” (MB0029, p. 52).

Brand goes onto talk about a Fred Williams painting being “an ambassador for Australian landscape” (MB0030, p. 2). In the ambassadorial orientation, the practitioner is conceived of as being in a special position to offer a visible representation of a particular culture, its institutions, its environment and place, outlook and way of engaging in and with society.

5.3.5.3 The Capacity of Practice, Practitioner and Artefact to Enable and Inform



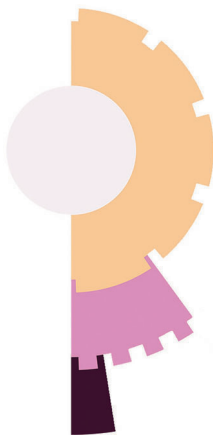
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Series 2 [#32]

Brand points to the enabling aspect of visual arts through the lens of the viewer of the art rather than the art maker (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#32]). “Artists and therefore art institutions who show their work, do have a chance to put ideas in front of the public that they might not otherwise have had” (MB0025, p. 44). Such a practice is about providing the opportunity for the seeds of change to be sown through changing perspectives, rather than an all out call to arms. The success of an artist in effecting change can only occur if the audience is able to interpret what the artist is trying to say. A really interesting aspect emerges

in this conversation where Brands talks about a number of activist art categories. He says “you can have a protest piece but you can also have a piece that might relate to certain issues but not

really be intended itself to urge someone into action” (MB0025, p. 46). The enabler theme is predicated on the idea that the concern of the artist or the concern of the artwork is presented in a manner that is able to communicate to the viewer, in this case the general public. Brand says “I think effective political art has to be pretty obvious. If you are going to run issues through your art, you probably don’t want your audience to need a PhD in our history to be able to get it” (MB0025, p.45). Brand’s thinking is in keeping with the idea of the demystification of practice and/or artefact, and is aligned with notions of the relationship between the visual, honesty and a desire to tell the truth. The influence of the enabler in this is informative but not necessarily designed to urge the viewer into action. Brand says “you can have a protest piece but you can also have a piece that may relate to issues of climate change, but that is not really intended itself to urge someone to action” (MB0025, p. 46).

5.3.5.4 Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Social Commentator



*Colour Enmeshment |
Series 2 [#33]*

Concerns about addressing social injustices, truth and voice are part of the relationship between the visual arts and social commentary (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#33]*). Quilty talks about this in his role as an artist. He says “so therefore when you say I am a voice to these things, I’m excited to have a voice that I can point those things at. And I try to take the emotion and passion at it, and say this is the truth this is exactly the truth” (BQ0038, p. 42). There is strength in the “independent voice commenting from the sideline” (BQ0044, p. 48). Quilty’s voice as an artist is lent support by others with voices and something wanting to be said. Quilty’s work with the soldiers in Afghanistan is an example of how the artist can tell a story without being labeled as biased but instead “just trying to get to the truth. And I focused on the human condition” (BQ0043, p. 48).

But at times this comes with a price. With the questioning by artists comes the answers that can cause concern for those who are perhaps having their integrity questioned as “the truth is an uncomfortable truth quite often, and they don’t want to hear it from an artist” (BQ0031, p. 29). Quilty states “as an idealist, and an artist equals an idealist, you’ve got to point these things out, (as) there are deep flaws...in democratic capitalism. Deep, deep flaws” (BQ0031, p. 29).

Winikoff also touches upon these issues when she says that an art practice helps one

to “be able to make tangible in the world your ideas and your sense of social engagement” (TW0014, p. 4).

Winikoff sees an artefact as a “relationship between an individual and their social context” (TW0016, p. 8) and that “collectively when you put together the sum of what is made and thought at that time, you get the picture of what the social environment was” (TW0016, p. 8).

Often artistic practice can serve as a way of encouraging leadership in society. It is not that someone practicing art automatically becomes a leader but instead that they can be a leader. A student could decide to take up a cause, such as “gay, lesbian and transgender issues” or “the right of women to wear hijabs” (MB0027, p. 49). Or a student could be affirmed by the fact that their work was shown at ARTEXPRESS as a form of leadership. “I’m a good artist and that gives me some recognition at school, with my family and my community, because I have been shown at the Art Gallery of New South Wales” (MB0027, p. 49).

Visual arts as a medium for communication when words are perhaps insufficient aligns with the notion that the visual arts can promote opportunities for students from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds to become social commentators. Winikoff comments, “Because those art forms weren’t valued in the same way as contemporary Western painting or print making, there certainly are cultural barriers built into visual expression but they are not as hard to wrangle as words” (TW0026, p. 19).

Sabsabi says,

We’re not dictating what is right and wrong for these students. They’re having a conversation within themselves. And there is no right or wrong. And that’s when the beautiful things happen because that’s the impetus for engagement and that conversation to happen amongst themselves, that growth. (KS0012, p. 25)

Leonard made reference to trigger moments. “I’m interested in trigger moments, I think they are very important, and I think art does it (provides such moments) and can do it individually, and then does it collectively” (RL0011, p. 18). These triggers can often serve as catalysts for change, and for what is more often than not self-reflective change,

I think the best of art demands we be present. Present to the art and present to ourselves,

because that is what it does, that interaction, whether it's spectator or reader or what term or paradigm we want to use, is about us being present to something and those triggers. What it's triggering for you, either individually or collectively. I think that starts to ask some very interesting questions. (RL0022, p. 33)

Brand suggests that an artwork can be "like a political icon" (MB0029, p. 52). He says, "so I think an individual work of art can take on a life of its own but I can imagine an activist work of art that wasn't created by an activist artist" (MB0029, p. 2). The artwork changes from sedentary artefact to something that is alive. This illustrates the power of the image and how it can be used to re-imagine a society. The importance of the visual in society formation.

Winikoff says,

I think for them (young people) to be excited about what the artists that they're looking at are trying to do. That it's not just about the accurate representation of what could be a photograph but that it's about the expression of ideas and that is about social planning. That communication is not neutral but it has an intention to make something happen in the viewer. (TW0040, p. 41)

French speaks about the "effect of an image, whether it's a percussive effect or a communicative effect. It is understanding how images bump around and create certain ripples" (BF0009, p. 4).

Conclusion: Drawing of the Threads (Part II)

The presentation of findings discussed in this chapter has shown there exists a relationship between a visual arts practice and contemporary society formation. Through a visual arts practice, a practitioner is able to identify the qualities and characteristics of a thriving and contemporary culture and society. This practice also has a distinctive role in the formation of society through the re-imagining of contemporary society. From the analysis data gathered during Stage Two of the study emerged the theoretical construct of *a visual arts practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society* (see *Colour Enmeshment | Series 2* [#34]). In the chapter which follows, the findings from Stage One and Stage Two of the research are woven together to inform the development of the theory emerging from this study.



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#34]

Chapter Six

The Weaving of Theory

Weave lasting sure! weave day and night the weft, the warp, incessant weave! tire not! (Whitman, 1900)

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Six is to describe and discuss the development and substance of the theory generated in this thesis, grounded in the research undertaken in association with this study. The chapter begins with the results of the conceptual and analytical review of the societal contexts within which the research was located. A review and synthesis of the empirical, analytical and conceptual findings of the research are then presented. Key categories and concepts emerging from the gathering, analysis and synthesis of the data in Stage One and Stage Two of the research are presented in text, visual and tabulated form. The emergence of the theory, addressing the central question of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society is then discussed in detail. This begins with reference to the significance of the craft of weaving to theory development. In theorising the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation, the metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft, derived from the craft of weaving, is used to enhance understanding. The relationship between theory and practice is then discussed, drawing on the concept of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, and its constituent features of Intent (The Desiderata), Practice (Aspects and Features) and Impact (The Transformed and Re-Imagined). The chapter concludes with the presentation and discussion of the proposed new theory and practice of a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society generated in this thesis.

6.1 Empirical, Analytical and Conceptual Findings of the Study

In the following sections the analytical, empirical and conceptual findings of the study are revisited and reviewed. Firstly, the societal contexts within which the study was situated and which form the warp are considered. Secondly, those core categories, sub-core categories, categories and concepts that emerged from Stage One and Stage Two data gathering and analysis, and which form the weft, are also considered.

Table 4

The Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts

Chapter	CMYK	Three Lines of Enquiry (Warp)	CMYK	Context (Warp threads)	CMYK	Detail (Warp fibres)	CMYK
A Review of the Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts (2)	0%, 0%, 0%, 1%	Portrait of a Diverse Society (2.1)	0%, 0%, 0%, 2%	An Australian Diegesis (2.1.1)	0%, 0%, 0%, 5%	A Rupture (2.1.1.1)	0%, 0%, 0%, 8%
						A Derivative Nation and Society (2.1.1.2)	0%, 0%, 0%, 11%
						War and Conflict (2.1.1.3)	0%, 0%, 0%, 14%
						Of Rights and the Right (2.1.1.4)	0%, 0%, 0%, 17%
						A Snapshot of the Australian Population (2.1.2.1)	0%, 0%, 0%, 23%
		The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities (2.2)	0%, 0%, 0%, 29%	Cultural Policy and Arts Policy	0%, 0%, 0%, 32%	Migration, Multiculturalism and Border Control (2.1.2.2)	0%, 0%, 0%, 26%
						Creative Nation	0%, 0%, 0%, 35%
						Creative Australia	0%, 0%, 0%, 38%
						A Vision for the Arts in Australia	0%, 0%, 0%, 41%
						Review of Contemporary Arts and Crafts	0%, 0%, 0%, 44%
	The Visual Arts Education Landscape (2.3)	0%, 0%, 0%, 62%	Bodies Adminstrating Cutlure and the Arts	0%, 0%, 0%, 50%	The Australia Council Review	0%, 0%, 0%, 47%	
					Government	0%, 0%, 0%, 53%	
					Political Parties	0%, 0%, 0%, 56%	
					The Australia Council	0%, 0%, 0%, 59%	
					National Association for the Visual Arts	0%, 0%, 0%, 68%	
					Visual Arts Education	0%, 0%, 0%, 71%	
					National and State Based Curricula	0%, 0%, 0%, 77%	
			Commissioned Reports and Reviews	0%, 0%, 0%, 86%	Victorian Curriculum	0%, 0%, 0%, 83%	
					First We See Report	0%, 0%, 0%, 89%	
					The Arts and Australian Education	0%, 0%, 0%, 92%	
					Review of the Australian Curriculum	0%, 0%, 0%, 95%	
					Education and the Arts Research Overview	0%, 0%, 0%, 98%	

Core category (CC)

Core category (CC)



Colour Enmeshment | Series 1 [#16]

Table 6

Stage Two Findings

Core category (CC)	CMYK	Sub-core category (SCC)	CMYK	Category (CAT)	CMYK	Concept (CON)	CMYK
Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice (5)	2% 5% 0% 3%	Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society (5.2)	30% 2% 0% 0%	Considerations of Honesty and Practice (5.2.1)	51% 11% 0% 0%	An Honest Practitioner (5.2.1.1)	93% 67% 0% 0%
				The Pursuit of Honesty (5.2.2)	73% 24% 0% 0%	An Honest Practice (5.2.1.2)	100% 78% 3 1% 15%
				The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Culture (5.2.3)	23% 17% 0% 0%	Questioning, Truth Seeking and Facing Taboos (5.2.2.1)	100% 75% 5% 0%
						Acknowledging the Past (5.2.2.2)	100% 87% 22% 8%
				Considerations on Society Formation (5.2.4)	12% 21% 0% 0%	Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation (5.2.3.1)	49% 31% 0% 0%
						Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance (5.2.3.2)	73% 60% 0% 0%
				The Nature of Endeavour Itself (5.3.1)	2% 24% 78% 0%	Indigenous Culture and Contemporary Society (5.2.4.1)	19% 33% 0% 0%
						An Amalgam of Evolving Identities (5.2.4.2)	32% 55% 0% 0%
						Making, Feeling and Thinking (5.3.1.1)	2% 33% 94% 0%
						The Demystification of Practice (5.3.1.2)	5% 45% 100% 0%
						The Possibilities of Practice (5.3.1.3)	32% 49% 100% 12%
The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice (5.3)	2% 24% 43% 0%			Communicating in Different Ways (5.3.2)	1% 30% 60% 0%	Visual Communication (5.3.2.1)	2% 46% 77% 0%
				Providing for Different Modes of Engagement (5.3.3)	2% 47% 55% 0%	Cultural Discourse (5.3.2.2)	7% 65% 100% 0%
						An Individual Engagement and the Experience of Self (5.3.3.1)	6% 62% 76% 0%
				Enmeshing Imagination and Skill (5.3.4)	4% 39% 42% 0%	A Collective Engagement (5.3.3.2)	15% 81% 100% 4%
						Interweaving the Individual and the Collective (5.3.3.3)	32% 84% 100% 36%
				The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact (5.3.5)	11% 52% 2% 0%	The Nature of Imagination (5.3.4.1)	6% 69% 72% 0%
						The Nature of Skill (5.3.4.2)	18% 100% 99% 9%
						Non Activist and Activist Practice, Practitioner and Artefact (5.3.5.1)	18% 70% 10% 0%
						Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Ambassador (5.3.5.2)	35% 89% 22% 1%
						The Capacity of Practice, Practitioner and Artefact to Enable and Inform (5.3.5.3)	38% 100% 51% 38%
						Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Social Commentator (5.3.5.4)	61% 91% 40% 62%



Colour Enmeshment | Series 2 [#34]

6.1.1 The Social, Cultural and Educational Contexts

An examination and analysis of the context within which the study was situated was presented in Chapter Two. In the following discussion about the weaving of the study's grounded theory using the metaphor of the loom, the warp and the weft, these contexts are conceived of as the warp. These are expressed in terms of *A Portrait of a Diverse Diversity*, *The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities* and *The Visual Arts Education Landscape*.

The specific components of these contextual warps are presented both in text and tabulated form. The first warp is *A Portrait of a Diverse*. The threads of this warp are *An Australian Diegesis* and *Policies Pertaining to Australia's Population and Social Fabric*. The composite fibres of *An Australian Diegesis* are *A Rupture*, *A Derivative Nation and Society*, *War and Conflict*, and *Of Rights and the Right*. The composite fibres of *Policies Pertaining to Australia's Population and Social Fabric* are *A Snapshot of the Australian Population and Migration*, *Multiculturalism and Border Control*. The second warp represents *The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities*. The threads of this warp are *Cultural and Arts Policies* and *Bodies Administering Culture and The Arts*. The third warp is *The Visual Arts Education Landscape*. A number of threads make up this warp, including *The Visual Arts*; *Visual Arts Education*; *National and State Based Curricula*; and *Commissioned Reports and Reviews*. The social, cultural and educational contexts of the study are represented in tabulated form (see Table 3).

6.1.2 The Core Categories, Sub-Core Categories, Categories and Concepts

The findings to emerge from Stage One and Stage Two data gathering and analysis were presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Two core-categories of findings were identified, namely *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* in Chapter Four and *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* in Chapter Five. In the following section, a review and synthesis of the findings are presented in text, tabulated and visual form.

Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant emerged as the core-category from the analysis of data gathered from students and teachers during Stage One of the research. The analysis of findings shows how learning in the visual arts can transform young people's understanding of self, others and society and how learning in the visual arts

itself might be transformed as a mode of learning. Such a transformative and transformed mode of learning can provide something different and significant both in stimulating learning and in contributing to society formation in a time of societal transition and change. From the perspectives of the students and the teachers about the relationship between learning in the visual arts and society formation emerged the theoretical construct of *visual arts transformative learning*. The findings indicated that young learners were open to change, that they wanted to contribute to change in the context of self, others and society and that an engagement with visual arts learning was regarded as being an effective means of doing so.

The core category of *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* is made up of two sub-core categories, four categories and nine concepts. The first sub-core category is *The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students* and it is underpinned by two categories. The first category, *Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *Seeing Self, Others and Society* and *Considerations of Cultural Identity*. The second category, *Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind*, is also underpinned by two concepts, namely *Individual and Collaborative Approaches to Practice* and *Dimensions and Dynamics of a Transformative Practice*.

The second sub-core category of Stage One of the study is *Something Different and Significant: The Perspectives of Teachers* and it is underpinned by two categories. The first category, *Something Different and Significant*, is underpinned by three concepts, namely *From Learning in the Visual Arts to Visual Arts Learning*, *Visual Arts Learning as Experiential and Experimental* and *Visual Arts Learning as a New Way for Exploring and Contributing to Society Formation*. The second category, *Realising the Potential of Visual Arts Learning*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *Valuing Creativity* and *Addressing Challenges in Traditional Approaches to Curriculum, Teaching and Learning*. The Stage One findings are represented in tabulated form (see Table 4) and as an artwork.

The second core category, *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*, emerged from the analysis of the data gathered from senior arts advocates during Stage Two of the research. The findings confirmed the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation, and in particular the findings revealed that an engagement with the visual arts offered a number of distinctive aesthetic practices that are central to the re-imagining of society. From these perspectives about the relationship between

a visual arts practice and contemporary society formation emerged the theoretical construct of *the visual arts as a practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of society*.

The core category of *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* is formed by two sub-core categories, nine categories and twenty-two concepts. The first sub-core category of Stage Two of the study is *Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society* and it is underpinned by four categories. The first category, *Considerations of Honesty and Practice*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *An Honest Practitioner* and *An Honest Practice*. The second category, *The Pursuit of Honesty*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *Questioning, Truth Seeking and Facing Taboos* and *Acknowledging the Past*. The third category, *The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *Cultural Identity and the Visual Arts at the Fore of Contemporary Society Formation and Competition and Conflict as a Contentious Provenance*. The fourth category, *Considerations on Society Formation*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *Indigenous Culture and Contemporary Society* and *An Amalgam of Evolving Identities*.

The second sub-core category of Stage Two is *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice* and it is underpinned by five categories. The first category, *The Nature of Endeavour Itself*, is underpinned by three concepts, namely *Making, Feeling and Thinking, The Demystification of Practice* and *The Possibilities of Practice*. The second category, *Communicating in Different Ways*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *Visual Communication* and *Cultural Discourse*. The third category, *Providing for Different Modes of Engagement*, is underpinned by three concepts, namely *An Individual Engagement and the Experience of Self, A Collective Engagement* and *Interweaving the Individual and the Collective*. The fourth category, *Enmeshing Imagination and Skill*, is underpinned by two concepts, namely *The Nature of Imagination* and *The Nature of Skill*. The last category, *The Aesthetic of Influence and Impact*, is underpinned by four concepts, namely *Non Activist and Activist Practice, Practitioner and Artefact, Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Ambassador, The Capacity of Practice, Practitioner and Artefact to Enable and Inform* and *Practice, Practitioner and Artefact as Social Commentator*. These findings from Stage Two are represented in tabulated form (see Table 5) and as an artwork.

Relationships exist between these concepts, categories, sub-core categories and core categories. The interweaving among these relationships and the weaving of them with the societal contexts within which the study is situated provide the basis for the emergence of the

study's substantive grounded theory. In the forthcoming discussion of the development of the substantive theory, a metaphor is provided from the craft of weaving, henceforth referred to as the metaphor of the Loom, the Warp and the Weft as a way to better understand and conceptualise the nature of relationships among the findings of the research and the development of the theory.

6.2 Weaving Relationships: The Emergence of Theory

The central research question guiding this study was *What is the nature of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation in Australia*, with the touch stone of this relationship being the visual arts. In Chapter Four the visual arts were central both to learning experiences that were perceived by students and teachers as being transformative and to the mode of learning that had been transformed. In Chapter Five, senior arts advocates highlighted a range of visual arts practices, the role of these practices in society and their impact on societal change, in particular the relationship between visual arts practices and the aesthetic re-imagining of society. The study was to reveal the nature of the relationship between the visual arts, specifically learning in the visual arts, and contemporary society formation.

6.2.1 Theorising Relationships Between Visual Arts Learning and Contemporary Society Formation: The Loom, the Warp and the Weft as Metaphor

In this study, the loom, the warp and the weft are used as a metaphor for understanding the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation. The loom is the overarching construct. It is the environment within which the study evolved and it is the societal environment that was the concern of the study. The warp is the infrastructure, demographic characteristics and policies of society that has provided the study with its specific contexts. The wefts are constituted from the findings of the research, data gathering and analysis. The process that brings the loom, the warp and the weft together in life is weaving. In the following sections, the metaphor is applied to the study in detail to describe and promote understanding regarding the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation.

A series of hand drawings accompany the following discussion. These line drawings are taken from sketchbooks in which I had generated memoranda whilst my conceptualisation about the metaphor was developing and the theory was emerging (see Appendix A).

In accord with the metaphor of the Loom, the Warp and the Weft, the loom is the

environment on which, in which and with which the substantive theory is framed. This frame is the three-dimensional space that is implied by the relationship between the rear (*A*), upper (*B1*), lower (*B2*) and forward (*C*) reaches of its environment. In Figure 6.1, the three dimensional

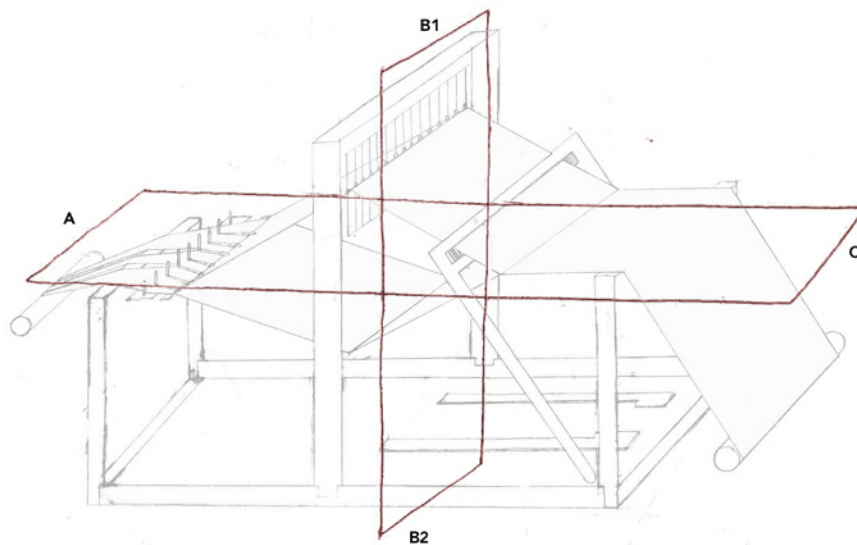


Figure 6.1: Three dimensional space overlaying the loom

A	Warp beam	B2	Castle
B1	Castle	C	Breast beam

space overlays the structure of the loom that is represents. Held within the frame in a state of tension, strength and possibility is the set of dimensions and dynamics that are conceived of as impacting on the topology and aesthetic of society directly or indirectly. This topology should not be considered as a set of rigid boundaries as this would run the risk of limiting the scope of the environment within which action takes place.

In Figure 6.2, the warp beam (*D*) anchors the contexts of the study and it is from this anchor that the underpinning warp threads of society emerge. As they emerge, these societal warp threads pass through the rattle (*E*), which is the system that partitions them into some of the broad infrastructural groupings on which society is constructed. This is the first stage in a filtering network of classification and governance systems. In the second stage of this filtering network, the shafts (*F*), which hang in relationship to the conceptual frame, sort and categorise the broad societal warps into smaller specific infrastructural groups. The heddles (*G*) are the third stage of the network and they are interdependent to the shafts. The threads of a specific infrastructural group are individually threaded through the eye of an individual heddle,

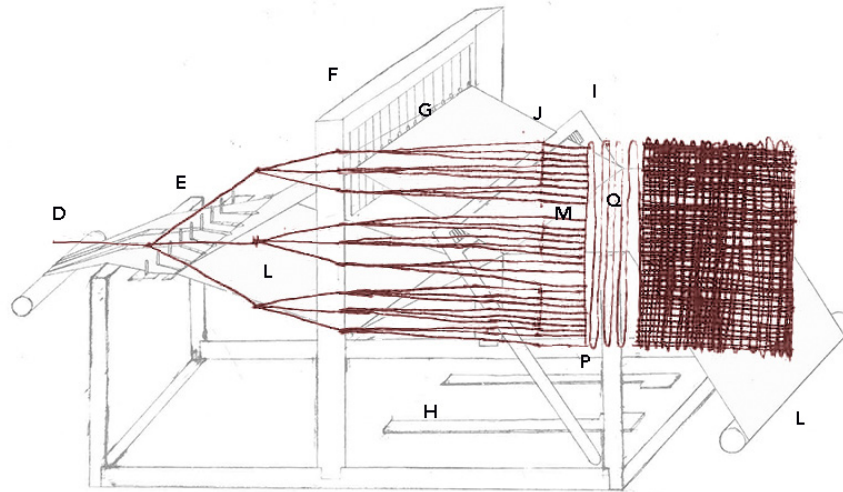


Figure 6.2: Applying the metaphor of weaving

D	Warp beam	K	Cloth beam
E	Raddle	L	Warp
F	Shaft	M	Shed
G	Heddle	N	Fabric
H	Treadle	P	Shuttle
I	Beater	Q	Weft
J	Reed		

a governance process that further categorises the warp at a micro level. The fourth stage in the network of filtering systems is the reed (*J*). The warp threads emerging from the third stage are passed through the dents in the reed, which provide uniformity to and management of these societal threads. The reed regiments the warp threads, spreading them evenly across the width of that aspect of society under examination.

The treadle (*H*) is the point at which control is applied to and within the conceptual frame, and as a consequence effecting a change upon it. The treadle is the mechanism through which the decision maker enacts a decision. Intentional and purposeful human input pushes the treadle down, and in doing so manipulates and controls the network of shafts. This process opens up the shed (*M*), a liminal space in which change is poised to happen. It is a space of transition and potential transformation. It is a space of capacity and possibility.

Positioned at the threshold of this liminal space, the shuttle (*P*) is also poised to act. The shuttle, independent of the loom, brings the findings of this study into relationship with each other as they are wound onto it and it is the means with which the weft interweaves with the societal contexts of the study. Those working the shuttle are responsible for selecting the

component fibres of the weft (*Q*). They determine the sequence in which the fibres are placed in relationship with each other and they wind the weft onto the shuttle.

At this point, the way in which changes to the fabric of society come about and how they may appear visually are hypothetical as the interweaving of the warp and weft has not yet begun. The environment that is the liminal space of the shed has been created, making the potential for change possible. In order for this potential for change to transform into actual change, there needs to be further human input. This is a non-adaptionist understanding to societal change in that the evolution of society's fabric, which includes its inhabitants, is determined by the actions of those inhabitants. The poised wefts of society have been brought into relationship with each other and they are now at the point of being woven into the societal warps within the liminal space with an expectation that transformation will occur. *This is the moment of theory.*

Once the shuttle is thrown through the shed, the potential for change becomes actual change. As the wefts are laid within the foundations of society, the topology and aesthetic of that society change. The laying of these wefts and the firming of their relationships through the purposeful actions of humankind in manipulating the beater (*I*) result in the non-adaptionist evolution of a re-imagined kind of society. Humankind has effected change on the environment of society. The cloth beam (*K*) provides tension and stability to this re-imagined fabric of society. It holds the evidence of both an evolving society and a society from the past.

The warp (*L*) is the collective of societal contexts understood as contributing to the underpinning societal infrastructure that runs the length of those elements of society in focus in this study. During the first stage of the filtering network of classification and governance systems, the warp is partitioned into broad infrastructural groupings (see Figure 6.3). As these partitioned threads are fed further along the filtering network, they are categorised into specific infrastructural group by the shafts. On moving through the more localised network of heddles, the threads are separated individually. Each individual warp thread itself is comprised of multiple fibre singles, with each fibre single is a micro component of its broader respective societal thread. The three broad infrastructural groupings of warp threads that provide the context this study are *The Portrait of a Diverse Society*, *The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities* and *The Visual Arts Learning Landscape*.

The weft (*Q*) exists, initially, independently of the frame of society. The weft comes to be through a process of data gathering and data analysis. The form of the weft is dependent on

the nature of the data gathered and the nature of the analysis. The findings presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five *come together in relationship* as the weft in the form of an entanglement of fibres. By placing these findings together and spinning them to form a plied thread, they are brought together in relationship. They are component parts of the whole. As a whole they represent something more than themselves. These fibres are the individual conceptual ideas grounded in the data and when woven amongst the warp, they form some of the fabric of the study's substantive theory.

As a weft comes into contact with the frame of society, that society is already a functioning entity and would continue to be so, even if no interaction with the new weft eventuated. In this case, it is assumed that the manner in which the society is currently functioning will remain unchanged. It is also assumed that the fabric of that society remains unchanged topologically and aesthetically.

As the fabric of society (N) is already in existence, a new weft is not crucial to the continuance of that society as it stands. If a new weft is introduced, it becomes the agent of change. It is responsible for an aesthetic re-imagining of society to happen. Another way to understand this is that society can be seen and heard in a particular way. It already has an aesthetic identity. By interweaving a new weft with the warp, the aesthetic of the warp and the weave will change. The aesthetic of society changes. What was previously seen changes and it is re-seen in a new way. The topology of the warp changes when the weft interweaves with it. They exist in isolation but are stronger and more effective in combination. The weft

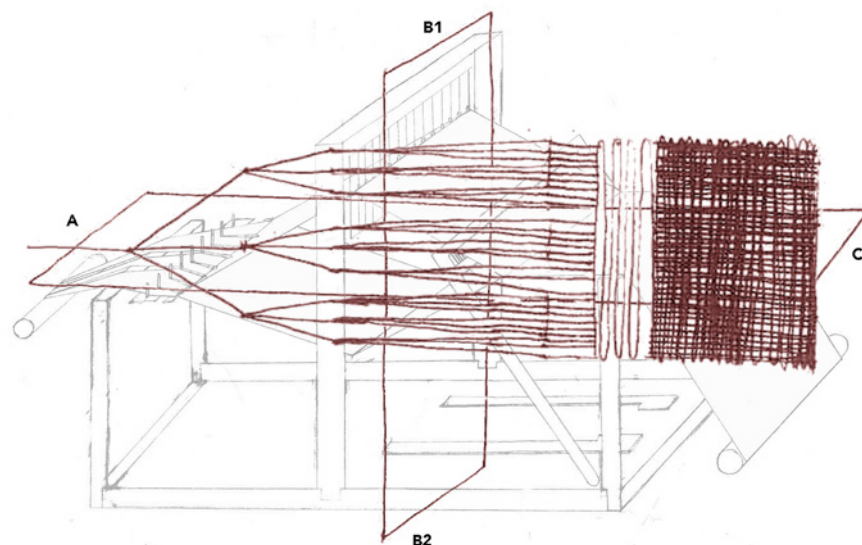


Figure 6.3: Theory of the Relationship between Visual Arts Transformative Learning and Society Formation

infiltrates the warp of society, it can appear and re-appear, what is unseen becomes seen, and was unheard becomes heard. Through a process of interweaving, the weft becomes the agent of transformation that impacts upon the more rigid warp by altering its topology and its aesthetic.

6.3 The Weaving of Theory and Practice

We now move forward to consider the weaving of theory with practice. From this discussion it is hoped that the reader will better understand the implications of this thesis for practice in visual arts learning, with particular reference to the significance of a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society.

In his influential treatise *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle determined that five forms of intellectual virtue exist, namely: scientific knowledge (episteme); art (techne); practical wisdom (phronesis); intuition (nous); and wisdom (sophia). Broadie (1993) guides us in how we might consider and distinguish these different forms of rational cognition by identifying that “the main distinctions, it soon turns out, are not between five types but three: theoretical wisdom (for which the term ‘*sophia*’ is reserved); practical wisdom (to be called ‘*phronesis*’) and craft or technical skill” (p. 187). Aristotle describes practical wisdom as being an intellectual virtue of practical reasoning, with this practical reason being that which enables a person to deliberate and to make good choices. In this discussion on practical wisdom, an attempt is made to provide a way of considering how the knowledge discovered during this research journey may be judiciously enacted and interwoven into the fabric of contemporary society.

In the context of this study, practical wisdom, or phronesis, is conceived of as having three constituent features, namely: Intent, Practice and Impact. Intent (The Desiderata) relates to the key questions under consideration, those things which are valued, the end achievements aimed at, and the qualities intended to be developed in a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society. Practice (Aspects and Features) relates to the experiences, activities and engagements that characterise a transformative visual arts learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society, particularly in relationship to arts education, curriculum practices, teaching and learning, and the addressing of societal and cultural issues in visual arts learning. Impact (The Transformed and Re-Imagined) relates to the transformations that is hoped might be brought about by virtue of a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society.

6.3.1 The Intent (The Desiderata)

In this thesis a number of questions and considerations have emerged which generate the desiderata, those things to be valued, the end achievements aimed at, and the qualities intended to be developed in a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society. Such questions include:

- What might be some of the principles underpinning a visual arts transformative learning practice that might contribute to addressing the individual, educational, societal and cultural challenges, facing contemporary society?
- How can a visual arts transformative learning practice positively address present and future challenges to create healthier and thriving communities?
- In what ways can a visual arts transformative learning practice confirm and enhance personal, social and cultural identities in a time of social transition and change?
- How can learning in the visual arts provide ways for young people to engage with cultural, religious, societal and identity concerns with the potential of moving towards deeper, more complex, more nuanced understandings and goals?

The results of the research lay the basis for proposing the following aspects of the intent or desiderata for a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society, which has as among its aims:

- Increasing affective, sympathetic understanding and expression in seeing self, others and society;
- Pursuing and seeking honesty, truth and integrity and expressing these values in artistic practice;
- Thinking critically in regard to socio-cultural issues and visual arts practice;
- Questioning traditional beliefs and assumptions about cultural and national identity and exploring new truths in the aesthetic re-imagining of society;
- Facing historical and societal legends and myths, and addressing and challenging traditional historical and social taboos in artistic works;
- Increasing visual skills, visual acuity and enhancing visual literacy and com-

munication;

- Enmeshing skills and imagination in visual learning and expression in experiential and experimental ways;
- Valuing visual arts learning *with* people from different cultures and traditions rather than learning *about* such people;
- Acquiring an appreciation of the personal engagement and joy associated with artistic and creative endeavour;
- Promoting a sense of value in the exploration and visual expression of ideas, feelings and emotions;
- Affirming all young people in their artistic expression and giving all young people opportunities to enjoy their creativity;
- Providing opportunities for young people to learn *about* oneself, *with* oneself, and with others in individual and collaborative modes of practice and new and different ways of artistic expression;
- Providing opportunities for learning and expression in the visual arts which is meaningful, based on experience and building on and developing prior knowledge, interest and understandings;
- Promoting directions in visual arts learning that young people see for themselves as being of value and related to issues and concerns they consider important and want to explore and express in artistic ways;
- Valuing creativity and overcoming apprehensions regarding creativity and the arts in the traditional curriculum, teaching and learning;
- Promoting among teachers and parents, policy makers and teacher educators a sense of meaning and value in the visual arts, creativity and the arts more broadly;
- Developing a healthy and thriving contemporary society in which the arts are valued and all young people are confident in their futures, in their cultural identity and their capacity to express themselves in artistic endeavours which contribute to the aesthetic re-imagining of society.

6.3.2 The Practice (Aspects and Features)

As a result of this thesis it has been possible to identify a range of experiences, activities and engagements that might be put forward to characterize a transformative visual arts learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society, particularly in relationship to arts education, curriculum, teaching and learning, and the addressing of socio-cultural issues in visual arts learning. These include the following:

6.3.2.1 Learning in the Visual Arts as Transformative

- Provision of experiences that enable young people to see beyond their existing perspectives and artistic expression of identity, self, others and society;
- Experiences of learning in the visual arts that enable young people to better understand and relate to others through collaborative and social modes of engagement which enhance the development of relationships and a deepened understanding of others;
- Provision, through visual arts, of different ways that young people can learn, interact differently, explore and see different things.

6.3.2.2 Learning in the Visual Arts as an Enduring Habit of Mind

- Providing opportunities for mutual engagement in an active process of art-making so that students are able to learn *with* people, not about people, and to reflect on new world views, alternative frames of reference and develop new habits of mind;
- Providing opportunities for young people to express things they may not be able to express or articulate in verbal language but which they may be able to express through the visual arts and visual communication;
- Providing opportunities for young people to engage in important conversations regarding their own capacity to express and contribute to society in the future;
- Promoting the importance of integrity, the pursuit of honesty and an honest practice in the arts that has sustainability across the lifespan.

6.3.2.3 Learning in the Visual Arts as Something Significant and Different

- Provision of learning experiences in the visual arts that lead to different ways of seeing thinking and behaving so that young people can identify new oppor-

tunities and ways of contributing to their on-going participation in the formation of society;

- Developing experiential, experimental and innovative practices in visual arts learning and expression;
- Providing opportunities for students from a range of cultural, social and faith traditions to engage in visual arts learning in a range of cultural settings, celebrating various aspects of different traditions, and understanding different forms of cultural expression;
- Valuing individual, collaborative and social approaches to visual arts expression and learning and promoting individual and collaborative modes of aesthetic expression and practice.

6.3.2.4 The Distinctive Nature of the Visual Arts Endeavour

- Acknowledging the visual art learning as a purposeful undertaking, with and through a visual arts practice, which presents the possibility of enabling individual and collective change at an aesthetic, cultural and societal level;
- Recognizing that much of the endeavour associated with the distinctiveness of the visual arts practice can be characterised by the connection between hand, heart and mind;
- Recognizing the connection in the visual arts between making (enabling the transition of intangible thoughts or imaginings into tangible forms or artefacts); feeling (an essential component of human existence and expression) and; thinking (the cognitive aspects of visual arts practice - enabling people to think with images).

6.3.2.5 Providing Opportunities for Communicating in Different Ways

- Providing opportunities through the visual arts to communicate in different ways, developing an ability to decode visual signs and provide different forms of exchange, inviting others to actively participate, react and respond through visual expression and images;
- Providing different modes of engagement through the visual, opportunities for individual engagement and the experience of self; collective engagement and the interweaving of the individual and the collective in learning and creativity.
- Opening up possibilities, enabling new ways of seeing one's place in the

world; seeing things in new ways, creating new solutions to individual, cultural and societal challenges and expressing these in artistic practice.

6.3.2.6 Providing for Different Modes of Engagement

- Integrating visits to museums, art galleries and community arts projects and venues as integral to visual arts learning experiences;
- Providing opportunities to engage with a range of practitioners in the arts community, including artists, curators of exhibitions, those involved in community arts activities, photographers, weavers and other people involved in craft;
- Developing new forms of engagement and expression in the arts, new ways of thinking and learning about the world and young people's place within it; new ways of engaging with others and society;
- Providing the opportunity to come to know new things, to learn how to "come to know" and relate to the world in new visual ways;
- Demystifying the arts and creative endeavour and forging a thriving culture by making the visual arts accessible to everyone, connected to the community, and accessible to a wide variety of participants and audiences.

6.3.2.7 Enmeshing Imagination and Skill

- Accepting that a range of purposeful undertakings exists within a visual arts practice which provide the potential for particular forms of action to occur and for particular kinds of transformation to be enacted through the interweaving of imagination and skill;
- Acknowledging that skill development is a necessary aspect of improving the capacity to express oneself visually;
- Valuing the imagination, the testing of ideas, exploring new ways of seeing, and expressing and experiencing the world.

6.3.2.8 Acknowledging the Significance of the Pursuit of Honesty in Visual Arts

Learning and Practice

- Communicating the importance of artists /practitioners being able to be honest to and about themselves with a strong commitment to the value of honesty in their own lives and artistic practice;
- Highlighting the significance of artists/ practitioners being prepared to exam-

ine their own intentions and motivations so that they are able to acknowledge the distinctive possibilities and capacities that characterise an honest practice, informed by a process of self-reflection and authenticity to beliefs and commitments that have been intensively examined and considered;

- Acknowledging that given that an artist/ practitioner can be honest or dishonest or anything in between a conscious decision must be made about motives and the values she or he wishes to embrace and the practices he or she identifies as being important to enact and about what motivates him or her in artistic expression and as a human being.

6.3.2.9 Linking Visual Arts Learning and the Complex Provenance of Society

Formation and the Re-imagining of Society

- In seeking to link the visual arts and society formation recognizing there is a vital role and place for the seeking and expressing of new truths, for questioning, and uncovering the “seen and unseen”;
- Admitting that conflict, war, and sporting achievements are only one aspect of the provenance of society formation and need to be balanced by reference to those other aspects of society which find expression in culture and the arts;
- Acknowledging the complexities of the past, experienced by all members of a diverse society, as a necessary aspect of confirming that there exists a heterogeneous culture and history to be drawn upon which can enrich the re-imagining of contemporary culture;
- Recognizing that considerations of the past, including aesthetic works and artefacts, enable young people to discern who they are, to tell their story, to embrace the strengths, difficulties, the challenges of the past as possibilities for new truths and understandings in the re-imagining of the future;
- Embracing the failures of the past as a direct and active way of making amends for the less savoury moments in our history many of which continue to be problematic but need to be addressed in the re-imagining of contemporary society and its cultural expression;
- Questioning and exploring the “unseen and unspoken” in a society’s history, facing taboos in story, myth and culture, acknowledging a hidden side of human nature and history as part of the process of re-imagining the future;
- Giving consideration to the hitherto hidden elements of society as well as to the more publically promoted and previously accepted elements of a society’s

past in acknowledging and celebrating cultural, historical and societal antecedents and their visual expression.

6.3.3 The Impact (The Transformed and Re-imagined)

The third aspect of the phronesis, the transformed and re-imagined, refers to the impact, the end that is aimed for, the potential for transformational change brought about by engaging with a visual arts transformative learning practice in the re-imagining of contemporary society. This includes the potential for:

- Enriching young people with the experience of being a part of a community of practice, sharing mutual interest and concern and artistic expression;
- Assisting young people to enter into and engage within a space that can take them across an initially safe place through to a threshold from which new challenging thoughts and experiences can be explored and transformations in thinking and action and artistic expression can occur;
- Providing opportunities for learning beyond the classroom environment and involving engagement with new people in the visual arts and the community from outside the everyday school environment
- Deepened intercultural understanding; new and deeper understandings of self, others and society; and enriched artistic expression;
- Increased skills of intercultural communication and empathy and increased capacity to understand and respect diverse social, cultural and personal identities and cultural expression;
- Deepened awareness and understanding of societal challenges and the contribution that can be made by young people to the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society;
- Enhanced ability to engage in critical questioning, truth seeking and honest practice through engagement and expression in the visual arts;
- Increased understanding by young people of their own visual culture and identity and those of other young people of different backgrounds;
- Acceptance of complexity, an amalgam of identities and a range of cultures as being an inherent part of modern contemporary society and artistic expression;
- Acknowledgement of the importance of being aware of the cultural heritage

and artistic expression of self and others;

- The integration of creative and artistic endeavour into a way of living and an enduring habit of mind;
- The development of confidence among young people in their own creative and artistic ability;
- Enabling all young people the opportunity to flourish and find in the visual arts an enriching way of learning, communicating and being.

Conclusion: A New Theory and Practice

In this chapter a new theory and practice in visual arts learning have emerged. The notion of a visual arts transformative learning practice has been put forward as an exciting approach to learning, opening new opportunities to invigorate and transform visual arts learning, providing an experiential, experimental and transformative approaches to thinking, communication and expression. A transformative visual arts learning practice enables young people to draw upon their existing perspectives and frames of reference, develop new perspectives, to express visually these new perspectives and develop new forms of visual expression that enable them to contribute to the aesthetic re-imagining of society.

In this approach there is an interweaving and interdependence between the seeking of truth, the generating and addressing of questions, and the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society. In this way artistic practice and a visual arts transformative learning practice is seen as a truth seeking experience. In the development of a visual arts transformative learning practice it is suggested that much can be learned from practicing artists and the pursuit of honesty in artistic practice and expression. In particular, the manner in which an artist understands what it is to be an honest practitioner and the manner in which she or he enacts her or his practice gives the artist a sense of integrity and credibility when it comes to thinking about many of the tough issues relevant to contemporary society formation. An honest practice is more than an act of creating. An honest practice requires synergy whether comfortable or uncomfortable between the creation process (practice) the artist (practitioner) and the purpose, intention and outcome (artefact). The passion of the artist should be accompanied by the voice of conviction for the practice to be accepted as an authentic process for seeking and expressing a truth.

The significance of seeking truth and questioning matters of importance to humankind through an art practice is considered to be an aspect of what art does at its best. It creates a space for addressing issues of finitude, mortality, meaning and existence; the important questions of what it is to be human. An artist questions, re-imagines and puts forward new truths and new ways of understanding self and society. The process of re-imagination comes to be through revisiting, reconsidering, questioning, and interweaving all of these fibres into a new intellectual aesthetic and social fabric.

In considerations of the provenance of a healthy and thriving culture, a re-imagined society has to be built on the idea that we have to understand who we are in all our complexity. The visual arts are central to the emergence and substance of cultural identity. Competition, conflict, wartime exploits and preoccupations with winning and losing are a flawed approach to building cultural identity. In the Australian context, the longevity, complexity and beauty of Australian Indigenous culture and its underpinning for Australia's identity is central to considerations of contemporary society formation. Indigenous culture and experience needs to be afforded the same respect as European Australian culture, traditions, legends and myths in Australian contemporary society formation and cultural expression. Massacre sites of Aboriginal people, for example, need to be marked and commemorated so that these footings are acknowledged as central to those upon which a re-imagined Australian identity and culture can be formed.

Australian contemporary society is an amalgam of people with a range of cultural and ethnic identities, often these identities were forged elsewhere and need to be negotiated with very different ways of thinking, so that new identities can evolve both for the individuals and for society. One homogeneous national identity upon which to form contemporary society is redundant in such a culturally diverse society. Australian society, for centuries has been made up of peoples who have had to negotiate their place and the way they interact with what is already here and influence and be influenced by it. Acknowledgement of this personal and cultural diversity is an inherent part of the transformation and re-imagining of contemporary society, now and into the future.

Chapter 7

Overview, Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

Every animate being, as it threads its way through and among the ways of every other, must perforce improvise a passage, and in doing so it lays another line in the mesh. Of course, there may be places of convergence and divergence. But whereas the network has nodes, the meshwork has knots. Knots are places where many lines becoming are drawn tightly together. Yet every line overtakes the knot into which it is tied. Its end is always loose, somewhere beyond the knot, where it is groping towards an entanglement with other lines, in other knots. (Ingold, 2012, p. 15)

Introduction

In this final chapter an overview of the study is presented, and the weaving of the theory emerging from the study is described. This is followed by the discussion, in which the thesis is situated in both the scholarly literature and visual practice, and the implications for the ongoing lines of work and enquiry are drawn. The recommendations for theory, research, policy and practice are detailed, and the thesis is then drawn to conclusion.

7.1 Overview

What follows is an overview of the study, including its aims and the research question, the evolutionary provenance of the study, the methodology and methods and the review of findings.

7.1.1 Aims of the Study and the Research Question

This study had as its aims:

- To undertake an empirical, analytical and conceptual study examining the perspectives of secondary school students, teachers, artists, senior arts administrators and arts educators regarding the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation.
- To clarify some of the conceptual, policy, professional and practical issues

relevant to the role of learning in the visual arts in stimulating learning and promoting contemporary society formation in a time of societal transition and change.

- To generate theory and develop recommendations for theory, research, policy and practice relevant to learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation.

The question guiding the research was *What is the nature of the relationship between learning in the visual arts and contemporary society formation?*

7.1.2 The Provenance of the Study

The study had its provenance in three significant settings. The first was the experience of students in schools involved in the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster of the Australian Commonwealth Government's Values Education Good Schools Practice Project (Staples, Devine, & Chapman, 2010) and in particular that aspect of the student experience which focussed on opportunities for students to learn to value and share cultures and contribute to Australian society formation through visual arts learning. It was this experience that laid the basis for the generation of the initial question and lines of enquiry for subsequent research and data gathering for Stage One this thesis.

The second was my participation in the *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence* conference of the International Committee of the History of Art that took place in Melbourne in 2008. This conference strove to answer the question '*what happens in art when one culture encounters another?*'. At the conference my initial learnings, insights and tentative identification of the research question and lines of enquiry were further deepened and enriched by the conceptual and aesthetic concerns addressed.

The third was my participation in *Future / Forward: The National Visual Arts Summit* in 2014. This summit brought me into contact with artists, senior arts advocates and writers, and it was during this time that I began to develop my thinking about the place of a visual arts practice in visual arts learning and contemporary society formation.

7.1.3 Methodology and Methods

This qualitative research study adopted an evolutionary epistemology and a meta-theoretical perspective based upon interpretivism and symbolic interactionism. A Grounded Theory Method approach to theory development was chosen. The approaches to qualitative data gathering included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field-notes and collection of relevant documentation. Data were gathered from a range of secondary school students, teachers, artists, senior arts administrators and visual arts educators. The approach taken to the qualitative analysis of data in this research was substantive coding, including open coding, selective coding, the writing of memoranda and theoretical sampling.

There were two distinct stages of data gathering and analysis. In Stage One, data were collected from students and teachers from a Catholic secondary school. Stage Two of the study began with the identification of a need to deepen and enrich, extend and complement the findings of the initial Stage One data analysis. As a consequence, a second phase of data gathering, this time from artists, senior arts administrators and visual arts educators, began.

7.1.4 The Review of the Findings

The analysis of findings from Stage One showed how learning in the visual arts can transform young people's understanding of self, others and society and how learning in the visual arts itself can be transformed as a mode of learning. Such a transformative and transformed mode of learning can provide something different and significant both in stimulating learning and in contributing to society formation in a time of considerable societal transition and change. From Stage One emerged the theoretical construct of *visual arts transformative learning*.

Underpinning the Stage One core category of *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* are two sub-core categories, namely (i) *The Visual Arts as Transformative: Perspectives of Students*, and (ii) *Something Different and Significant: Perspectives of Teachers*. It is suggested visual arts transformative learning provides a conceptual and practical link between learning in the visual arts and experiences that are transformative in nature.

The analysis of findings from Stage Two sought to more deeply understand and extend the findings from Stage One. The intention was to broaden and enrich the insights offered by the students and teachers through an examination of perspectives of senior arts advocates about

the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation. From these perspectives emerged the theoretical construct of *a visual arts practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society*.

The Stage Two core category of *Re-Imagining Contemporary Society: The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*, which is grounded in the data gathered from artists, arts administrators and arts educators, is underpinned by two sub-core categories, namely (i) *Re-Imagining Contemporary Culture and Society* and (ii) *The Distinctiveness of a Visual Arts Practice*. An examination of the former described what the qualities and characteristics of a thriving and contemporary culture and society might be. In the latter, the distinctive role that a visual arts practice may have in the formation of society through the re-imagining of contemporary society was examined.

The findings of both Stage One and Stage Two are represented in their entirety in the artwork *Colour Enmeshment | Series 3* [#1].



Colour Enmeshment | Series 3 [#1]

7.2 The Weaving of the Theory Emerging from the Study

This study provides a way of thinking about the nature of the relationship between visual arts learning and society formation in a time of transition and change. It puts forward the notion of a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of society that has wide ranging implications for theory, research, policy and practice.

The theory generated from the research sees society formation as the process by which a society is in a constant state of renewal. In this thesis society formation recognises that the development of society is an active process. The thesis has been less concerned with addressing the question of identity within and among particular demographic groups, but instead it is concerned with the fabric of society, what it is and how that fabric comes into being.

How is the fabric of society made and held together? Using the metaphor of a piece of fabric that is woven, it is possible to see each thread representing a facet of society, be it social, cultural, or educational. If an individual thread is removed, that society will not unravel entirely but it is suggested that something is changed. And in keeping with the adage ‘a stitch in time saves nine’, the thread can be rethreaded. Society formation is about the sustainable and long term practices that weave the society that we want to live in. A premise of society formation in the context of this study is that it is an enterprise that is constantly evolving and that its evolution takes time. Of specific concern to this study is the part that visual arts learning has in the formation of that society, in particular is there a visual arts thread and what is its role?

To assist in understanding what society formation is in the context of this study, the metaphor of the loom, warp and weft was brought into play. The metaphor for society is a piece of woven fabric that represents a way of describing society. Its parts are interwoven and with time it expands. The metaphor for formation is the weaving process and the tools associated with weaving. In weaving there are two yarns, the lengthwise warp and the crosswise weft. The denser the number of warps and wefts, the stronger the fabric. The loom holds the warps threads under tension, and through which the weft threads are interwoven. Two warps do not make a weave and in considerations of society formation, it is the relationship between the warp and the weft that is important.

In accord with this model, the loom is the overall structure and context. A number of areas under the broad categories of *A Portrait of a Diverse Society*, *The Spectrum of Cultural and Arts Policies and Priorities*, and *The Visual Arts Education Landscape* provide the warp.

The weft threads are those aspects of a visual arts transformative learning practice associated with the re-imagining of contemporary society, which have emerged from the key findings of the empirical aspect of the study. The metaphor of weaving, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Six has provided an important conceptual framework for understanding the nature of the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation.

An important aspect of the discussion on theory in this thesis related to the weaving of theory and practice. In this discussion particular attention was paid to the notion of practical wisdom (Phronesis) and its constituent elements of Intent (The Desiderata), Practice (Aspects and Features) and Impact (The Transformed and the Re-Imagined).

7.3 Discussion: Situating the Thesis within the Scholarly Literature and Visual Practice

This discussion of the thesis originally began with the intention of situating the thesis within a review of the body of literature relevant to the core categories and concepts that had emerged from the conceptual, analytical and empirical aspects of the study. However, as I proceeded with this intent it became clear to me that a discussion based on a traditional review of literature only, would not enable me to do justice to the cornerstone of this thesis, the visual arts, and my understanding the world, that being through the visual and the confluence of lines and entanglement of concepts.

I thus begin this discussion by situating the thesis within a review of some of the more seminal literature relevant to visual arts transformative learning and visual arts learning and society formation. The review then moves into a discussion of aspects of the thesis relevant to the aesthetic re-imagining of society through an examination of the practice of selected visual artists working in areas cognate to this thesis, contemporary commentaries on and of their work and significant writings by relevant theorists that are apposite to understanding this broader aspect of the thesis related to visual practice.

The conduct and place of a review of literature within the Grounded Theory Method approach to research differs somewhat from the literature reviews conducted in the initial stages of more traditional research approaches. In this thesis, considerations of the extant literature, in line with the Grounded Theory Method, were not completed until all research data had been collected, core categories and concepts had been identified and the substantive theory arising from and grounded in the findings of the research had emerged.

In the exordium to the study I wrote about the way in which I understand and see the world through lines. I see the world as being interconnected through a variety of lines: trace lines, thread lines, overlapping lines, ephemeral lines and lines that gather. Thus in this discussion I have attempted to focus on the mains lines of scholarly literature and visual practice relevant to this thesis and the points where there is a confluence of lines of enquiry, artistic expression and practice providing rich entanglements of conceptual, theoretical, artistic and practical considerations.

In the following discussion it is proposed that this thesis, at the same time as being located in significant bodies of literature, has also uncovered new knowledge and understanding that have implications for new directions and new lines of scholarly enquiry and visual practice. Specifically, through the generation of a theory of a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society, the thesis puts forward new ideas and insights, new categories and concepts, that were hitherto unknown and unexplored or separate and distinct.

Weaving together the different aspects of the thesis in the discussion which follows I would like to point to some new areas of knowledge and understanding, and new linkages and relationships, arising from this thesis. In this I am seeking to identify new lines of enquiry, and new linkages between key concepts and concerns, so that other scholars, researchers, visual arts educators and arts practitioners might build upon what was found in this thesis, thus adding to and extending knowledge, understanding and practice in relevant fields of scholarly endeavour and visual arts learning practice.

Before embarking on the more detailed discussion, let me draw attention to three particular lines for future consideration. The lines bring together new insights and understanding that have not previously been identified and woven together and which I suggest will establish the original contribution to new knowledge and understanding that is made by this thesis.

To begin, I suggest that one of the implications of this thesis is the identification of lines of work and enquiry that might be undertaken into those things which are valued and the qualities intended to be developed in relation to a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society. These might include further consideration of the principles, values, ethical and moral concerns underpinning a visual arts transformative learning practice. It might also include consideration of the ways in which a

visual arts transformative learning practice can positively address present and future challenges to create more healthy and thriving communities and enhance personal, social and cultural identities in a time of social transition and change. In the theory generated by this research particular attention is given to the interweaving of the seeking of truth and the generating and addressing of questions. In this analysis a visual arts transformative learning practice is seen as a truth seeking experience. In the development of a visual arts transformative learning practice it is suggested that much can be learned from practising artists and the pursuit of honesty in artistic practice and expression. An honest practice requires synergy whether comfortable or uncomfortable between the creation process (practice) the artist (practitioner) and the purpose, intention and outcome (artefact). The passion of the artist should be accompanied by the voice of conviction for the practice to be accepted as an authentic process for seeking and expressing a truth. This has wide implications for the learning of young people, for the linking of the arts, visual arts learning, and society formation and considerations of the moral and aesthetic imperatives of education.

A second implication of this thesis lies in the further lines of work and enquiry that might be undertaken in regard to the activities and engagements that characterise a transformative visual arts learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society, particularly in relationship to arts education, curriculum practices, teaching and learning, and the addressing of societal and cultural issues in visual arts learning. These might include the ways in which learning in the visual arts can be transformative through the provision of experiences that enable young people to see beyond their existing perspectives and expression of identity, self, others and society; learning experiences that enable young people to better understand and relate to others through collaborative and social modes of engagement which enhance the development of relationships and a deepened understanding of others; the provision of opportunities for mutual engagement in an active process of art-making so that students are able to learn *with* people, not about people, and to reflect on new world views, alternative frames of reference and develop new habits of mind to inform their lifelong learning and their re-imagining of society and the contribution that they might make to society now and in the future.

A third implication lies in further lines of work and enquiry that might be proposed into the potential impacts and ends to be aimed at by virtue of a visual arts transformative learning practice in the aesthetic re-imagining of society. How might a transformed approach to visual

arts learning and society be conceived? In considerations of the provenance of a healthy and thriving culture, how can a re-imagined society be framed around an understanding of who we are in all our complexity; accounting for the amalgam of people with a range of cultural and ethnic identities; respecting our indigenous people; acknowledging the various ethnic and cultural backgrounds of people with extended personal histories of settlement in this country; and welcoming those newer to our country with identities often having been forged elsewhere and needing to be negotiated with very different ways of thinking and being, so that new identities can evolve and find expression both for the individuals and for society.

An important contribution to this literature regarding the contributions of the arts to the transformation of society is provided by the work of Maxine Greene, an American educator and philosopher who “explores living in awareness” in order to advance social justice” (The Maxine Greene Center, 2014, para. 1). Greene’s philosophical approach to aesthetic learning is concerned with how to awaken a person’s consciousness and imagination through their aesthetic experience. According to Greene (1995), imagination enables the person to see “things as if they could be otherwise” (p. 16) and to “cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same” (p. 16). This aspect of Greene’s work has been explored further by Moon et al. (2013), who suggest the interweaving of aesthetic experiences and social imagination present possibilities “to rethink art and the aesthetic experience as a means of awakening students’ consciousness towards democratic values, including multiple perspectives, freedom, responsibility, and diversity” (p. 223).

Greene proposes that “aesthetic education should strive to develop and experience the notion of wide-wakeness, as opposed to numbness to social issues” (Moon et al., 2013, p. 224). By engaging with the imagination and the aesthetic, it is possible to “conceive a better order of things” (Greene, 1995, p. 19), and in doing so, “a person may become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be, and what is not yet” (p. 19). Greene’s approach to the imagination in aesthetic education and social formation provides with study with established educational underpinnings which support its findings. Greene’s legacy continues in the work of colleagues across education and the arts, in particular in the work of Rita Irwin and F. Graeme Chalmers (1996), who draw on her work to design educational programs in and through the arts.”

7.3.1 A Visual Arts Transformative Learning Practice

The significance of a visual arts transformative learning practice was central to the theory emerging from this study. Experience of the transformative was evident from the analysis of data gathered during both stages of the research program. In particular, two distinct iterations of the transformative had emerged. The first of these pointed towards a transformation of young peoples' understandings of self, others and society. The second pointed towards a transformation of visual arts learning itself as a mode of learning. In the literature about transformative learning, the terms transformative and transformational are used interchangeably. Transformative is used in this discussion unless cited otherwise.

Much of the literature addressing the notion of the transformative in education is underpinned by Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Taylor, 2007). Whilst Mezirow's contributions to the field of transformative learning provide a solid and relevant explanation for understanding the transformative in this study, a review of related literature provides additional approaches to grappling with the theory relevant to visual arts transformative learning. This discussion on transformative learning practice draws extensively upon Mezirow's work, but also offers alternative lenses through which to understand the theory pertaining to a visual arts transformative learning practice put forward in this study especially from a more emancipatory perspective.

Mezirow developed two concepts that help in providing a deeper understanding of the underpinnings of transformative learning, namely meaning schemes and meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 2000). It is theorised that a number of meaning schemes, which include "specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgements, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience" (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 5–6) work together to form meaning perspectives, which themselves are our worldview. Meaning perspectives "determine the essential conditions for construing meaning for an experience" and they "order what we learn and the way we learn it" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 44). These are the codes that "govern the activities of perceiving, comprehending, and remembering" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 4). Mezirow also referred to meaning perspectives as frames of reference (1997, 2000) and habits of expectation. Popper had established a similar code with his "horizons of expectations" (Popper, 1963). whilst Freire referred to "*conscientização*" (1970, p. 17) and Habermas to "emancipatory action" (as cited in Mezirow, 1981, p. 3).

In the process of transformative learning, it is the frame of reference that changes. A meaning perspective determines “our concept of personhood, our idealized self-image, and the way we feel about ourselves” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 44). This transformative learning is a manifestation of the individual adapting his or her way of knowing in terms of negotiating “meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally” (p. 3) instead of adopting a way of knowing defined by others.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paulo Freire had positioned the transformative as being interlinked with social and emancipatory endeavour. Freire wrote that in order to “surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (p. 29). Like Mezirow, Freire was concerned with the betterment of human existence through transformative education but unlike Mezirow, he was primarily concerned with the transformation and emancipation of the collective rather than the transformation of the individual.

Mezirow provided the transformative learning theorist with a “process of personal transformation” (1991, pp. 168–169) that often involved the sequential clarification of ten phases of meaning (Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009) These phases include:

- a disorienting dilemma
- self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- a critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions
- recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
- exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
- planning a course of action
- acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
- provisional trying of new roles
- building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

Kegan (2000) developed a constructive-developmental approach to transformative

learning and presented a number of distinct features of “the genuinely landscape altering potential in the concept of transformational learning” (pp. 47–48). These features are a relevant consideration in this study: transformative learning is distinctive and “needs to be recognized as valuable in any learning activity, discipline, or field” (p. 47); the “form that is undergoing transformation needs to be better understood; if there is no form there is no transformation” (p. 47); if we consider a form as a way of knowing or a frame of reference, transformative learning is therefore ‘an epistemological change “rather than merely a change in behavioural repertoire and an increase in the quantity fund of knowledge” (p. 48). In line with this analysis the concept of transformative learning needs to be “broadened to include the whole lifespan” (p. 48).

Taking up both Mezirow’s stance that “perspectives are constitutive of experience” (1981, p. 14) and Kegan’s (2000) belief that transformative learning be enacted across the lifespan, it is possible to consider new ways in which to understand transformative learning as a theory and practice as worthy of further consideration and application in extending both scholarly enquiry and visual practice in areas relevant to the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation.

Considerations of the extant literature relevant to the categories and concepts emerging from this research in relationship to transformative learning has thus more deeply enriched the understandings derived from this study and provide new directions for scholarly enquiry and visual practice in the future.

7.3.2 Visual Arts Learning and Society Formation

Reviewing seminal work in the areas of visual arts learning, with particular relevance to visual arts learning and society formation have been especially helpful in deepening this understanding of transformative learning and situating the thesis in bodies of literature and understanding regarding visual arts transformative learning and the aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society.

In the forward to the publication emanating from Mason and Buschkühle’s (2013) important work on learning in the visual arts, Gearon and Naval draw distinct parallels between changes in society and changes in art thinking and practices, arguing that as society changes and conceptions of the person in society changes so too art is transformed (p. xi). Gearon and

Naval point to the existence of a relationship between visual arts and society formation in their description of the development of the notions of visual imagery from the time of the ancient cave paintings of pre-historic man in France, through to the changes brought about in both society and in art during the time of the European reformation, and to the rise of secular art and to the use of the digital in visual arts today.

The publication *Images and Identity* (Mason & Buschkühle, 2013), draws upon a project undertaken in the European Union and provides important insights into the relationship between visual arts learning and society formation from the perspective of a cross-national citizen education project situated in the visual arts. It tells of the experiences of art educators and citizenship educators from European Union member countries, in a “two year curriculum and research project, developing teacher education materials and aimed at increasing school children’s identification with Europe through discussion and production of visual images” (p. 3).

The project, *Images and Identity: Improving Citizenship Education through Digital Art*, was based on the premise that identity and social cohesion are critical to citizenship education. Although this thesis used and embraced the broader concept of society formation and was undertaken in Australia, and whilst the European Union project used the more specific concept of ‘citizenship’ and was undertaken in a number of countries in the European Union, Mason et al’s work has significant implications for considerations of this thesis. Mason (2013) notes examples of the different perspectives of citizenship which are embodied in citizenship courses within member countries of the European Union (EU). For example, the British curriculum incorporates such concepts as democracy, rights and responsibilities, diversity and identity in its formal program. Other nations incorporate information and knowledge of political procedural and institutional awareness, and the development of values and attitudes as citizens, whilst others have no citizenship programs in their formal education systems.

The design of the European Union project aimed to utilize the strengths of art education and citizenship education, and the entities which they seek to develop in upper primary children, using specific art-making and visual images as means of developing social, cultural and individual identities in line with the citizenship and identity aspirations of the European Union. Lines of connection might be drawn with the intention of the *Images and Identity* Project to develop the role of lifelong learning in European citizenship building and the concept of *visual*

arts learning as an enduring habit of mind, generated by the findings of this thesis.

The *Images and Identity* project adopted an action research method and sought to build on existing practices and classroom activities. Documentation and evaluation of the various activities were developed on-line throughout the consortium of partner institutions involved in the project. The resultant materials comprised “19 schemes of work with 70 lesson plans together with supplementary resources” (p. 9). The notion of shared experience and expertise underpinned much of the development, with a resultant commonality of ‘shared civic values as expressed in the EU constitution’ (p. 9).

In her reflections and evaluation of the overall project Mason notes both managerial and technological challenges of working across such a broad range of national traditions and languages and economies. She illustrates the complexities of diverse understandings and the quest for commonality across the project. Although one finding of the project was that art teachers did not use the materials developed with the expertise of citizenship teachers, the project did have a number of positive outcomes, and has generated further inquiry and research.

The individual chapters of the Mason et al publication provide a number of ‘snapshots’ of the differing responses and activities in each national entity. These are valuable in exploring experiences in the Australian setting, but perhaps the theoretical perspective of Buschkühle echoes most strongly in relation to this thesis and the relationship between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation. Buschkühle describes the visual arts as part of humanistic education which is “under pressure now as the result of the ideology of neoliberalism. It is losing ground in a system which is obsessed with competence and objectives and developing skills and abilities that strengthen the competitiveness of individuals and societies” (p. 50). Referencing Kettel (2004), Buschkühle notes that the international PISA study identified science and mathematics skills and abilities, “but did not mention aesthetic competence as a basic cultural competence” (p. 50). Such comments reflect the controversies and positioning of the visual arts in the current Australian education curriculum as noted in Chapter Two of this thesis. The findings from the data from both teachers and students in this study and the subsequent sub categories of *learning in the visual arts as transformational* and *learning in the visual arts as an enduring habit of mind* would seem to suggest that, *Visual Arts Transformative Learning: Something Different and Significant* may well offer far deeper, richer and more comprehensive learning both theoretically and practically than the current assignment of the

arts in the curriculum in Australian education.

The second line of work of significance to this thesis is that provided by the Canadian scholar Rita Irwin and her colleagues. Irwin (2013) points out that whilst considerations of art education have traditionally addressed the dimensions of ‘learning *about* visual arts’ and the ‘application *of/to*’ techniques and technologies, concentrating largely on the ‘artifact’ or ‘product’ of the artistic endeavor in the boundaries of the discipline of the ‘visual arts’, there is now a growing recognition of the possible superficiality or limitations of these dimensions and instead there may be potential value of envisaging visual arts learning in much deeper and more complex theoretical understandings (Irwin, 2013).

In a presentation to the annual Studies in Art Education Invited Lecture (2012) entitled *Becoming A/r/tography*, Irwin was concerned to address the professional development of teachers and the forming of new understandings of the relationship between theory, practice and pedagogy. Although Irwin’s work has a slightly different focus to this thesis, there is a resonance between elements of her approach and the concepts, categories and theorizing of relationships emerging from this current study. Irwin (2013) speaks of transforming “the intention of theory and practice from stable abstract systems to spaces of exchange, reflexivity and relationality found in a continuous state of movement” (p. 199) and refers to “self-reflective and self-reflexive engagement of the many individuals who have physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually taken this journey with me...touching the life of one another” (p. 199). The current study bears witness to the value of such an undertaking in future research, theory development and pedagogy in areas related to visual arts education and society formation.

In elaborating on her concept of ‘becoming’ Irwin notes a focus of her research as exploring teachers conceptualisation of ‘arts integration’ and how the arts can constitute a discipline *and* a strategy for integration. The relationship between visual arts learning and society formation, and the findings of this study lend themselves to an even further understanding of and explorations of the concepts of ‘integration’ and of the nature of ‘visual arts learning. Irwin speaks of “lingering in this evolving space of possibility, recognizing that one never ‘becomes’ but rather resides in a constant state of becoming” (p. 203). Irwin’s notions of the dynamics of a liminal space and of “otherness and difference” (p. 211) might also apply within both contexts of professional education for art educators and the linking of visual arts learning and society formation. Finally, common theoretical pursuits might also be found in the nature of

Irwin's work and the knowledge and understanding it pursues in regard to "commitment" as illustrated in the work of Gouzouasis, Irwin, Miles and Gordon (2013) and in the pursuit of an understanding of "honesty" in visual arts transformative learning practice as highlighted in this thesis.

The third line of activity which situates this thesis within an international community of scholars, arts educators and artists working in this and cognate fields is the World Alliance for Arts Education. Formed in 2006, this is a global alliance which brings together arts education organisations and practitioners from across the world. Professor Margaret Barrett, of the University of Queensland, is a former past Chair of the World Alliance of Education (2013-2015) and a foremost leader in this field. Barrett's work in arts education broadly (1998, 2007, 2011, 2012) and in aspects of music education (2011, 2014, 2015), in particular has important implications for this thesis.

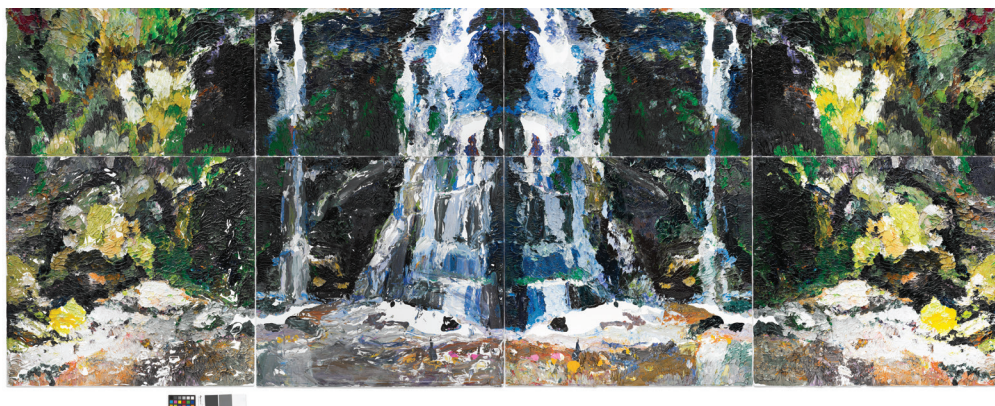
The World Alliance for Art Education focuses on collectively advancing research and practice in the arts, and has established global recognition of the need for intercultural understandings and developments in arts education. Created under the auspices of UNESCO and holding both forums and summits in various countries, the Alliance aims "to utilize the strengths and knowledge with trans-disciplinary, trans-national and trans-cultural arts associations for the benefit of arts education in the 21st century". As an advocacy provider of expert advice and policy development entity (WAAE - Memorandum of Alliance, 2012 - waae.edcp.educ.ubc.ca), its influence on the global stage may well serve to make a major contribution to bringing about many of the changes proposed in this thesis related to transformative learning in visual arts learning and society formation.

7.3.3 The Aesthetic Re-Imagining of Contemporary Society

In this final section of the discussion, I move beyond a concentration on viewing the thesis within the extant literature, to situating the thesis, in the practices of the Australian artists, Ben Quilty, Liam Benson and Khaled Sabsabi. The discussion includes contemporary commentaries on and about their work. It also incorporates reference to the seminal work of two significant writers, Jacques Rancière and Nicos Papastergiadis, whose more theoretical and philosophical writings have much to contribute in identifying new lines of insights, understanding and enquiry related to this thesis. The concept of an aesthetic re-imagining of society, and the ideas that underpin it, emerged most powerfully from the analysis of Stage Two data collected from

practising artists, arts administrators and significant arts advocates and visual arts educators. This concept is the confluence of the lines that run through the categories of *Considerations of Honesty and Practice*, *The Pursuit of Honesty in Contemporary Society*, *The Provenance of a Healthy and Thriving Contemporary Culture* and *Considerations of Society Formation*. An aesthetic re-imagining of contemporary society is the way in which society formation can be understood as being a visual experience, with particular attention paid to practice, practitioner and artefact.

An art practice and the creation of artefacts have the potential to play a significant role in the aesthetic re-imagining of society, as noted by Hers and Douroux (2013) in their suggestion that “artworks become the expression of people who have decided to *faire société* (make or forge society)” (p. 13). By examining the aesthetic practices of contemporary artists concerned with the revivification of society, some of the process of aesthetically re-imagining society can be described.



Ben Quilty, 'Fairy Bower Rorschach', 2012 (oil on linen), 120 x 130 cm each panel; 240 x 550 cm overall
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Patrick White Bequest Fund 2012 © Ben Quilty Photo: AGNSW

In conversations undertaken with Ben Quilty as part of this research enquiry, Quilty spoke about the importance of questioning, truth seeking, facing taboos and acknowledging the past. Honesty, confrontation and ‘big experiences’ are integral to Quilty’s practice as an artist and he uses them to draw his audience into a form of personal and intimate conversation in an attempt to address truth. When drawing portraits of the author Germaine Greer, Quilty wrote of truth, saying “one of the most vexing human conditions to me is an inability to look inwards, to confront the truth about ourselves” (2012, para. 8).

It is this confronting of the truth about ourselves both as individuals and as a collective that has framed Quilty's practice in three particular contexts that are of relevance to this study. The first of these contexts is Aboriginal Australia, the second is the impact of working as Australian official war artist in Afghanistan on Quilty, and the third is his friendship with, and artistic mentorship of, Myuran Sukumaran, an Australian on death row in Kerobokan prison in Bali. Quilty has described such contexts as the "big experiences" that drive him as an artist and which provide him with a basis from which to "make profound work".

The injustices lived by Aboriginal Australians "in a country that has been taken by force from their culture" (B. Quilty, personal communication, October 24, 2014) are of paramount concern to Quilty. When prompted to reflect on the voice his practice has afforded him, Quilty says "I am excited to have a voice so that I can point out these things" (B. Quilty, personal communication, October 24, 2014). In recent times, Quilty has developed a series of paintings of Aboriginal massacre sites, because these "beautiful landscapes with a very dark past need to be marked and commemorated" (B. Quilty, personal communication, October 24, 2014). *Fairy Bower Rorschach* one such painting. In this instance Quilty unsettles the viewer into searching for an explanation when it is revealed that this landscape is reputedly the site where Aboriginal people were massacred in the nineteenth century (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2016).

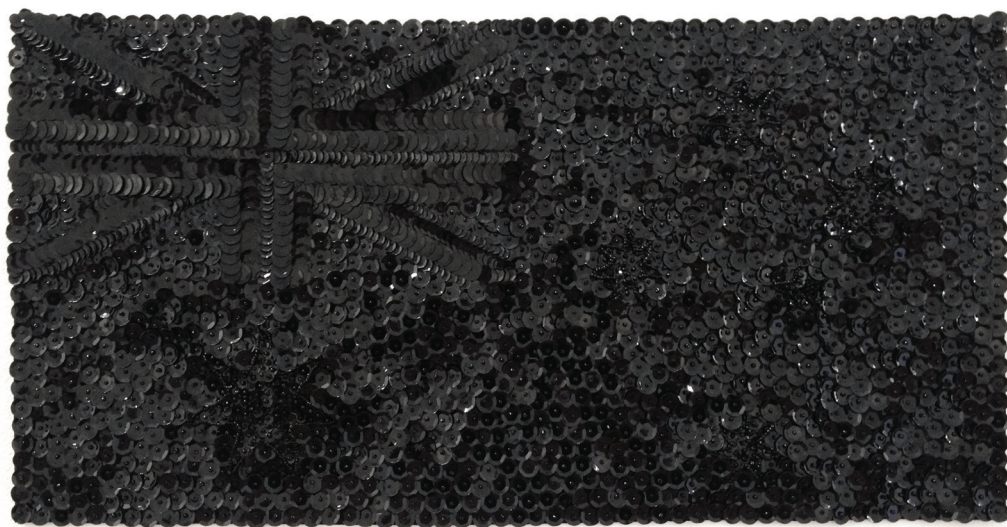
Through his practice as the Australian official war artist, Quilty told the story of the Australian "men and women who were at war in Afghanistan" (2014, p. 7), and through these stories he hoped to offer an "insight into broader questions of mortality and the effect of conflict on those who are in the way of it" (p. 7). What he saw in Afghanistan, and his attempt to answer his questions through his practice, culminated in a series of artworks that formed his '*After Afghanistan*' touring exhibition. Quilty reflected that this show was "a pretty heavy anti-war statement because I just responded to what I saw and four out of the eleven young people that I worked with were diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder in the first year after leaving" (B. Quilty, personal communication, October 24, 2014). Of his experiences in Afghanistan, Quilty said "It was horrendous, horrific and I was scared being there. It was dark" (B. Quilty, personal communication, October 24, 2014). The importance, veracity and relevance of an honest practice was explicit, loud and clear. Quilty's time as the official war artist had a profound effect, both on him personally and on his practice. Messham-Muir commented that Quilty had become the best known artist of his generation in Australia and with this responsibility, Quilty had emerged as a powerful public voice (2014).

In 2012 Quilty met Myuran Sukumaran after responding to a request made by Sukumaran and relayed through his barrister, Julian McMahon, to be taught how to paint “thick” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). From this first meeting ensued a three year friendship during which Quilty mentored Sukumaran as an artist. Quilty produced a compelling body of work himself whilst working with Sukumaran. In particular, self portraits such as *Self portrait Kerobokan* give the viewer an insight into the life of artist who is questioning, facing taboos and seeking truth. Quilty has reflected that as a consequence of painting with Sukumaran and spending time with him in Kerobokan prison, he came to understand “the power of art for the first time” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). Quilty became a prominent supporter of Sukumaran and a committed anti-death penalty voice. In doing so, Quilty captured the attention of many Australians. A new form of voice was being exercised by Quilty the artist in the formation of contemporary Australian society.



Ben Quilty, Self portrait Kerobokan, 2013
60 x 50cm, oil on linen
(courtesy of the artist)

Liam Benson is an Australian artist whose practice “deconstructs the social perceptions of gender, race, cultural and subcultural identity...and serves to celebrate the abolition of the social archetypes and explore the possibilities within the cross influence of socially entrenched identities and cultural and subcultural amalgamation” (Benson, 2013). Benson is inherently interested in exploring the contemporary discourse about Aboriginal Australia. As a non-Aboriginal man, Benson approaches this subject matter as a supporter of the Aboriginal voice, rather than as a voice of Aboriginal Australia. Benson’s artworks constitute a form of research into new approaches of understanding Aboriginality, they are representative of a conversation about uncomfortable issues yet to be resolved in Australian society and they are evidence of a practice. An example of how Benson constructs his understanding is his artwork *Black Flag* (2015). This particular artwork is a simile of the Australian flag that Benson has embroidered using organza, cotton, glass beads and black sequins. The artwork is black, a colour that is significant to Benson for a number of reasons. He understands black as being a beautiful colour. Black also resonates with the black Australia and it is certainly representative of the time and nature of interactions between and within aboriginal Australia and non-aboriginal Australia. Very importantly Benson also notes that in some way this is a charred black flag that offers the chance for the renewal and re-visitation of the past. Benson likes to subvert popular opinion from the inside and he is most cognisant that many people are disconnected from the truth about who we are (Benson 2013).



Liam Benson, Black Flag, 2015
30 x 59cm, sequins, seed beads, cotton
(courtesy of the artist)

Much of Benson's work is of a collective enterprise. An example of this is a large-scale project called *Me and You*, in which Benson teaches people embroidery. This project celebrates cultural diversity within the community and the essence of this practice is "the conversations which fire from engagement and shared activity, the personal stories that emerged from the process and which are at the heart of any community" (Miller, 2015). Benson's project celebrates "individual identities, their cultural legacy and also contribute to a wider understanding of our changing Australian identity" (as cited in Miller, 2015). Miller writes that Benson reconstructs "hybrid identities at a clever juxtapositions of the cultural signifiers of mainstream and marginalised aspects of Western patriarchal culture". This can be interpreted as using a practice to reimagine what the future may be like and what it may look like.

Another work *Adorned: Women of Western Sydney*, is a project established by Benson as part of his celebration of the "diversity in western Sydney, and includes participants from Afghani, Iranian and other cultures". One of the outcomes of this project is has been an acceptance and understanding of where the participants come from and the formation of close bonds among people from different cultures and traditions. Benson is quoted as saying that during the workshops emotions often ran quite high. Some of the women shared stories about having felt isolated and lonely in Australia. One of the participants in the project spoke about the value of participating in an arts project that provided opportunities for expressing thoughts "rather than having it tucked away deep inside" (Sydney Morning Herald, 2016). The focus of a project such as this is not predicated on the attainment of skills requiring encryption but is instead predicated on the idea of using art making as a way of nurturing a practice and developing a way of thinking that can have longevity, purpose and be built into a habit of mind. The practice is both individual because very personal histories are drawn upon, it is also collective because it encapsulates a group of people working together. The artefacts that are created are personal, meaningful and express experiences drawn from previous histories but are also representative of a new reimagined way of seeing themselves in new relationships and society of the future.

Another artist whose practice is significant to this thesis is Khaled Sabsabi. Lisa Havilah, Director of Campbelltown Arts Centre in Sydney, wrote that Sabsabi's practice functions as a "tool for community engagement" (Havilah, 2009) and that it is "innately tied to the contemporary manifestations of suburban Australia" (2009). Sabsabi uses this practice as "an entry point to

deal and engage with community issues in a positive way in an attempt to achieve real social change” (2009). Sabsabi says of his own work that it examines “the complex and often fraught space of border identities, migrant territories and identity production, characterised by an ever changing and contingent nature” (Sabsabi, 2016), and that as an artist he is concerned with “function and practicality” (Verity, 2014).

In 2011 Sabsabi won the Blake Prize with his installation *Naqshbandi Greenacre engagement*. In her contribution to an episode of ABC Radio National’s Encounter series entitled *A day in the life of prize-winning artist Khaled Sabsabi*, Naomi Noffs, co-founder of The Street University, commented on Sabsabi’s work within his community and how his practice as an artist explores contemporary society in Australia,

Khaled has a very strong drive for justice. I think he is out there as a person who illuminates life of those people and connects, whether it’s through his social development work or through his art, connects the beauty of life, connects it with the struggle, connects it with the realities of people and brings these stories out and helps other people do the same. (Verity, 2014)



Khaled Sabsabi, *Naqshbandi Greenacre engagement*, 2011, installation view, MCA Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, 2012, 3 channel digital video, 2 channel sound, wooden table, plastic folders with photocopied texts, Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre for Edge of Elsewhere, 2011, Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with funds provided by the Coe and Mordant families, 2011, image courtesy the artist and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, © the artist

Each of these artists use their practice to awaken their viewer and to guide their viewer to rethink about their relationship with each other, with Australia, and with Australia's history and contemporary society. Through their practice they present a visual reimagining of contemporary society and also a more cerebral reimagining of contemporary society. Quilty's series of paintings about landscapes in Australia challenges the viewer to reconsider Australia's history, to acknowledge the past and revisit the past. The histories that accompany Quilty's work are largely oral in nature and are not written down and so the viewer needs to adopt another perspective of being out to reflect on what has happened. And this is done through the visual means offered by the practice as an artist. In the case of Quilty this is through viewer interaction. Benson in his practice also wants the viewer to reconsider existing perspectives and existing understandings of society. He is not offering the answer but he is offering a way for the viewer to construct new meaning or a new frame of reference. In their practice Benson and Sabsabi also organises community-based art learning in which members of the community are able to construct meaning through an art practice and community based experience.

The French philosopher Jacques Rancière (2004), who has written extensively on the aesthetic and the political provides some seminal ideas that provide interesting connections and insights into the practice of these artists and the central concepts of this thesis. In particular, Rancière refers to a process in artistic practice through which "the unseen and the unheard" becomes "seen and heard", thereby bringing about an aesthetic change in society. In describing this process in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière comments, "there is no politics of art but a politics of aesthetics.....the aesthetic effect is not the effect of a work in the sense that the work should produce the energy for action...it's about creating forms of perception, forms of interpretation" (2004, p. 80).

I would suggest that Quilty, Benson and Sabsabi, through their artistic practice, have enabled much that was previously 'unseen and unheard' about Australian society to become 'seen and heard'. In addressing questions about our past, addressing taboos, uncovering truths about our history and aspects of our country and our lives today, they have contributed to an aesthetic re-imagining of society and laid the basis for emancipatory transformations in individuals and society. An approach to visual learning incorporating these insights and approaches has wide ranging implications for education. Of special importance to considerations of approaches to visual arts learning is the value attached to creating forms of perception and forms of

interpretation as central to a visual arts transformative learning practice.

Also of importance to considerations of the implications of this thesis for visual arts learning is Rancière's (2004, p. 40) discussion on the "ordinariness" of work and notions of artistic "exceptionality". This is a critical distinction for this thesis especially in so far as the findings that emerged from student based data highlighted a reservation among some young people to engage in visual art and visual arts learning because they saw themselves as incapable of the exceptional practices that they associated with work in the arts. The need to dispel this notion of artistic "exceptionality" should be addressed if there is to be a change in the mindset of many young people regarding how they see the arts and what constitutes "work" in the arts. In so doing more young people might be encouraged to approach the arts with greater confidence and thereby experience the potential for joy and personal satisfaction that engagement in artistic expression work and endeavour can bring .

Rancière's challenge to "artistic exceptionality" also has implications for consideration of equity, emancipation and the rejection of outmoded conceptions of social division based on ethnicity and class in approaching and valuing artistic endeavour. Rancière's work provides strong support for the development of approaches to visual arts learning and arts education which respects the diverse cultural backgrounds, identity, and modes of visual practice and artistic work expressed by all people in our diverse society and provides support for more communal approaches to visual arts practice.

This line of thinking is also taken up in by Papastergiadis in his work on *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (2012) particularly as applied to considerations of visual arts learning and the re-imagining of society. Papastergiadis identifies aesthetic strategies and new forms of cosmopolitan agency in visual arts learning, arguing , "... It is no longer where you are from, or even where you are at which matters, it is more about the ways we communicate with others" (2012, p. 73). In his theorizing and writing, Papastergiadis generates important questions and concerns that might frame an agenda for emerging approaches to visual arts learning and which complement the attention given in this thesis to a visual arts transformative learning practice in the re-imagining of society. Such an agenda might include the addressing of questions such as:

- How can visual arts learning help young people to both represent the condition of their world and enable alternative ways of imagining their participation in the world (p. 14)?

- How can visual arts learning help young people give form to alternative imaginings and emergent systems for making sense of their place in the world (p. 15)?
- How can visual arts learning provide opportunities for young people to develop new approaches and techniques for finding the questions with which they can cross examine the “perplexities of their common condition” (p. 179)?
- How can visual arts learning and an education in the imagination yield among young people an alternative sense of place; new modes of relating to others and another way of seeing the world as a whole (p. 200)?

In Chapter Two of the thesis reference was made to the scholarly critiques and contested views of the Australian cultural landscape provided by contemporary cultural commentators such as Throsby, Caust, Eltham and Westbury, and it should be noted that such commentary adds further dimension to this discussion concerning the aesthetic re-imagining of society.

7.4 Recommendations for Theory, Research, Policy and Practice

In this section the recommendations arising from the findings of the study are presented. Recommendations are offered for the advancement of theory; the undertaking of a progressive research program furthering this research area; the development of policy particularly pertaining to those areas associated with culture, society, visual arts and visual arts learning associated with this area of study; and recommendations for improved practice arising from the findings of this study, especially relevant to findings related to a visual arts transformative learning practice and the re-imagining of contemporary society.

7.4.1 Recommendations for the Advancement of Theory

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following questions to advance theory development in areas of importance as identified in this research.

1. What is it that can be further stated and known about the form, nature and value of a visual arts transformative learning practice?
2. What is the form, nature and value of the relationship between a visual arts

transformative learning practice and contemporary society formation, and what further can be known about this relationship?

3. How can the meanings and interpretations that young people bring to themselves and their understanding of their world be more deeply enriched, embedded and extended by a visual arts transformative learning practice?
4. In what ways can a visual arts transformative learning practice extend existing forms and bring about new forms of perception, comprehension and interpretation regarding the range and possibilities of re-imagining contemporary culture and society?
5. In which ways, can new images of contemporary culture and society, in a re-imagined space, contribute to the development of an aesthetic of self, meaning and change?
6. How might young people be encouraged to engage in artistic expression, endeavour and learning through the transformation of their mindset and confidence regarding how they see the visual arts and visual arts learning and what constitutes work, value and achievement in the visual arts?
7. How can considerations of concepts such as equality, emancipation, and social recognition and division (such as ethnicity, class, country of origin) be best analysed and deployed in approaching, understanding and valuing visual arts learning?
8. How can a visual arts transformative practice contribute to social change through generating new modes of being, thinking and acting in the world?
9. How can a visual arts transformative learning practice generate and develop in the young person an aesthetic and artistic practice characterised by honesty in discerning and questioning, addressing realities, acknowledging and embracing taboos and creating understandings of new personal, social and cultural possibilities?

7.4.2 Recommendations for Undertaking a Progressive Research Program

It is recommended that the following research studies be undertaken to advance the lines of enquiry and findings of the study.

1. Sustained conceptual, analytical and empirical research studies of a visual arts transformative learning practice as a concept and as a framework for visual arts learning and educational and societal reform.
2. Deeper investigations and further clarification of the conceptual, empirical and practical issues relevant to the concept of a visual arts transformative learning practice and its role in bringing about or contributing to contemporary society formation.
3. More research studies, in a range of settings, of the nature of a visual arts transformative learning practice as new and distinctive learning practice and as an approach for re-imagining society and contributing to strategies for educational and societal reform.
4. Research into the conditions within learning environments in the community and in educating institutions that enable a visual arts transformative learning practice to be introduced and sustained, including identifying the opportunities and challenges operating in relationship to its introduction, including the implications for curriculum learning, teachers and teacher education.
5. Studies of individual students and how a visual arts transformative learning practice has the capacity to help young people learn about themselves, better understand and value people from other cultures, and more fully recognize the ways in which they can contribute to contemporary society formation.
6. Conduct of research into the ways in which considerations of a visual arts transformative learning practice might contribute to the development of improved policy and practice in curriculum, teaching and learning.
7. Research undertaken to identify the ways and the manner in which different forms of communication through the visual arts and visual arts learning differ

from other forms of communication within education.

8. An examination of the nexus between purpose, intention and communication in a visual arts transformative learning practice.
9. Further research examining the nature, role and purpose of entry points in the aesthetic of a visual arts transformative learning practice

7.4.3 Recommendations for Policy Reform and Development

It is recommended that policy makers and relevant stakeholders give consideration to the following specific areas relevant to culture and the arts, and visual arts learning and education, which have been highlighted in this thesis.

1. Policy makers and relevant stakeholders and interest groups give proper consideration to the development of a comprehensive arts policy for the future of the arts, including visual arts and visual arts learning, in contemporary Australian society.
2. Policy makers and relevant stakeholders and interest groups make a commitment to providing new, increased, and more widely accessible funding to the arts broadly, and the visual arts and visual arts learning in particular.
3. Policy makers and government consider an increase in funding to national, state, regional and community arts and cultural institutions, including the National and State galleries and other cultural institutions and bodies, and regional, local and community arts and cultural institutions and groups, reflecting the diversity of the Australian population and the pluralistic forms of artistic and cultural expression.
4. Governments and policy makers consider the ways in which the creative potential of all young people can be unleashed to generate new forms of cultural expression, artistic endeavour, and new understandings of art, visual art and culture in contemporary society.

5. Policy makers and government give consideration to the development of a creative industries strategy to support new and innovative approaches to the arts, including the visual arts, reflecting a commitment to seeing the arts, not as elite or exclusive, but as a living and dynamic expression of a diverse contemporary culture and society.
6. Consideration be given to the ways in which work in the visual arts is valued, supported and recognized in universities, art schools and society more broadly so that young people and their parents feel confident in encouraging young people to pursue further education, learning, careers and work in the visual and creative arts and so that tertiary educating institutions and arts schools face the future with confidence in government and community support.
7. Members of the arts community provide advocacy on behalf of the arts and lobby policy makers and decision makers in government institutions, universities, schools and other institutions of learning and society to recognize the public benefit, that engagement in the visual and creative arts can bring, including the value that the arts brings to the everyday lives of people.
8. Policy makers and government consider the various ways that those working in and engaging with the creative arts can be rewarded and affirmed, including increasing grants for visual artists in Australia.
9. Policy makers give consideration to the need for a clearly articulated policy for change in visual arts, curriculum, teaching and learning and increase investment in the pre-service and ongoing professional education of teachers in the creative and visual arts.

7.4.4 Recommendations for the Improvement of Practice

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following areas relevant to visual arts learning and contemporary society formation that will have the potential to improve practice, particularly in curriculum, teaching and learning.

1. The promotion and development of an understanding and commitment to the

practical implications of the relationship between a visual arts transformative learning practice and contemporary society formation among visual arts educator, members of the education profession and the wider visual arts community.

2. Consideration by visual arts educators and members of the visual arts community of the ways in which a visual arts transformative learning practice can be inserted into and interwoven into practical strategies to reform curriculum, teaching and learning in the visual arts.
3. A commitment to engaging in and maintaining a momentum of change, sharing good practice and celebrating success in a reconfiguring of the visual arts learning landscape and visual arts learning practices derived from the learning gained regarding a visual arts transformative learning practice and the re-imagining of contemporary society.
4. A preparedness to consider the practical significance, distinctiveness and value of a visual arts transformative learning practice to de-mystify approaches and practices in the visual arts and visual arts learning in schools, the community, other educating and cultural institutions and society.
5. Promotion of the adoption of a visual arts transformative learning practice as part of an experiential, experimental and innovative approach to visual arts learning and educational reform, including consideration of:
 - a visual arts transformative learning practice as something significant and different
 - providing new ways of exploring and contributing to society formation
 - realising the potential of visual arts learning
 - valuing creativity
 - addressing challenges in traditional approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning.
6. Providing opportunities for young people to re-imagine contemporary culture and society through a visual arts transformative learning practice focusing on such concerns such as:

- the provenance of a healthy culture
 - the pursuit of honesty and honest practice through questioning; exploring taboos; acknowledging the past; making amends
 - generating new possibilities and new ways of being and becoming
 - recognizing the place of indigenous culture
 - considering an amalgam of evolving identities in the formation of contemporary society.
7. A commitment to identifying, describing, mapping and enacting different modes of learning and engagement within a program of a visual arts transformative learning practice, including:
- the nature of the endeavour itself, incorporating making, feeling, and thinking
 - communicating in different ways
 - a concern for enmeshing imagination and skill
 - valuing creativity
 - balancing individual, collective and interwoven engagement
 - widening opportunities for seeing self, others and society
 - providing opportunities to explore cultural identity
 - expanding the outreach of visual arts learning into museums, galleries and new learning environments and learning spaces.
8. Acknowledgement that in a diverse and multicultural Australian society of today and the future there is a need to ensure that in the education of both young people and members of the education profession, a broad range of artistic and visual traditions from across the world are known and valued.
9. Promotion of the message of the value of visual arts learning to young people by giving consideration to the ways in which visual arts learning can become more highly valued amongst parents as well as teachers and students.

Conclusion to the Thesis

The story of this thesis found form on lines that had already been in existence prior to my embarking upon this journey. Lines of enquiry. Lines of thought. Solitary lines. Entangled lines. Structured lines. Connecting lines. Lines of imagery. Lines within imagery. Lines of text. Lines in-between text. Intentional lines. Accidental lines. Lines of clarity. Lines of confusion. Tangible lines. Intangible lines. Lines of possibility.

With the thesis at its conclusion, these lines have brought me to a deepened understanding of the central importance of honesty, truth, integrity and connection in life, and the value of acknowledging the past, challenging taboos and making amends in becoming the best that one can be. Inherent in this journey has been the notion of the transformative, and the capacity that human beings have to bring about transformation in self, others and society. At the confluence of these lines of the transformative is the aesthetic, as both a practice and a way of re-imagining the society to which we all belong.

We live at a time in history when the technological capacity for connection is greater than it has ever been but suspicion of the ‘other’ has become not only evident in many societies, but embedded in political ideologies. I trust that within this thesis lie new lines for thinking, being and practice that might open up new opportunities for people at all stages across the lifespan, but particularly for young people, through the visual arts....

*With native mode the vivid colours shine,
And heaven's own loom has wrought the weft divine.
Where art veils arts, and beauties beauties close,
While central grace diffused throughout the system flows. (Brooke)*

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Metaphor of Weaving and the Importance of the Loom, the Warp and the Weft

In this Appendix, detailed hand drawings of a floor loom and a shuttle and weft are presented with accompanying glossaries of terms. The loom, the warp and the weft are then described, including the physical structure of a floor loom, the nature and form of the warp and the weft, and the preparation of a loom for weaving.

The type of loom described is a floor loom (see Figure 0.1). The loom is the structure on which and with which a fabric is woven. The loom is both a frame and an interdependent collection of operational components that are used in the weaving of a fabric. The frame is an external construct of three connected main parts, namely the *back beam* (A), the *castle* (B) and the *breast beam* (C). The back beam is the horizontal crosspiece at the rear of the loom. The castle is the centre crosspiece of the loom. The castle is the highest part of the frame. The breast beam is the horizontal crosspiece at the front of the loom.

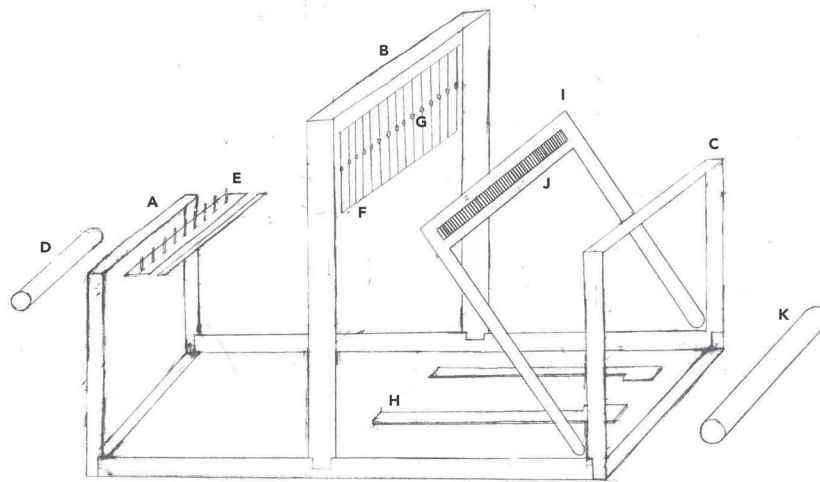


Figure 0.1: A loom

A	Back beam	G	Heddle
B	Castle	H	Treadle
C	Breast beam	I	Beater
D	Warp beam	J	Reed
E	Raddle	K	Cloth beam
F	Shaft		

Within the frame of the loom is a collection of operational components that when directly or indirectly manipulated by the weaver, help realise both the weaving process and the production of a fabric. These operational components are now individually described in order of appearance, starting at the rear of the loom.

The *warp beam* (D), located below the back beam, is a rotating cylindrical piece of equipment onto which the unwoven warp threads are wound. The length of the warp beam is the same as the width of the loom. The *raddle* (E) sits on the top of the back beam. This comb-like structure separates the warp threads into identically sized groupings of thread as they are wound from the warp beam. The *shafts* (F) are rectangular frames that hang from the castle. Within each shaft is a set of heddles. The *heddles* (G) are thin rods placed vertically, and at uniform intervals, within the shaft frames. In the centre of each heddle is an eye through which an individual warp thread is threaded as it emerges from the rattle.

The *treadles* (H) are foot pedals that are attached to the shafts. The treadles raise and lower the shafts, creating a *shed* (M) (see Figure 0.2), the space between the raised and lowered warp threads. The *beater* (I) is located between the castle and the breast beam. Spanning the width of the loom, the beater is attached by hinges to the loom’s frame in such a way that it can be pushed back and pulled forward. The *reed* (J) is a metal comb set within the frame of the beater. Once the warp threads have been threaded through the eye of the heddles, they are passed through the comb of the reed.

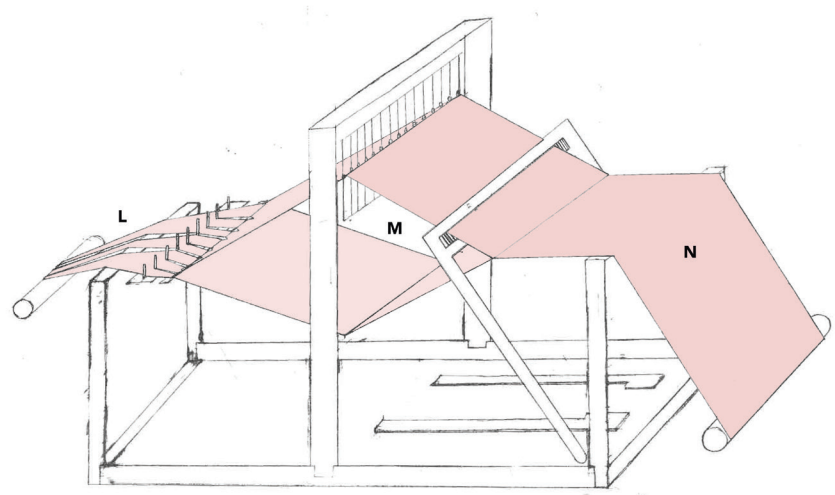


Figure 0.2: A warped loom

L	Warp	N	Fabric
M	Shed		

The shuttle (P) (see Figure 0.3) is a handheld instrument onto which the weft thread (Q) is wound and it is independent of the loom. Once the process of weaving has begun, the woven fabric is wound onto the cloth beam (K), a rotating cylindrical piece of equipment located under the breast beam.

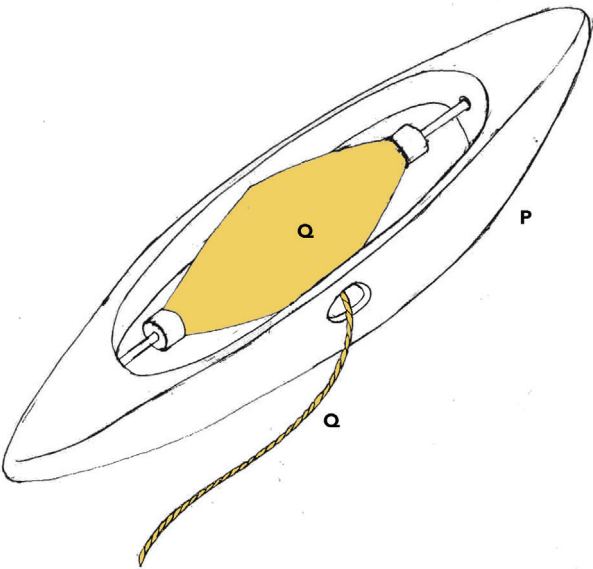


Figure 0.3: Shuttle and weft

Q	Shuttle	R	Wound-on weft
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Fibres and threads are the filaments within the woven fabric. An individual fibre, called a fibre single, is a thin length of fleece. To create a fibre single, the fleece is pulled and twisted into a length, which is then spun on a spindle in a clockwise ‘Z’ direction (Figure 0.4). A thread is a combination of fibre singles. Thread is formed when two or more fibre singles are plied together in an anti-clockwise ‘S’ direction (Figure 0.4). The tension between the Z twist and S twist balances the thread and prevents it from unwinding. Whilst both the warp and the weft are types of threads, they are often different in appearance, texture and composition.

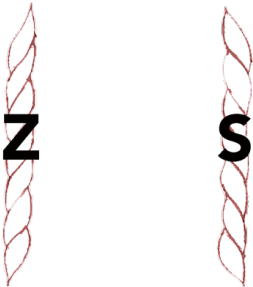


Figure 0.4: The Z and S twists

A *warp* (L) (see Figure 0.2) is a collection of warp threads. Winding a continuous single thread onto a warping board, producing loops of thread, creates the warp. A specific sequence of looping is used when winding the thread in order to produce two points at which the thread crosses over itself. These two crossovers are called the rattle cross and the threading cross, and they ensure the warp threads are kept in order and untangled during the warping of the loom and the weaving process.

The *weft* (R) is a thread that interweaves through the warp threads at right angles and together they form the fabric (N). Before a weave begins, the weft is wound onto the shuttle and both sit independently of the loom. The weft is thrown horizontally by the weaver left to right and right to left through the shed and across the warp. Once the weaving process is underway, the weft forms an inherent part of the fabric and its pattern.

Pattern is a distinctive feature of many woven fabrics. Patterning of the fabric is determined by the colour and nature of the materials used, as well as by the sequences in which the weft is interwoven with the warp. Fleece, fibres and thread can be sourced in an array of colours, materials and sizes, all of which impact on the pattern of a weave. The pattern of the fabric emerges as a consequence of the warp and weft being brought into relationship. A pattern can be regular or irregular.

Warping the loom is the process of setting up the loom in readiness for weaving to begin. The looped warp is removed from the warping board and anchored to the warp beam. The warp is unwound from the warp beam, passed over the back beam and through the raddle, which separates the threads into even groups. The weaver holds the warp in tension as it is fed through the loom structure towards the front beam. Thus far, the warp has been formed by multiple loops of a continuous single thread. In order to create the individual warp ends, which are needed for the remainder of the warping process, the front loop-end of warp is gathered and cut. This forms the warp ends, which are then threaded individually through the heddles in the shafts and pulled towards the beater. In a process called *swaying the reed*, the warp ends are passed through the dents in the reed. Once through the dents, the threads are pulled over the front beam and are tied and wound onto the cloth beam. The width of the warp determines the width of the fabric. The length of the warp determines the length of the fabric. The loom, warp and weft are now ready for the weaving process to begin.

When preparing to operate the readied loom, the weaver sits at the front of the loom,

facing down the warp towards the back beam. The weaver begins by compressing the treadles. The compressing of the treadles takes a particular sequence, which raises and lowers the shafts in a similar sequence, lifting and lowering the warp threads running through the heddles in these shafts. As these weft threads are raised and lowered, the shed forms between them. It is within this space that the relationship between warp and weft begins. The weaver takes up the shuttle, onto which the weft has been wound, in the left hand and points the shuttle into the shed (see Figure 0.5). The weaver is poised to weave. The warp and weft threads are poised to be interwoven. The loom is poised to realise the weave. *This is the moment of weaving.*

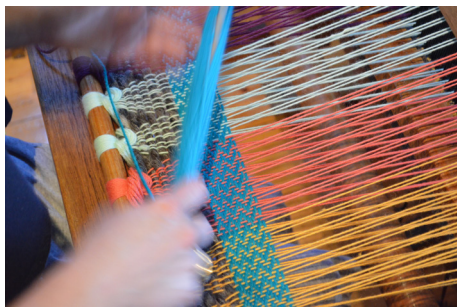


Figure 0.5: Throwing the shuttle through the shed



Figure 0.6: The emerging fabric

During the practice of weaving itself, the shuttle is thrown through the shed from left to right, releasing the weft behind it. The shuttle is then taken up in the right hand. At this point the weft thread is lying across the width of the interior of the shed, on top of the warp threads that were lowered and below the warp threads that were raised. The treadles are released and the shed closes. The treadles are compressed again in a new sequence, thereby raising the shafts and heddles in a similarly new sequence as well. In doing so, a new iteration of the shed is formed. The shuttle is then thrown back through the shed in a right to left direction, once again releasing the weft behind it. The treadles are again released and the shed closes. At this point the weft has been laid down twice, loosely interweaving with the warp. The weaver pulls the beater forward, which compresses the wefts, bringing them together into a tight relationship with each other, the warp and the fabric (see Figure 0.6).

Appendix B

Census Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Table B1

Total population of Australia

Year	Female	Male	Total
1901	1,795,873	1,977,928	3,773,801
1911	2,141,970	2,313,035	4,455,005
2001	9,606,409	9,365,941	18,972,350
2006	10,056,039	9,799,248	19,955,287
2011	10,873,706	10,634,013	21,507,719
2016			24,271,288

Table B2

Total population of Aboriginal Australia, 2011

	Female	Male	Total
Aboriginal	251,729	244,027	495,756
Torres Strait	15,600	15,806	31,406
Both	10,707	10,498	21,205
Total	278,037	270,331	548,368

Table B3

Place of Origin, 2011 (of total population)

Country	Population
England	911,591
New Zealand	483,396
China	318,969
India	295,363
Italy	185,402
Vietnam	185,038
Philippines	171,233
South Africa	145,683
Scotland	133,428
Malaysia	116,196

Table B4

Most commonly spoken language at home, 2011

Language	Population
English	16,509,291
Mandarin	336,411
Italian	299,833
Arabic	287,174
Cantonese	263,673
Greek	252,217
Vietnamese	233,390
Spanish	117,498
Hindi	111,351
Tagalog	81,457

Table B5

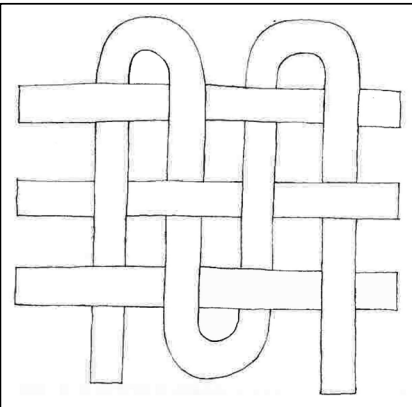
Most popular religion practised, 2006 & 2011

Religion	2006	2011
Buddhism	418,758	538,977
Christianity	12,685,828	13,150,670
Hindusim	148,125	275,535
Islam	340,392	476,290
Judaism	88,831	97,336
No Religion	3,706,552	4,796,786
Other Religions	109,026	168,196

Appendix C

An Analytic Protocol

M:		Data set [ID]:		Date:			
Coding		Theoretical meaning making		Illustration		Pg.	
Indicator [I]		Code name:					
Concept Property [CoP]	Concept [Co]						
Theme [Th]							
Category Property [CaP]	Sociological construct [behaviour]						
Category [Ca]	In vivo [explanation]						
Sub Core Category [SCCa]							
Core Category [CCa]							
Theoretical Coding Family							
• 6 C's							
• Process							
• Degree							
• Dimension [part of]							
• Type [whole]							
• Strategy							
• Interactive [cyclical]							
• Identity / self							
• Cutting point [moment of transformation]							
• Means-goal							
• Cultural							
• Consensus							
• Mainline							
• Theoretical							
• Ordering or elaboration							
➢ Structural							
➢ Temporal							
➢ Conceptual							
• Unit							
•							
•							
•							
•							
•							
•							



Appendix D

Stage One Information Letter



Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's)
115 Victoria Parade Fitzroy Vic 3065
Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy MDC Vic 3065 Australia
Email: adam.staples@acu.edu.au
Telephone: 61 3 9953 3271
Facsimile: 61 3 9953 3475

PARENT LETTER SEEKING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: IDENTITY, CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND LEARNING –
VISUAL EXPLORATIONS BY STUDENTS IN ART AND DIGITAL DESIGN

SUPERVISORS: PROFESSOR JUDITH CHAPMAN; ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SUE
MCNAMARA (Head of School of Education, Victoria)
STUDENT RESEARCHER: MR ADAM STAPLES, PhD CANDIDATE

Dear Parent / Guardian

We are writing to ask your permission for your daughter to take part in a PhD research project that aims to investigate identity, cross-cultural understanding and visual learning amongst secondary school students. The study has been inspired by the work of the Melbourne Interfaith and Intercultural Cluster of which your school has been a cluster member.

During the course of this research, students will be asked to produce visual and digital reflective work in response to discussions around the themes of identity, cross-cultural understanding and visual learning. The students will be interviewed individually and collectively about their work and their understanding of these themes. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. It is not anticipated that there would be any difficulties in the conduct of this research, but in line with the requirements of the Ethics Committee of ACU we wish to inform you that if a student becomes distressed during an interview, the interview will be terminated, and he/she will be returned to their teacher or another appropriate staff member, nominated by the principal, for any necessary counselling or support, and the principal will be informed.

The research will be conducted by Mr Adam Staples who is a lecturer and tutor at The Australian Catholic University, currently undertaking his PhD studies in the field of education and diversity.

Once you have given your consent for the researcher to work with students in the school, you are free to withdraw your consent or to discontinue participation in the project at any time, without giving reasons. The participation of students and their parents' consent is voluntary and they are free to discontinue participation in the project at any time, without giving reasons. Should participants withdraw this will not affect their academic progress in any way.

Written reports from the study will not enable anyone to identify individual children. The data collected throughout this study may be used in publications, used in teaching or shared with other researchers, but confidentiality of teachers' and students' identities will be maintained at all times. Art work and digital design created as a result of this study may be used anonymously in professional development sessions and shown at conferences to other teachers and researchers, including on the internet. The name of the schools may be kept confidential if the Principal wishes, or he/she may consent to the school being named in order for the school community to be thanked for participating in this research.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor of the Research, Professor Judith Chapman, School of Education, St Patrick's Campus, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy 3065 (Tel : 9953 3254).

Following the data analysis, we would be pleased to share a copy of the major findings with you. It is anticipated that the results of the study will be reported in Adam Staples' PhD thesis, research papers in education journals and papers at education conferences.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about this study, or if you have any query that the Principal Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to: The Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, C/O Research Services, The Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065 (Tel: 9953 3157; Fax: 9953 3315). Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

We have asked that the Principal give permission for arrangements to be made to forward the parent information letters and informed consent forms to the students and their families. If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to Mr Adam Staples c/o The School Principal.

We look forward very much to your response.

Yours sincerely

Professor Judith Chapman

Associate Professor Sue McNamara

Mr Adam Staples

Appendix E

Stage One Consent Letter

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT: Identity, cross-cultural understanding and learning: visual explorations by students in art and digital design

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Judith Chapman.....

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr Adam Staples

I (*the parent/guardian*) have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in this activity from the beginning of April 2009 to the end of December 2009, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree to (i) involvement in production of digital and reflective art work and its further use by the researcher; (ii) an initial interview of up to one hour; (iii) to a follow up interview of up to an hour; (iv) being involved in the research project for its duration, ie the whole year. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE DATE:

NAME OF CHILD

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER :

DATE:

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

I (*the participant aged under 18 years*) understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in this activity from the beginning of April 2009 to the end of December 2009, realising that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision. I agree to (i) involvement in production of digital and reflective art work and its further use by the researcher; (ii) an initial interview of up to one hour; (iii) to a follow up interview of up to an hour; (iv) being involved in the research project for its duration, ie the whole year.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18:

SIGNATURE: DATE:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

Appendix F

Stage One Interview Questions

Interview questions

- 1. What are the main ideas / feelings you were trying to express through this art work?**
- 2. Some of the themes discussed centred around identity, cross-cultural understanding and learning through the visual arts.**
 - How do you see yourself as a young person in Australia's diverse society?**
 - What do you see as your identity?**
- 3. How often do you engage with students from cultural backgrounds that differ from your own?**
- 4. One may challenge in Australia is to ensure that schools are providing for the educational needs of all young people. How successful have schools been in addressing this challenge?**
- 5. What do you think are the best ways students can learn about cross-cultural understanding and identity?**
- 6. What suggestions would you make about the ways in which we might design learning experiences using visual art.**

Appendix G

Stage Two Information Letter and Consent Form



INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Identity, cross-cultural understanding and learning: Perspectives on the place of the visual arts and visual arts education in contemporary society building in Australia

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Professor Judith Chapman AM

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr Adam Staples

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: PhD

Dear

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project which aims to investigate the place of visual arts and visual arts education in contemporary society building in Australia, with a particular focus on identity, cross-cultural understanding and learning. During the course of this research, participants will be interviewed individually by the researcher about their perspectives on the place visual arts and visual arts education have in contemporary society building in the Australian context. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. These interviews constitute phase two of data collection in this study.

This study is deemed low risk research and it is anticipated there will be no risk of any physical, psychological, social, economic or legal harm or discomfort being experienced by participants. Any foreseeable risk is no more than inconvenience being experienced by participants.

Participants will be interviewed by the researcher in a face to face environment with the interviews being recorded by digital audio recorder, and with the researcher taking written notes whilst the interview is being conducted. The interviews will be arranged by email communication and will be conducted at a time and in a location convenient to the participant. Interviews will be no longer than one hour and thirty minutes. The interviews will be based on a series of semi-structured questions which will be made available to the participants at least a week prior to any interview.

It is hoped the findings from this research will inform the development of cultural, arts and education policy in Australia. It is anticipated the results of the research will be reported in Adam Staples' PhD thesis, research papers in education journals and papers at education conferences

Once participants have given their consent to be involved in this research project, they are free to withdraw consent or to discontinue participation in the project at any time, without giving reasons.

Participants are able to select on the Consent Form whether their names and / or positions can be identified in the thesis or whether their confidentiality remains protected during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor of the research or the PhD researcher:

Faculty of Education
Level 8, 250 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne, VIC 3065
Locked Bag 4115 | Fitzroy MDC | Fitzroy Victoria 3065
T: 03 9953 3273

Australian Catholic University
ABN 15 050 192 660
CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

Professor Judith Chapman AM
Professor of Education
School of Education
Australian Catholic University
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy
VIC
3065

Email: judith.chapman@acu.edu.au
Tel: 9953 3254

Mr Adam Staples
School of Education
Australian Catholic University
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy
VIC
3065

adam.staples@acu.edu.au
9953 3272

Following the completion of the research, we would be pleased to share a copy of the major finding with you.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about this study, or if you have any query the Principal Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to The Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee:

Chair, HREC
C/- Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the PhD Researcher, Mr Adam Staples

.....
Principal Supervisor

.....
PhD Researcher

CONSENT FORM
Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT: Identity, cross-cultural understanding and learning: Perspectives on the place of the visual arts and visual arts education in contemporary society building in Australia

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Professor Judith Chapman AM

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr Adam Staples

I (*the participant*) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research interview, which I understand will be no longer than one hour and thirty minutes and will be recorded by digital recorder, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers.

I agree to my name and / or position being referred to in reports of the study ☐ (please tick)

I do not wish to be identified in any way ☐ (please tick)

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER:

DATE:.....

Appendix H

Stage Two Guiding Questions

The place of visual arts learning in contemporary society formation in Australia

Guiding questions

1. How can learning in the visual arts be a **strategy** for learning about and contributing to society formation?
2. In a society as diverse as Australia, how can visual arts learning address **multiple perspectives** associated with cultural diversity and culturally different ways of seeing?
3. Do the visual arts provide a distinctive **language** and **mode of expression** for young people, and how can this be garnered in the interests of promoting positive attitudes towards society and society formation?
4. What is the power of the visual arts as an expression for modern youth?
5. How can visual arts learning **promote understandings** about similarities and commonalities amongst different cultural groups?
6. What is your understanding of **visual arts capital**? What is the importance of visual arts capital as a foundation for transformative visual arts experiences and as an enabler for the formation of contemporary society formation?
7. It has been suggested that visual arts learning has innate **pro-social** characteristics (ie potentially positive interactions). Do you agree that visual arts' learning has innately pro-social characteristics and if so, in what ways is it pro-social?
8. How can visual arts learning promote **leadership** amongst students and confidence in their contributing to society and society formation?
9. What do you understand about the notion of **creativity**? Is it different to artistic enterprise? How is the notion of creativity linked into our understanding of the nexus between visual arts learning and contemporary society formation in Australia?
10. How do you see **experiential** visual arts learning as offering unique learning to students? In particular, how do you see visual arts learning outside the classroom as being important or different in terms of exploring issues of society and society formation

Keywords

Strategy, visual arts capital, experiential, pro-social, multiple perspectives, negative perceptions, parental reservations, leadership, intercultural understanding, language, mode of expression, creativity

