Chapter 1. **OVERVIEW**

What is the subjective experience of a participant in the process of making their artwork? What is their attitude to the product of the their artwork in the context of psychodynamic group art therapy?

Art therapy generally involves a triangular interrelationship between the therapist, the participant and their artwork, whereas this research examines the interrelationship between the participant and their artwork (Case, 1990; Schaverien, 1990). It is assumed that the participant’s relationship to the group or to the therapist is subject to the latent material in the artwork. The psychodynamics that have been operant in the therapy may be seen in the art-making or in the artwork (Schaverien, 1992).

The main assumption of the research is that through the art-making process and the artwork, itself as a product and object that latent material of the participant is brought to therapy for examination and therapeutic discussion. The art-making and artwork, the process and the product in therapy may be trusted to advance personal integration. However, any attempt by the participant to use the artwork as a defence may indicate a resistance to the therapy (Milner, 1971; Sarra, 1998; Springham, 1998; Wadeson, 1980).

The art-making may involve metaphoric processes that sublimate latent material in the art-making (Case and Dalley, 1992; Kramer, 1987). The metaphorical processes or metaphoricality may exhibit the psychodynamics that are activated and are linked to the metaphors and meanings that the participants experience in group art therapy. The psychodynamics may include sublimation, projection, transference, resistance, causation as a result of memories and the formation of potential space (Deco, 1998; Edwards, 1987; Kramer, 1987; Lanham, 1998; Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992; Sarra, 1998; Springham, 1998).

The metaphoric processes also make evident the psychophysical connection that bypasses conscious thought, and express what would not otherwise be consciously articulated. This psychophysical connection may bring memories and affects into the therapeutic setting.
To research and explore the phenomenon of group art therapy, the qualitative methodology of phenomenography was chosen (Marton & Booth, 1996). Phenomenography allowed the interviews to include questions concerning the artworks and how they were made, and these activities incorporated latent material into the research. The latent material was viewed as metaphoric since it described in visual terms the psychodynamic content of the artwork. Phenomenography ascertained a variety of meanings and anticipated a shift in the participant’s psyche through their involvement in group art therapy experience.

The participants were interviewed about their artwork without direct reference to their personal history or prior experiences. The participant’s artwork, the metaphoric processes of the art-making, the psychodynamics and the participant’s meaning were analysed and aligned to validate the process of group art therapy.

Although the questions in the interviews were not informed by art therapy literature, they were simple and designed to assist the participants to share their group art therapy experience, their intention and the meaning that they found (Marton & Booth, 1996). The interviews were conducted without imposing either a template of art therapy theory or a traditional optic of the profession onto the study. There were nine participants who were interviewed: three of the participants were women in a psychodynamic art therapy group committed to the resolution of personal conflicts, while six of the participants were women in a psychodynamic art therapy group committed to their professional development as art therapists. The transcripts of the interviews and the artwork that the participants brought to the interview constituted the data for this research. The interviews were conducted before undertaking the literature review and, although this may appear contrived, the thesis has been written as though the literature review preceded the research in order to minimise a repetition and fragmentation of art therapy theory.

Chapters 1 through 6 of this thesis are based on psychodynamic art therapy theory. The literature review is flagged by different aspects of art therapy to signal important psychoanalytic theory that is relevant to art therapy, group analysis and this research. The rationale for the methodology is in chapters 7 to 9, and has been adapted from the qualitative model of phenomenography. Chapters 10 and 11 contain the results, discussion and conclusions. The appendix contains the verbatim transcripts of the interviews.
Key issues that are raised in this research, include:

1. The relationship between the metaphoric processes in the art-making, the psychodynamics of the therapy and the metaphoric content of the artwork, as described by the participants, are analysed.

2. The variety of different responses by the participants of group art therapy are also collated in order to view the range of meanings gained from their experiences. This range of experiences may enrich the understanding of what a participant may experience in group art therapy (Marton & Booth, 1996).

3. A comparison of the participants is differentiated between those participants in therapy for personal reasons and those participants who were training for the art therapy profession.
Chapter 2. **AN ART THERAPY PERSPECTIVE**

This literature review will survey the development of understanding of the role of the artwork in the triangular relationship of the participant, the therapist and the artwork in art therapy (Case, 1990; Schaverien, 1990). It will follow the historical development of psychodynamic art therapy, with an emphasis being placed upon the primary position of the artwork informing the underlying therapeutic dynamics. It is assumed as a preliminary position, that the artwork reflects the therapeutic experience, embodying the content of the latent conflict for the participant and the therapist in a visual metaphoric form.

The work of Jung pioneered the incorporation of image-making into psychotherapeutic practice and employed painting and art making in self-analysis. His fascination with symmetrical patterns like mandalas and the symbolic representations of opposing elements informed his understanding of the human psyche. Jung respected and acknowledged the spontaneous images of his patients in a non-reductive manner. He distinguished between artwork spontaneously produced for therapeutic purposes and artwork made for aesthetic purposes. He observed that when therapeutic artwork was viewed as an aesthetic piece it may lead to a psychological inflation and ideas of aggrandizement that are detrimental to individual development. Jung had a significant influence on the early art therapists in Britain including Irene Champernowne, who underwent analysis with Jung. From Jung, Champernowne obtained a great respect for the healing potential of art and was a pioneer of art therapy in Britain (Schaverien, 1992).

An early author to explore the psychodynamics of art-making and the artwork was Marion Milner (1971). She discovered that her art-making affected the way she understood and viewed herself. Her insights, and the studies of art therapists, have produced a body of literature illustrating the various roles that the artwork plays in art therapy. This review will examine a variety of contributions that different art therapists have made to the literature: concerning the properties of the artwork created in psychodynamic art therapy; the effects of the artwork over long periods of time; and, how a series of artworks may reveal a transformation process in the individual. It is assumed that artwork contains unconscious material and metaphoricality is the manner in which it portrays the direction and dynamics of an

This review will also include a discussion of the triangular relationship between the participant/art-maker, the therapist/viewer and the artwork (Case, 1990; Schaverien, 1990). Finally, the therapeutic relationship will be depicted as being contained in this triangular relationship and mirrored in the artwork (Schaverien, 1992).

2.1. Artwork Leads the Way

Milner (1971) embarked upon a journey of discovery through learning how to paint by permitting images to rise from her unconscious and become manifest on paper. As Milner becomes comfortable with this process, she intuitively follows the direction and leading of the artwork. As a psychoanalyst she enters into the world of art-making with an expectation of learning from the unconscious images that she creates – in a similar way that dreams present latent material to the conscious mind. The images that she paints seem to spontaneously form as she engages with the art materials, and these images come to her attention with an element of surprise. She approaches the art-making with the deliberate intention of exploring the images that are made but with an attitude of openness and receptivity to what might happen in the art-making process.

Aware that the artwork is leading her into a creative process, Milner follows the direction submissively, receiving understanding and integrating this new knowledge along the way. As the journey continues she becomes aware that each painting is individually significant as well as acquiring a position within a sequence of images. Retrospectively, Milner notices patterns and repeated forms that confirm her intuitive ideas about this process.

The paintings also record her progress along this journey of personal exploration. She notices reversals occurring in her artwork, where what she intended to create did not come about but rather the opposite mood or idea was expressed. These findings show her that the unconscious plays a compensating role for her consciousness. This understanding of the compensatory role of the unconscious helps her to decipher the very visual and metaphorical language of the unconscious. The artwork, Milner notices, also engenders a form of free association as she is able to recognise, connect

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with and begin to verbalise messages from her unconscious. The artwork makes manifest the dynamic role of the unconscious in relation to consciousness. The artwork mirrors back to Milner’s consciousness the dynamic role of the unconscious and brings to her awareness this vital connection (Milner, 1971).

2.1.1. Body and Artwork Interrelate

The act of painting requires the physical cooperation of the body as it forms brush strokes and as the artist manipulates the art materials. The body, with its physical limitations, Milner (1971) notices, serves as a grounding factor that keeps her imaginative exploration real. The physical action of painting maintains the awareness of the present moment, while there is an involvement with psychological elements and the unconscious. She notes that there is a relationship between ideas and action, and that the movement of the body may be in response to an inner image with a consequent outer image in the artwork. The body can be responsive to the stimulation of the unconscious so that the artwork may precede from the corporal movement. Milner realises that a painting can embrace a range of bodily experiences and unadmitted feelings. The body is the vehicle for the art-making and may at times bypass the censorship of more sophisticated thought processes and defences.

Concealed feelings such as hate and disillusionment are expressed through Milner’s paintings and she finds that these pictures grant her the opportunity to acknowledge these emotions. She discovers that she thinks in images and that this is a quick and comprehensive mode of understanding and accommodating the unconscious. The unconscious communicates through metaphors and images to the conscious mind. Being aware of images that arise from the unconscious also brings the past into the present, so that the past is made conscious.

At one stage Milner paints a person’s face but is unable to confront it and so tears up the picture. In response to this unexpected behaviour, Milner concludes that outwardly her behaviour is correct but her lifelessness makes her realise an unacceptable part of her inner being. Acknowledging her inability to cope with this image allows Milner to perceive a discrepancy between her inner life and her behaviour. This inconsistency indicates to Milner a dormant area that needs to be addressed in her life. The ability to receive guidance from her art-making is a vital link for Milner and a process of personal integration which has the function of “restoring and re-creating externally what one had loved and internally hurt or destroyed”. (Milner, 1971, p. 67)
Through observing her artwork Milner notes that, in order to get away from the necessity to admit unpleasant things in oneself, one can externalise them and blame others. This process of projection is possible through the art-making because the art media makes it possible to physically externalise psychological tensions. As she reflects on her artwork and its personal relevance, she becomes aware that the artwork contains inner psychic issues that she had externalised. This material in the artwork has been objectified from its internal context and placed externally for conscious recognition. Milner can see that the art-making and externalisation of psychological material is as a necessary part of the integration process, where the material externalised is later brought back and integrated into her consciousness.

Milner now understands that the art-making process was the arena for the complex interplay and interchange between her unconscious and conscious. This interaction, made manifest through the art-making and its production, was essential in bringing the projected elements of the psyche to a place of restoration, cohesion and unity. Milner had permitted herself to be led along an interactive journey of art-making and personal discovery that was dynamic and productive. The ameliorating effect of this development gave Milner confidence in the art-making process, with a resulting increased personal understanding (Milner, 1971).

2.1.2. Image Before Words

The process of art therapy, Naumburg (1958) writes, is based on the awareness that fundamental thoughts and feelings emerge from the unconscious in the form of images rather than words. The individual involved in art therapy has a latent capacity to project their unconscious tensions into a visual form. The image that is expressed is a tangible metaphoric form of unconscious material. The metaphors are ‘like’ but are not the exact object, for they stand in the place of the actual psyche and are a tool for inquiry for the therapist. The individual may express visually what he or she dared not say in words, and communicate issues that would otherwise be repressed. The art-making is free of many resistances and verbal inhibitions. Following this visual expression, the individual becomes more verbally articulate as they explain their art production with an increased awareness of the experience and free association. The individual is able to observe and grasp changes resulting from art therapy because the artwork is fixed in a lasting form and a reminder of the art therapy experience.
Naumburg (1958) considers that the unconscious expresses itself through rhythm, colour and form and that these are significant components of the artwork. These sensate aspects of the artwork may represent an inner image from the individual, but the method of production is as equally important a vehicle for transmitting information from the unconscious. Because the patient is encouraged to discover their own meanings of their artwork within therapy, Naumburg notes, they gain a sense of autonomy since they have contributed to the interpretation of their creations. Naumburg recognises that the patient’s involvement in the art-making and their reflection leading to conscious awareness, enables them to participate in their own recovery. Art therapy empowers the individual, as they actively become involved in their healing process.

The individual develops a narcissistic attachment to their artwork during art therapy as he or she admires and falls in love with his or her own creation. As a result there is a strengthening of the individual’s ego and this is an important element of recovery. Naumburg (1958) observes that as this narcissistic attachment develops between the individual and their artwork so the dependency upon the therapist is reduced. Art therapy is considered by Naumburg to be a potent therapy, because it tends to quickly access deep unconscious material and so speeds up the therapeutic process. Engagement with the media and the artwork facilitate free association that rapidly accesses latent material in therapy. Waller (1993) observed the dynamic of free association in art therapy groups and noted that is quickened the group dynamics.

The artworks also retain importance for the individual over time and may be revisited at a later date, as was the case in the research of Nowell Hall (1987).

2.1.3. Retention over Time

In the research conducted by Nowell Hall (1987) data in the form of the artwork and the patient’s comments were gathered at the time of therapy and again in interviews held seven to ten years after therapy. The individuals were observed looking at their pictures during the interviews and talking about their experiences. The images evoked detailed memories of the art therapy experience of previous years and retained the same meaning for the individuals. Nowell Hall notes that conversations from past sessions were forgotten or denied, whereas the images were still real and alive for the therapist and patient alike after many years. The activity of art-making gave the patients a feeling of involvement in their therapeutic process and a sense of accomplishment. Nowell Hall assisted the patients to come to their own
understanding of their images and the patients realised that the art involved far more than they had consciously intended.

The artwork had the potential for holding and communicating polarities and ambiguities for the patients. The image made in art therapy, Nowell Hall (1987) found, became a mediator between the unconscious and consciousness that led its creator in the direction of self-reliance and resolution of transference, and towards the development of individuality. A notable contribution of Nowell Hall to the development of art therapy is the understanding that the artwork has the capacity to retain its significance for the individual over time.

2.1.4. The Artwork is Reliable

As an analytic art therapist, Wallace (1987) considered it essential to trust the images that are formed in therapy because they come from the depths of the person’s psyche. Wallace describes an analytic approach to art therapy where unconscious material is brought to awareness through the artwork and there is a recovery of the individual’s hidden potential. Within the person’s unconscious psyche resides reliable information that is accessible through metaphoric forms. It is for this reason that Wallace suggests that the images that arise in art therapy can be relied on, since they reveal aspects of the unconscious.

Wallace (1987) addresses the ‘Self’ as the ‘creative source’ and considers it to be the source of healing and creativity in the psyche by bringing unconscious issues to consciousness through the artwork and managing the person’s psychological equilibrium. Interaction between the unconscious and the conscious is communicated through art-making and the finished artwork. Wallace considers that if unconscious material is not acknowledged it will have a life of its own and possibly be destructive.

Wallace (1987) describes the case study of a participant over four art therapy sessions that portrays an imaginary journey in her artwork. Wallace encourages the participant, through active imagination, to reveal an aspect of this experience in her artwork. The active imagination is similar to a lucid dream, where the participant is aware of herself in her imaginary world. Through the active imagination the participant describes movement and interaction in the paradigms of this unconscious reality. The image that she creates, though a static representation of what she had experienced, embodies latent material from the active imagination and the
therapeutic relationship. The active imagination process highlights directions and movements that occurred in this unconscious flow of imagery in a similar way to that in dreaming. The artwork held the image still for the person and the therapist was able to grasp and comprehend the process, thus promoting integration.

2.1.5. The Direction of the Healing Process

When examining the images made by her participant, Wallace (1987) observed that the images form a series, where one image leads into another and all are in some way connected. Wallace comments on the sequence of the visual images as evidence of a direction in the healing process.

Wallace (1987) understands healing to occur when the unconscious and the conscious connect with each other through the images. Conflicting emotions in the person begin to cooperate and meld so that it is easier to function. She considers art therapy to accelerate the healing process in a person’s psyche, facilitating creative potential. The integration and development of the individual’s psyche is made possible through art therapy.

2.1.6. The Artwork Communicates Metaphorically

The art that is formed during art therapy is a site where the participant can make himself or herself known to the therapist (Case, 1990). It is the mediator through which the therapist can see the heart of the participant and the participant can see himself or herself anew. The picture has the ability to speak silently of the inner world to the individual and the listening therapist. The artwork is not mute, nor is it deaf to the conversation of the participant and therapist, but appears to be an active participant in the therapy. Communication of feelings such as hostility may be expressed through the picture as it arbitrates tumultuous feelings displaying them to the therapist.

The image embodies thoughts and feelings and is able to hold past, present and future elements of the participant’s life and link them to consciousness. The artwork may impart constellations and dynamics of the psyche in a metaphoric way to the attention of the therapist and the participant. The art in this way has an entity of its own and so can be viewed as having an influence on the relationship between the therapist and participant.
2.1.7. The Triangular Relationship

A triangular relationship is formed between the participant, the therapist and the artwork, and in this therapeutic relationship transformation can occur (Schaverien, 1990). The artwork seduces the therapist into the participant’s unconscious process and it is suggested that this is highly beneficial for the participant since their personal secret is acknowledged. The picture embodies the desires of the participant and as the therapist observes the image the participant’s hidden desires are kindled and become animated in the therapeutic environment. The picture in turn arouses a response, or counter-transference, from the therapist. Both the therapist and the participant are involved in a dynamic encounter with the picture. At times the therapist experiences being drawn into the picture, at times the participant is aware of this phenomenon, and on occasion they meet at some unconscious level within the image. It is at such a meeting place that both people are changed within the environs of the artwork. That is to say, both transference and counter-transference may be evident and animated in the image. The artwork then becomes the means for transformation within the individual, involving the relationship with the therapist.

2.1.8. The Place of Transformation

As an analytic art therapist, Schaverien (1992, p. 7) explores the process of transformation of the individual through the person’s artwork and in relation to the therapist. This process of transformation is initiated by the creation of a picture by an individual in a therapeutic relationship. The art-making and the finished picture reveal aspects of the inner world of the individual and their relationship with the therapist. Through reflection on the picture the individual is able to explore themselves to new and deeper levels. The artwork enables the person to search for transformation, and rewards them with a sense of freedom and discovery. The picture in this way guides the direction of the therapy, and is indicative of the therapeutic process and the therapeutic relationship.

The sequence of pictures records the progression of the individual through art therapy and gives the therapist and artist feedback of the experience. The pictures are metaphors that unfold additional memories and emotions for the individual. It is argued that the artwork grants the therapist access to the deepest personal aspects of the artist’s psyche. The relationship between the artist and the therapist is enhanced by the artwork in therapy, for it is a mediator between the unconscious and consciousness of the individual and also between the artist/participant and the

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therapist/viewer. The artwork is a reference point for the therapeutic relationship and a means of communication and a conversation starter in therapy.

At times the therapist and the artist may meet or connect at some level within the artwork. The result is a combination of the participant–picture–therapist in a charged triangular encounter. The art functions as a vessel in which transformation of the individual occurs, including the transference and counter-transference of the therapeutic relationship. It is as though both the therapist and the individual are immersed in the artwork. The transference occurs as the picture pulls the artist and therapist into its presence and stimulates their relationship to each other in metaphoric environment. It is at this site of transference that an interactive dynamic potential space forms promoting transformation (Schaverien, 1989). Schaverien (1992) considers that this ability for the picture to carry the transference is to say that the image is ‘embodied’ and holds unconscious processes that are occurring in art therapy. An embodied picture is one that contains emotions and elements of the transference and appears in some ways to be alive. Such an image has the ability to mobilise healing within the individual, since it becomes the focus of the therapy within the context of the therapeutic relationship.

The art has a dynamic and formative role in the therapy because it actively progresses the process of transformation within the individual. The process of transformation is described by Schaverien (1992) in terms similar to that of alchemy with the artwork. Like a crucible over a fire full of a substance that begins to melt down and mix, causing reactions and bonding of unconscious materials in the presence of the therapist. This ‘alchemical’ metaphor of transformation regards the material of the unconscious to be malleable, meldable and transferable.

The ability to transfer states or attributes of the psyche to other places and externalise them is an ancient concept and evident in a number of peoples and groups (Frazer, 1978). To remove an unconscious state or pressure and to project it onto an externalised object in this case an artwork permits the participant to manifest latent material in an externalised object. The art-making in this way contributes to a splitting off of unknown material into the artwork.

Klein (cited in Mitchell, 1986) first described the concept of splitting as a defence mechanism that dissociates repressed or unwanted or unknown latent material to avoid its conscious recognition. This defence mechanism was applied by the
individual’s psyche as a way of coping with, and avoiding, the awkward nature of a situation. The material used as a resistance, in this case the artwork, gives an indication to the therapist of the unconscious material that the conscious mind would prefer to ignore (Mitchell, 1986). Within the therapeutic setting this splitting off of unconscious material is the first stage of objectifying the latent material so that the material may be reflected on, recognised and integrated into the psyche.

The function of splitting in analytic art therapy is viewed as a form of scapegoating unwanted material from the unconscious (Schaverien, 1992). The artwork holds this unwanted material and acts as a scapegoat for the individual. According to Schaverien (1992) artwork, with the artist and therapist, then proceeds through four stages prior to the disposal of the image. These stages include the participant identifying with the picture, becoming familiar with the image, acknowledging the content of the image, and assimilating the new material found in the image. The conclusion of the therapy is the appropriate disposal of the image that carries away the unwanted aspects of the material in the artwork.

The art which brought separation and a splitting is now owned and assimilated, resulting in a unity within the individual. The art and the therapeutic relationship have contained this powerful reflexive process which has involved unconscious material being integrated into the individual’s consciousness, advancing transformation.

2.1.9. **Mirroring Aspects of the Psyche**

Schaverien (1992, p. 119) argues that the artwork functions as a mirror in the triangular relationship. Both the therapist and the participant gaze into the image and see themselves and each other. The therapist views the unconscious material that is evident in the artwork and responds to the image with free associations, rising emotions, intuitive thoughts and bodily sensations. Realisation of the transference and counter-transference may also become evident for the therapist. The participant may begin to become conscious of the unconscious material invested in the artwork and of the therapist’s presence in relation to the artwork. The gaze of the therapist onto the image is then reflected to the participant and mirrors back the participant’s unconscious material in the context of a caring therapeutic relationship.

The artwork may permit the participant to catch the gaze of the therapist into very personal intimate areas of their life that are not normally in view. The participant’s
psyche may then be mirrored and affirmed by the therapist through the artwork. To observe the artwork both the therapist and the participant may be positioned in a similar way that a mother would bend over to be close to her infant. The artwork may be handled, touched and engaged with in a similar manner. A direct gaze of the therapist towards the participant may be too confronting, but through the artwork the gaze is received (Schaverien, 1992). This mirroring process, where the artwork as a mirror catches the therapist’s gaze, may imprint trust and a sense of being treasured at a primary relationship level.

The participant in this way may be able to receive validation from the therapist through the artwork. Kramer (2001), an artist and art therapist with many years of experience, has noted that there has been a paradigm shift in therapy. She argues that from the Victorian and modern age there was repression due to discipline and that this resulted in expression of denied and unknown material in therapy. However, her experience of working with disturbed children of New York has led her to conclude that in the post-modern era these children do not feel repressed but rather have a sense of emptiness expressed in static stereotypes. The direction of therapy Kramer (2001, p. 14) suggests is to strengthen relationships, foster identification and assist in the internalisation of values. The artwork in this way may assist in the establishment of the participant’s sense of connection with themselves in therapy.

2.1.10. Summary

Art therapy includes the art therapist, the participant or group and the artwork. The artwork reflects the psychodynamics in a visual, tangible form for the participant and the therapist. The artwork may stimulate the direction of the therapy leading through images rather than words (Milner, 1971; Naumburg, 1958; Wallace, 1984). These images retain significance long after the therapy has been completed (Nowell Hall, 1984). During the art therapy there is a sense that the art is an active participant in the therapy and influences the art-maker and the therapist (Case, 1990). This relationship of participant, therapist and art is a triangular relationship and the artwork holds evidence of the transference in therapy (Schaverien, 1990). Within this therapeutic relationship the transformation of the participant may be engendered, observed and contained in the artwork (Schaverien, 1992). This transformation is evident in the vessel of the artwork, where the individual and the therapist meet and the participant mirrored. The artwork assists the participant to begin to connect with themselves and establish a sense of self in therapy (Kramer, 2001).
The artworks made in art therapy are an essential part of this research data. Not only are they evidence of the process of the art-making; their metaphoric language is a tool for inquiry. The artworks also provide visual verification of the transformation of the individual in therapy and the triangular relationship of the participant, therapist and artwork, revealing the therapeutic transference. They also retain their significance for the participant long after the therapy has been completed and so are important data for this research.

The artwork made in therapy may clearly indicate the latent material that is brought to the therapy, the direction of participant's transformation and the transference dynamic. Trusting the artwork is beneficial for therapy, but at times the artwork may be used as a tool of resistance against therapy. The artwork used in this way by the participant may give a clear indication of a conflict. The following section of the thesis highlights such literature where the therapist experienced the artwork as resisting the therapy and how this becomes the pivoting point of the therapy leading to a beneficial outcome.

2.2. The Artwork and Resistance

The artwork may display defence mechanisms and resistance to therapy where the participant avoids their true mental state. The artwork in this way may appear to reinforce the position of the participant, cause confusion in the therapy, or demand that the therapist collude with the individual in their defensive state. Some art therapists have noted these defence mechanisms and resistance to therapy both in the images and their formation (see, for example, Sarra, 1998; Springham, 1968; Wadeson, 1980). The image may distract the therapist or the group from the actual conflict. These resistances may be connected with transference towards the therapist or the group, where individuals seek to hide from the gaze of others, and avoid underlying conflicts and vulnerabilities. The following literature addresses resistance and defence mechanisms in art therapy.

2.2.1. Personal Identity and a Sense of Loss

When writing of her experience of painting Milner (1971) notes a freedom that results from her personal interaction with herself but that there is also included a sense of personal loss. She agrees that this loss is experienced as one relinquishes the concept
of the ideal and accepts the imperfect reality of oneself. Through her artwork, Milner became conscious of her human frailty rather than her ideal self, and this reality saddened her.

Her artwork also disclosed areas that she had not accepted in the past. Her awareness of these imperfections led to an acceptance of herself and a greater ability to interact with others. Conscious realisation and self-acceptance carries with it a sense of grief, when the ideal self is lost (Milner, 1971). Resistance to this change in personal identity, due to the content in the art-making and the artwork, may result in resistance to the art therapy and the therapist.

2.2.2. **Art-Making may Resist Disclosure**

The resistance may be in the artwork or in the way it was made. Images that hold such material may highlight areas that the individual is protecting or denying. Scribbles and chaotic images were studied by Milner (1971) and she understood them to work in a variety of ways. She suggested that there may be forbidden or primitive material in the artwork that is unacceptable to the conscious mind. The conscious mind may not listen to the material in the artwork until internal work is done. Awareness of resistance to unconscious material was seen as a beginning place for therapy.

The bodily interaction with the art media may be indicative of the resistance. The repetitive sensual activity of scribbling may break down old automatic patterns and help establish new movements (Milner, 1971). In the forward to Milner’s book, Anna Freud explains that the aim of therapy is to recover lost feelings and abilities and to create new attitudes and relationships. This development is based on the patient’s growing insight into their inner world.

2.2.3. **Artwork may present a False-Self Image**

The relinquishment of an idealised view of oneself and an acceptance of new insights is regarded as a substantial component of therapy. Springham (1998) has found that group work with participants with drug and alcohol misuse indicated that the artwork was an invaluable way to process the real issues. The art production transported the participants into a narcissistic space, but the individuals were resistant to showing their real conflict to the group and were antagonistic to the art therapist. Even though their images breached their false-self, they continued to resist...
the therapist. The artwork appeared to become a tool against the art therapist to express hostile emotions.

In Springham's (1998) study individuals found it difficult to speak about their own work, but would project onto an image in the group that appeared unthreatening. This image became the ‘group image’ that carried the group’s hostility towards the therapist and allowed the true dynamics of the group to emerge. The artwork used to avoid therapy created the opportunity for the group to express hostile transferences and become more conscious of their true selves. Where the images are used defensively, the therapist is in a hostile environment and a ‘group image’ or metaphor may be a way through to therapy.

2.2.4.  Artwork Resists Personal Change

While working with acute psychiatric patients Sarra (1998) noted that there was ambivalence towards the artwork and the therapist. This ambivalence was due to the participant’s preference to stay in denial and avoid integrating the material from the artwork. The artwork challenged their tentative integration and they resisted the group art therapy to avoid the disclosure of personal information. The images were despised by the patients for their potential to bring integration and change. If the patients began to integrate latent material it had the tendency to cause a loss of identity, even a dysfunctional identity (Sarra, 1998). Art therapy challenged the patients, some of whom responded by verbally attacking the group or the therapist. Sarra suggested that it is important for the therapist to survive attacks from the patients because this enhances the likelihood of integration and connection with unconscious material.

Individuals may resist therapy by not cooperating with the art-making, refusing to receive from the manifest unconscious content in the artwork, using the artwork to support their position and refuting the therapist. Sarra (1998) found that these resistances are evident in the art-making, their relationship to their artwork, their attempts to split the therapist from their images and negate their professional role.

2.2.5.  Artwork Deflects the Therapist’s Gaze

Schaverien (1992) argues that images can embody emotions and transferences in therapy. Through the art-making the artwork is invested with emotional and latent material to form an embodied transitional object (Schaverien, 1989). The participant
has the control of the transitional object and may destroy it and so metaphorically resist the influence of the therapist. Where the individual resists the process of embodying the image with emotion, it was found by Schaverien (1992) that the result may be a flat and lifeless diagrammatic image (Schaverien, 1992). The art-making stage of therapy may engage the artist either in an intensive process that embodies emotion and psychological material in the image or it may involve the artist in a process that contains relatively dispassionate material. The embodied image is imbued with emotions and transference content that differs markedly from a diagrammatic image that contains the descriptive content of a mental image. Diagrammatic image formation requires less attention by the artist and is accompanied by explicit verbal discussion with the therapist about personal intention. The diagrammatic image may evoke discussion that is not attached to the image whereas embodied images engage the art maker and therapist in the material. However, a discussion about a diagrammatic image may disclose resistances to the art-making process and indicate transference with the therapist (Schaverien, 1992).

This resistance to therapy may engage the therapist in dialogue that colludes with the individual’s defence mechanisms (Carr, 1999). The literature in this area suggests that the recognition of the collusive nature of the image can be a valuable indicator of the dynamics that are activated; however, if the therapist does not perceive the superficiality of the artwork the therapy will be deflected.

2.2.6. Overwhelming Material

Another defence strategy is the overwhelming amount of material that arises in the artwork. Skaife and Huet (1998) have found that the individual may be feeling overwhelmed by the latent material in the artwork, or this may be an attempt to overwhelm the therapist or the group.

The combination of artworks and verbal responses may be overwhelming for the therapist and participants (Skaife & Huet, 1998). Additionally, Wadeson (1980) has noted that excessive amounts of material in art therapy may disrupt the focus of the therapy, causing confusion and feelings of inadequacy (Wadeson, 1980). The real issue in therapy may be swamped and avoided by numerous extraneous images, whereas focusing on one or two images may reduce anxiety and hone in on the important material in a similar way that a ‘group image’ functioned in Springham’s work (Springham, 1998).
2.2.7. **Artwork and Fear**

The images may be overwhelming in that it evokes fear and anxiety. Lanham (1998) entered into an imaginary dialogue with a series of images of corbel creatures. In one of these dialogues the corbel announced its name, ‘Beelzebub’, and this caused a fear in Lanham. Did he create this devil, give it life and a voice through his art-making? Is this creature an unknown part of his psyche that he needs to integrate? Has he tapped into the collective unconscious and accessed an archetype? Or is this just a powerful illusion? Whatever the explanation, Lanham experienced fear that was uncovered through his art-making. This encountering of fear and anxiety may not have been contained as he painted the images on his own and then took them to his therapist for discussion and assistance. Edwards (1987) argues that coming in contact with a fear of the unknown is a reality of therapy that needs to be met in the containment of the therapeutic relationship but outside of it it may produce fear.

2.2.8. **Summary of Resistance in Art Therapy**

The artwork may form a resistance to therapy and act as a defence mechanism in the hands of the participant against the therapist. The latent content in the artwork may threaten the participant’s identity and sense of integration resulting in guardedness (Springham, 1998). The artwork may produce a fear of the unknown and have a damaging effect on therapy if the person feels uncontained (Lanham, 1998).

Loss of innocence and the ideal self may result in the participant taking accountability for their grief and realising their true self (Milner, 1971). If this personal change is resisted then the artwork is employed by the participant to challenge or deflect the therapist. The artwork may then reinforce their tentative ego-state, contribute to their false-self image, deflect the therapist’s attention and attempt to seduce the therapist into colluding with the participant (Carr, 1999; Sarra, 1998; Schaverien, 1992; Springham, 1998). The participant may use their artwork to direct hostility towards the therapist, making them feel silenced and redundant. Although the therapist feels disempowered and possibly angry, the artwork may again be trusted as an indicator of the conflict for the participant in therapy.
Chapter 3. **GROUP ART THERAPY**

Art therapy and group analysis are two disciplines which function together effectively within the psychodynamic framework. The benefits of joining art therapy and group analysis are mainly concerned with the group response to the artwork and the process of making the artwork. Art therapists use image-making to assist in the disclosure of latent material in the group. Wadeson (1987) writes, “I find art expression especially valuable in both reflecting and advancing the group process. The art activity makes everyone a group participant ... promoting experiences of universality through the commonality that can be readily viewed in the context of the art productions, and the exploration of the here and now through art expression, makes the marriage of group therapy and art therapy a dynamic union” (p. 302). This union will now be discussed.

The group adds an extra dimension to therapy that is not present in one-on-one art therapy sessions. The group dynamics may aid or inhibit the therapy concurrently the artwork reflects this process. The artwork in this way stimulates the group dynamics.

The purpose of this overview of psychodynamic art therapy groups is to investigate the effect the artwork and the art-making has on the individual and the group. Does the artwork assist the therapist to reflect the dynamics and enhance the containment of the group? Can the artwork function metaphorically; carry opposing forces in the group and reveal the group process? Does the artwork raise the awareness of the individual in the group to enhance integration? Or does the artwork hinder these processes and permit defence mechanisms to confuse the therapy?

To begin this inquiry it is necessary to review psychoanalytic group theory, from which group art therapy has developed.

### 3.1. **THE NATURE OF GROUP DYNAMICS**

Freud (1939/1952) wrote a paper on group psychology that outlines a number of insights concerning the dynamics within a group. He postulated that the cohesive power in a group is “eros” which “holds together everything in the world” (Freud,
1939/1952 p. 674). This “eros” persuades individuals to relate to rather than to oppose the group. Freud observed the formation of transferences within individuals towards other members and in particular, the therapist. These transferences were patterned on primary relationships in early life and then related to the social need to belong. Part of the dynamic of belonging includes a sense of duty and feelings of guilt in relation to other members. Freud noted that for an individual to emerge they needed to develop a myth as a transitional step away from the group (Freud, 1939/1953). The metaphor associated with an art product creates a myth that facilitates an individual’s entry into and separation from the group.

Freud also observed that if the group leader was strong and authoritarian the peer relationships would be less powerful, and when the peer relationships increased in strength the intellectual content gave way to a rise in emotional content in the group (Freud, 1939/1952). Non-directive approaches to group art therapy may further contribute to a rise in emotional content and this, coupled with the unconscious material present in the artwork, may result in an emotionally charged group with low intellectual or conscious content. When this occurs, the individuals in the group may be emotionally overwhelmed. The non-directive group work of Bion (1961) modelled and developed dynamics that enabled the containment of emotions.

3.1.1. Non-Directive Groups

During World War II, Wilfred Bion (1961) was placed in charge of the military training and rehabilitation wing of Northfield Hospital in England. He worked with his colleague, Rickman, and two hundred soldiers suffering from war neurosis who were to be returned to the frontline of the war. Bion used group dynamics to encourage the recovery of these soldiers. His approach was poorly understood by the men and the hospital authorities alike; however, many of the soldiers did respond to the therapy. Waller (1993) notes that Bion and Rickman were later removed from their positions at the hospital but their work became a landmark in group psychotherapy.

Bion (1961) led the group in a non-directive manner and permitted the group to express feelings. He reflected back to the group the dynamics that were occurring and categorised them into three basic assumptions:

1. Dependency: the group may want a leader on whom they can depend.
Fight or flight: the group may express a fear of a common enemy ‘out there’ and pull together to fight it or flee from it.

Pairing up: this pairing up was usually seen by other group members as a sexual relationship and a defence against the group as a whole (Bion, 1961).

Bion would articulate the adopted assumption of the group and raise the consciousness of the group to that dynamic. The group would then head in the direction of another assumption. Bion continued to work the group so that the interpersonal relationships became malleable and interaction began to flow. He saw the group as a single identity and if a comment came from one member of the group, he assumed all agreed. He noted that the assumptions made by the group were passed unchallenged and that it was not self-reflective or self-conscious. Individuals may have become aware of the dynamics that were functioning in the group but the group itself was unaware of the group processes. The group needed to become more sophisticated rather than rely on ‘magical’ happenings. Schisms were seen to form when a section of the group wanted to grow or expand while the majority remained stagnant and resisted change (Bion, 1961).

Bion’s understanding of group dynamics was grounded in his experience of treating soldiers and, later, civilians. The non-directive nature of his group work was not specifically oriented to a goal like returning soldiers to battle, but to the containment of the emotions in the group. Bion’s (1961) strategy of reflecting group assumptions enabled the group to contain the presenting emotions. The insights and practice developed by Bion (1961) have been applied to art therapy groups by researchers such as McNeilly (1984, 1989, 1990) and Waller (1993).

3.1.2. Group Analysis

Foulkes (1964) began a non-directive approach to group work at about the same time as Bion and called it group analysis. The groups were “not too highly organised but at the same time, not completely unstructured” (Foulkes, 1964 p. 48). He regarded the individual in the group as being brought into social integration and that the group was the “basic social context of human psychology” (Foulkes, 1964 p. 46) whereby a person’s psyche was brought into a living perspective. This living perspective engaged the individual’s psyche in transference within the group. Transference developed with individual members in the group and the group as a whole. He managed the group as a unit and concluded that “if we look after the group the individual will look after himself” (Foulkes, 1964, p. 106). The group was not left
to its own devices but rather channelled by the group conductor. This was achieved not by attending to individuals, but the group as a whole.

Foulkes (1964) described four dimensions that occurred simultaneously within the group. They are:

1. The **current level** of happenings.
2. The **transference level**, which occurs as group members develop transferences with the leader or other members.
3. The **projective level**, which occurs when bodily and mental images are projected into the group.
4. The **primordial level**, which is the primitive and instinctual level.

These dimensions may be occurring at a non-verbal level of communication and within the group interactions. This model of group analysis has also been applied to art therapy groups (Deco, 1998; McNeilly, 1984, 1989, 1990). Foulkes (1964) focused on conducting the group while being aware of multiple levels of communication.

A contrary voice concerning the development of the individual in group analysis was that of Jung. His insights may shed light on the effects group therapy may have on the individual.

3.1.3. **Jung and Groups**

Carl Jung (1875–1961) was a psychiatrist, anthropologist and doctor who lived through two world wars and observed humanity with great intensity and some suspicion. He worked with his patients face to face and highly valued dreams, images and active imagination as ways to enter into the realm of the unconscious. In respect of art-making, he wrote that “the picture is an attempt at self cure” as the art objectifies the person’s unconscious (Jung, 1968, p. 199). Concerning social relationships he states that “the inner man remains unchanged however much community he has” and that “a favourable environment merely strengthens the dangerous tendency to expect everything to originate from outside” (Jung, 1974, p. 58). Jung was very wary of groups because he saw the way to wholeness as a result of coming into communion with the ‘Self’.

Wallace (1987), a Jungian art therapist, considered the ‘Self’ to be the ordering and unifying centre of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious), just as the ego is the
seat of the conscious personality. Von Franz (1993) was a colleague of Jung and she observed that as “the group reinforces the ego, one gets more courageous, or even impertinent, but the Self is pushed into the background”, causing the sense of security to increase but feelings of responsibility to decrease (Von Franz, 1993, p. 291). Jung thought that a “relationship to the Self is at once a relationship to our fellow man and no one can be related to the latter until he is related to himself” (Jung, cited in Von Franz, 1993, p. 294).

Art therapy may be seen to enhance the relationship with personal unconscious material in the form of the artwork, while the group engages the functions of the ego. Group art therapy may strengthen the ability to move between unconscious material, the Self and the ego (Wallace, 1987). The artwork may also limit the inflation of the ego in the group by raising latent metaphorical material to awareness.

### 3.2. The Metaphor and the Group Process

Some Jungian analysts value the group process and respond to the metaphors that arise in the group. Boyd (1991) considers that the group needs to begin with unconscious material and it requires courage to encounter the message of the metaphor and its latent content (Boyd, 1991). If group members are to relate and contact the latent material in the group, the individual needs to reflect and discover a transpersonal layer of experience that taps into the collective roots and essences of the group (Ettin, 1995). Ettin (1995) considers that these layers of the psyche are illustrated by metaphoric imagery that tracks the group processes and meanings. Latent material of the individual member’s psyche is brought to the attention of the group through the metaphor and this reflects the group process. This occurs in art therapy where the artwork reflects and stimulates the group process (Wadeson, 1987; Waller, 1993).

The metaphor or artwork can reflect the group process with the assistance of the therapist. The group process may enhance the individual’s ability to form new relationships and reflect on interpersonal relationships. Yalom (1975) considers that therapeutic groups change the way group members relate and enables them to develop new relationships that are not determined by past experiences.
3.2.1. New Perspectives

Yalom (1975) views group analysis as offering the ability to change the behavioural trajectory on which a person’s life is determined by early childhood experiences. The process of sharing personal information and acceptance by the group increases an individual’s understanding and changes their perspective in a way that will enhance their ability to form new relationships. The ability of the therapist to reflect and mirror group material is crucial for therapy and enables the individual to take responsibility for their actions empowering them to become the “author of her/his interpersonal world” (Yalom, 1975, p. 41). He explains that one cannot find meaning or actualisation through self-conscious pursuit but through reflection on a psychological phenomenon. This usually occurs when a person is absorbed in someone or something other than themselves (Yalom, 1975, p. 14). The art-making and the relationships in the group may redirect an individual to greater social awareness and cooperation. But wherever there are therapeutic benefits there is the potential for detrimental effects.

3.3. DANGERS OF GROUP THERAPY

Lieberman, Yalom & Miles’ (1973) work with encounter groups indicated that when a group was not highly structured there was a greater amount of disclosure and sharing in the group environment. The study, however, found that 8% of the people who began group work had detrimental experiences. This is a significant percentage of people and it included those who initially believed the group to be a safe place and who had high expectations for positive change. People with high expectations were more vulnerable and damaged by the group than those who were sceptical (Lieberman, Yalom & Miles, 1973). The possibility that group art therapy can be detrimental is a necessary consideration when conducting or researching art therapy groups.

From the literature, it appears that non-directive psychodynamic groups need some structure from the therapist in the form of reflection on the group experience to enable the containment of emotions. Metaphors also assist in the management of opposing forces and tracking the group processes. Individuals within the group may experience tension between their need to belong and personal expression. The therapeutic group may assist in the integration of the individual’s psyche and relationships. Therapy groups may also be experienced by some members as
destructive. How does the artwork affect the art therapy group and does it influence the group process?

3.4. **Art Therapy Groups**

Group art therapy literature has researched a variety of groups with diverse constituencies and contexts. Early art groups run by Adrian Hill were open and patients were able to access the art studio at will (Waller, 1993). Open sessions of group art therapy were effectively used by Luzzatto (1997) in an acute psychiatric ward. Closed groups that limit the group membership have been described by Strand (1990) to give a strong sense of containment and safety in an institutional context. Slow-open groups have a long term commitment to the therapeutic process permitting the coming and going of individuals in the group. Short term groups may be conducted once a week and run for a short duration with a fixed commencement and termination one such group is described by Springham (1992). Medium groups are for a longer duration but with set parameters of time whereas long-term groups may run for years. The participants in this research were from two art therapy groups. The first group consisted of a short term group of eight weeks and the second consisted of a medium term experiential art therapy training group. Both of these groups contained less than twelve members and were conducted once a week. Some groups are homogeneous, some heterogeneous; other groups have specific group populations, whereas others have diverse needs. Other groups are closed, others open; others are short-term in acute psychiatric wards, whereas others are long-term groups. Waller (1993) concludes that art therapy is effective for a variety of diverse groups.

This literature review will examine art therapy groups in relation to the issues of whether the artwork assists communication within the group dynamics, and where the metaphor in the artwork enables the therapist and group members to observe the latent material. It will also examine the dynamic relationship between the individual and the group, and the conflict between the exposure of personal material and professional development in those training for art therapy.
3.4.1. **The Artwork and Group Dynamics**

A survey of the literature reveals that the inclusion of art-making and artwork adds non-verbal communication to the group and reflects the group dynamics. Art therapy is a primary form of communication that contributes to verbal communication; it is visual and sensual, and adds multiple layers of communication and stimulates the group process.

*Art therapy a visual communication*

An inquiry by Nowell Hall (1987), a Jungian art therapist, recognised that artwork is an antecedent element to the group dynamics. Her art therapy group consisted of patients who attended a day hospital over a number of months. The art therapy group was conducted in an 'open' and non-directive manner. Comments and images by the patients were collected and recorded. The images were studied and reflected upon by the therapist and the patients. The subsequent comments from the participants clearly expressed that the art therapy was enjoyable, non-threatening, authentic, and promoted energy in the patients. Nowell Hall's (1987) studies indicated that art therapy groups counterbalanced the verbal groups that patients were receiving in the hospital.

When the artwork was revisited by the therapist and the patients seven years later, some of the patients explained that the artwork was just as 'alive' and real as it had been previously during therapy. Nowell Hall commented that the words of the therapy had passed away but that the images remained and the emotions were evoked in the follow-up interviews. She noted that the artwork permitted group members to relate to the group through their art and to receive affirmation from each other. Emotions that were active in the group were evident in their artwork (Nowell Hall, 1987). Nowell Hall used the subjective material as data to assess the group art therapy experience.

The research by Nowell Hall (1987) was an inspiration for this research in psychodynamic group art therapy where the artwork was present in the interview after the group had been completed. The artwork was part of the record of the individual's experience of group art therapy and brought vivid memories of the group to the interview. The visual communication of the artwork contributed to the group art therapy.
The visual communication of artwork

Strand (1990) conducted research into the effects of a closed art therapy group upon a group of seven people with learning disabilities. The seven participants had been institutionalised most of their lives and could communicate verbally. The group also included the therapist and a co-therapist, and was held at the same time each week in the same room. The group was closed in order to make the group as significant as possible for the participants and to engender trust.

At first the participants needed encouragement and some direction, but soon they started to communicate and relate with little direction from the therapists. They also began to listen to each other and share themes in their artwork. Artwork was readily shared and Strand noted that the participants began to take responsibility for their own actions in the artroom. This was a breakthrough considering their institutionalised background. The artwork helped them come into touch with their personal feelings which, when shared with the group, permitted others to connect with their own feelings. One example raised in the group was the experience of ‘loss’. The group members shared feelings of loss, abandonment and great sadness. Strand (1990) pointed out that “there is tangible evidence that people do listen to and make links with one another on an unconscious level, in the way that the visual image is picked up and shared in the group” (Strand, 1990, p. 262). It is evident that group art therapy was effective in developing meaningful communication in a relatively difficult institutionalised setting.

Strand (1990) worked with people with disabilities, some of whom could not speak, and she found that art therapy was valuable because it gave the participants a non-verbal form of communication. The images can also communicate on a number of levels to a number of people at once, and thus facilitate unconscious communication. The latent material in the artwork may stimulate associations and emotional responses in the group.

Multiple levels of communication

In acute short-term psychiatric units, Deco (1998) advocates the return to the open-studio model for art therapy groups. She suggests these groups be less theme-centred and more free-associative or ‘non-directive’ groups. This would provide art therapy groups with the flexibility and containment required for the diverse and often highly disturbed patient community. Deco also commented that the hospital system has a large, rapid turnover of patients with minimal staff and that an open studio would
best accommodate this environment. “The role of the images has ... deepened the communication between group members, and between the therapist and patients” (Deco, 1998, p. 98). She suggests that Foulkes’ model of communication in groups is of particular relevance in open art therapy groups and may apply at the following levels.

1. The current level, where the descriptive, diagrammatic work is done and may involve artwork and influences from outside the group.

2. The transference level is encouraged by the art-making, since it permits regression. Regression is due to the texture of the art media and the spontaneous playing in the presence of the therapist. The images are significant in relation to the conductor and the transference with the conductor/therapist. The participant desires approval and validation from the therapist.

3. The projected level contains embodied images where the images are intense and alive. The person feels identified with the artwork and creation.

4. The primordial level occurs where the artwork language is archetypal, powerful and often unconscious. At this stage words come slowly if at all to the patient.

Deco (1998) found that the open studio gave each individual the opportunity to use the group for their own needs. The participants began to make art and became attached to the art-making before relating to others in the room. Accessing the group via the art-making seems to have been less threatening and more under the direction of the participant. For the therapist to exercise a minimum of intervention and to hold the group requires a great deal of internal work on the part of the therapist (Deco, 1998). Communication between members and the therapist was enriched by the artwork, permitting personal material to be rapidly expressed to the therapist and the group in the acute setting. Group art therapy in the open-studio model was experienced by Deco (1998) to be appropriate in a contemporary acute psychiatric unit.

Artwork stimulates group processes

Waller (1993) wrote a book on art therapy group practice that addressed theory and documented experiences of a diversity of art therapy groups. The model that Waller developed was an Interactive Art Therapy model. The group involved the simultaneous interaction between its members, together with the art-making. Waller (1993) noted some therapeutic functions of the art therapy groups that are valuable for this research. Group art therapy permits visual communication, components of
play, and visual free association, as well as unconscious material and metaphors to form in the group. The individual may project and objectify their feelings and transferences into the artwork. The artwork may in this way stimulate the group process hastening the group dynamics.

Waller (1993) suggests that, due to this influence of the artwork in the group, the art therapist needs to be aware of the unconscious material being placed into the group and, where necessary, slow the impact of the artwork so that the group has time to process the material that is present in the group. The process of making the art and reflecting on the artwork brought structure and order into the therapy group and supported the therapeutic containment and purpose of art therapy groups (Waller, 1993).

Skaife (2000) proposes that there is a dialectical tension between the art making and the verbal therapeutic relationship; between the art maker and the therapist. The art making is verbally inexpressible and antithetical to the verbal therapeutic relationship. The transference between the therapist and the individual may be interrupted by the development of transference between the individual and their image. This dilemma forms the basis of the dialectical tension between the transference of the image and the transference of therapeutic relationship. Skaife however, does not find a resolution to this tension in a new synthesis but rather argues that a co-existence develops between the therapeutic relationship and the constellation of the image (Skaife, 2000).

Skaife (2001) writes concerning the making of art as an intersubjective activity that enhances relating and connectedness with others in art therapy groups. Skaife explains that by promoting art making to the centre of group art therapy that a balance may be maintained between the benefits of art making in therapy and psychoanalytic theory. Art making may be seen as a visible expression of the person that connotes personal change in relation to others. Art making requires people to interact with the material world and to move about the therapy room while relating with others. The art work is the tangible product of therapy that adds to the intersubjective reality. Skaife continues her argument that the image is not a representation of an inner object but that it shapes the inner reality. The external world of the art therapy group and the materials influence the subjective experience of the individual. The individual is not the source of the work independently but the sense of self is formed through the eyes of the beholder.
3.4.2. **Metaphors in the Group**

Non-directive group art therapy permits latent material to be present in the artwork in a metaphoric form. The metaphoric properties of the artwork enable the expression of the nature and dynamics of the psyche, permitting conflict and resolution to be present in the artwork. Opposing aspects of a conflict may be held in the artwork in anticipation for integration. Similarities among group member’s artwork, or resonance of the artworks in the group, may display a recurring metaphor that is common in the art therapy group and be indicative of the therapeutic process. A group image that focuses the attention of the group onto the true dynamics or issues of the group is indicative of the metaphoric nature of the artwork, enabling therapy (Springham, 1998).

*The artwork holds the metaphoric language*

Skaife (1990) describes one session of art therapy that had been running for fifteen months with a membership of six people. The decision to commence the art-making and the duration of the art-making was the group's responsibility – one member expressed her anger at Skaife for not telling them “how to do it”. The group discussed how good it was to make art, but complained that they did not have enough time to reflect on the work.

Eventually the group decided to do a group painting where they worked together on an image. The group vigorously set to work and they all involved themselves in the artwork. Skaife points out that to have all of the members working together in this manner could not occur in a purely verbal group. The group functioned by the individual members negotiating and collaborating in both verbal and artistic modes of communication (Skaife, 1990). She notes that the art activity added a new dimension to the analytic group, the expression of feelings in the group in a nonverbal form: “it allowed for feelings to be expressed in an alternative way, and for metaphorical and symbolic language to stay on in the group in a concrete form” (Skaife, 1990 p. 237). The metaphoric nature of the artwork permitted the presence of the latent material to linger in the group.

*Opposing forces in the group*

The metaphoric nature of the artwork permits ambiguities to be communicated in the artwork. The artwork is able to hold these opposing or differing perspectives in
the group and equip the therapist to reflect the dilemma to the group. The tension raised by the artwork may have produced uneasiness and hostility but also the opportunity to acknowledge or resolve the dilemma. Sarra (1998) reports such an incident while running an art therapy group in a psychiatric locked ward. The group had a sense of being disconnected and resisted integration while being hostile to the therapist. The unbearable feelings in the therapy focused Sarra's attention onto an image or metaphor that reflected an analogy of a connection to the group. The artwork in this way brought hope and direction to the therapist and the group.

McNeilly (1990) has found that different pieces of the artwork may contain similar material, forms or themes that visually synchronise a resonance within the group.

Resonance

Resonance or similarities occurring between the images of individuals are synchronistic and significant in group development (McNeilly, 1990). Recurring themes, forms or metaphors in the art therapy group are indicative of resonance, the therapeutic process and the dynamics in the group. Resonance in the artwork of the group is significant because it reinforces the unconscious material and prolongs and amplifies its presence in therapy. McNeilly encouraged therapists to recognise the leading of the unconscious through the latent content in the artwork. The therapist actively monitors the group, recognising resonance and at times balancing the opposing tensions of the group as displayed in the group's imagery. The combination of art therapy and group analysis is termed by McNeilly (1984, 1989, 1990) as group analytic art therapy, bringing together art and group analysis.

Expression of latent material

McNeilly challenged an approach to art therapy groups contained in an art therapy handbook authored by Liebmann (1986). The book was directive and pragmatic in relation to running art therapy groups. Liebmann viewed “groups as aiming to enhance and sometimes change the personal and social functioning of the group members, rather than specific treatment for a particular disease” (1986, p. 9). She endorsed the use of themes and exercises to direct art therapy groups.

McNeilly challenged Liebmann's directive approach and warned of “a tendency to uncover, possibly rapidly, powerful feelings which may be difficult for the individual, the group and the therapist to contain and understand” (McNeilly, 1984, p. 7). He endorsed a non-directive approach that focused on the latent material in the artwork,
commenting that “the group will take the road to the unconscious, trusting that it will find its own way” (McNeilley, 1984, p. 9).

**The group image**

Homogenous pathological groups may present a group resistance in group art therapy and this dilemma is addressed by Springham (1998). Springham’s art therapy group consisted of people who misused drugs and alcohol. He considered that the people with substance misuse issues were narcissistic and would initially relate at a ‘false-self’ level. The art therapist experienced a great deal of anxiety hidden in the group. Springham (1998) noted that the relationship the participants had to their art was different to their relationship with each other: the art-making was a solitary experience that assisted them to access a real sense of self. The image-making objectified and expressed the personal desire of the group for a connection with their real self without a sense of shame. It enabled a narcissistic engagement with the art materials, permitting the patients to disclose aspects of their real self through the artwork.

In Springham’s study, he noted that one particular image made in the group became the focus of the group – it appeared to be an image of a magpie’s eye. Springham (1998) explained that this was a group image that carried a metaphor and focus of the group disclosing a corporate resistance to the therapist. Reflection on this image during the therapy and recognition of the resistance disqualified the false alliances of the group. Group members began to express their anxiety and fear of relationships. Springham gently moved through the anxiety of the group and remained with the images and hostility of the group. The group image formed a bridge for communication concerning relationships and feelings of hostility towards Springham. The art therapy group offered relationship without substance misuse.

**Resonance and metaphoric functions**

A valuable discussion concerning the theoretical issues in art psychotherapy groups was written by Skaife and Huet (1998). The discussion referred to an art psychotherapy group that was conducted at a university where students self-referred themselves to the group. There were five to eight members in the long-term open art therapy group that met once a week for two hours. Skaife and Huet (1998) conducted such groups for eight years by maintaining a focus on the images and resisting the tendency for words to take precedence. (The role of the art therapist is brought into question if the group leaves the artwork behind and just communicates verbally.)
Skaife & Huet (1998) analysed the enabling factors of the art psychotherapy groups. The enabling factors are ways that fears can be relieved, shared and expressed in order to increase the potential for personal growth. Resonance in the group's artwork or a group image or the group dynamic reflected the enabling factors present in group art therapy. When the group focused on the artwork, attention was heightened and what had not been verbally expressed began to be acknowledged. Unintentional art expression frequently connected with the unconscious themes of the group and might form a group image. The group image then acted as a mirror to the group. These enabling factors are peculiar to art therapy and give depth to the group process.

3.4.3. Individual Expression in Group Art Therapy

The art therapy literature suggests, in a general sense, the art-making phase of the art therapy group, where individuals create their own work, heightens the awareness of personal expression and individuality in the group. Cooperation with art materials and tools promotes non-verbal communication and relationships, and raises dependency and independency issues. The art therapy group is an environment where individuals can learn through relationships.

Isolation and connection

Peterson & Files (1989) adapted a psychodrama model for the art therapy group and, through more directive than non-directive psychodynamic art therapy groups, they observed that the art-making heightened the individual’s identity in the group. They explained that “art-making can be very intense involving individual process, sometimes giving the individual a feeling of isolation. Each individual was connected to others in the group through a personal process that broke a sense of isolation” (Peterson & Files, 1989 p. 323). The art-making permitted the personal expression of the individual to be present in the group dynamics.

Dependence and independence

The art-making by the individual may disclose the therapeutic process in the art therapy group (Case & Dalley, 1992). It engaged the active participation of the group. The individual’s artwork unconsciously influenced other members, including the therapist. The art media used influence the group – for example, clay work may permit the expression of sensations and tensions that assist emotional release in the group. Creating artworks together in the group raises issues of dependency and
independency for members through the mainly non-verbal cooperation of the art-making. The quality of the art media may permit an individual to regress in preparation for a process of integration through the group art therapy (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998). The sequence of images made in the group may also inform the therapist of the simultaneous therapeutic process of the individuals and the group.

*Learning through relationships*

Wadeson (1987) has commented that in art therapy groups “individuals can best learn about themselves by examining their relationships with others. There is no better place than group therapy for obtaining the sort of feedback in the here and now” (1987, p. 305). This feedback within the group has an impact upon the individual and is important in the process of change (Lieberman, Yalom & Miles, 1973). As the individual encounters the therapeutic group situation they become involved in a process of change. The interaction within the art therapy group provides relational feedback to its members in the therapeutic environment (Wadeson, 1987).

From the literature it is evident that the artwork influences the group dynamics, the formation of transferences in the group and is essential in the therapeutic process. Some recent literature, however, is concerned with professional development of art therapists in group art therapy where the therapeutic aspect of the group is secondary to the formation of the member’s professional persona. The artwork in professional art therapy training groups may cause conflict due to the personal material being made present in the group.

### 3.4.4. *Art Therapy Students*

The literature shows that the artwork in professional art therapy training groups has a curious function compared to those groups where the participant is receiving therapy. The artwork is recognised by the students as visual communication that operates at multiple levels containing latent material. The artwork also is seen to reflect and stimulate the group process, and resonance of images or a group image may emerge. Conflicting forces may also be evident in the group artwork and held in the metaphoric language of the artwork. Individual material from group members is brought into the group through the artwork, and this may produce hesitancy in the art therapy students, not feeling comfortable with their work in the professional training group. Professional training may have insinuated that personal material he
kept at a distance from the group, so that the artwork for them is a threat to maintaining a 'professional' position. The nature of being a student should also be addressed: the artwork may disclose material that the students do not feel appropriate or which may be seen as inadequate for the profession (Gilroy, 1995).

Professional Training

Gilroy (1995) investigated the effects of art therapy group experience on two consecutive years of students training in a one-year art therapy course. The aim of the research was to explore some of the changes which occurred in experiential art therapy groups.

The research included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies with the application of interviews, case studies and questionnaires. The triangulation of material, due to the variety of methods used for data collection, resulted in thorough and balanced research.

Gilroy (1995) adapted a questionnaire designed by Lieberman, Yalom & Miles (1973) to be applicable for art therapy groups. The research of Lieberman et al. (1973) indicated that group members experience personal change during group therapy.

The questionnaire was administered separately to the first and second year groups on three different occasions during the academic year. Group process notes were recorded and the students were interviewed regarding their expectations and reflections on the group work (Gilroy, 1995).

The results indicated a change in the self-perception of the students and that this individual perception was greater than the group perception of change. The highest scores were in relation to self-perceptions of change in the areas of openness, spontaneity and influence in the group. Fears of unconscious meanings in the artwork also scored highly. The first group of students became less open and spontaneous during the study but felt a growing sense of belonging to the group. The second group of students became more cautious and less willing to share their artwork in the group. It was also evident that members of the group who developed an active participatory role in the group had a correspondingly decreased fear of unconscious meaning arising in their artwork, while those students who had a fear of the unconscious meaning of the artwork became more passive and less open in the group (Gilroy, 1995).
Fourteen of the sixteen students also expressed that their artwork had changed in response to the experiential art therapy group, and that it now expressed greater freedom and spontaneity with more honesty and directness (Gilroy, 1995).

In relation to this study, Gilroy (1995) poignantly remarks that we need to be cognisant of the power of imagery due to the dynamic between the fear of the unconscious meaning of the artwork and the individual’s behaviour in the group. This study is important to this research because there are similar participants in both studies. The participants were art therapy students in a university for professional art therapy training, and group two of this research are art therapy students at a university: both were involved in experiential art therapy groups.

*Cognitive input to optimise understanding*

An investigation into the learning experiences in introductory art therapy groups was undertaken by Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife (1998). The purpose of the study was to develop the most effective means of introducing people to the theory and practice of the art therapy profession. Experiential learning was seen to be the direction to go but Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife (1998) have contributed interesting developments in the theory of learning in this milieu.

Initially it was thought that an information-seeking question in small experiential groups was a resistance. Such questions were referred to the end session of the course to be handled in the large group. This practice led to the small groups being less effective for anxious members, particularly if the conductor maintained a clinical role. It became apparent that direct questions concerning theory and practice arising in the groups were best answered in the group. These answers needed to be explained within the context of the group and with reference to clinical practice. The therapeutic role in these groups was combined with an educational one.

The course began with a large group, two experiential groups and a final plenary over two days. Clear guidelines of the course were explained and described by Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife (1998) in the large group and questions were called for. Through the duration of the two days of the course it was emphasised that there was a continuity of learning from the leaders, the experience and the social milieu. The learning experience was most effective when an unconscious group process developed, while the leader contained the anxiety and anger of the group to a manageable level.

*Tlying the Artwork*
The main finding of the investigation by Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife (1998) was that to limit the causalities of this learning experience in experiential art therapy groups, the group leaders needed to permit the group process to proceed while speaking to the questions and issues that emerged on a cognitive level. The acceptance of emergent ideas into the group by the leader, and the acknowledgement that these ideas related to art therapy theory or practice, built participants' confidence and demonstrated that their understanding was applicable and transferable to art therapy. The endorsement of the comments by the leader assists in the direction of the group. To ignore or put off answering questions in an experiential group may be asking for trouble.

They acknowledged that the leaders of the group may be perceived as powerful figures by the participants of the experiential group. The participants actually needed to feel in charge of the experience in order to learn. It is necessary for power and transferences to be acknowledged so that the collaborative learning potential of the group may be realised and anxieties eased.

A collaborative research project by Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife (2000) investigated the processes in art therapy education with specific reference to experiential learning in art therapy groups and was conducted over eight years at a London University. Three main themes emerged from this study. The first theme was that the institutional context of the group in the university influenced the dynamics of the group. The second theme established a dilemma between the educational/learning and the therapeutic/personal aspects of the group work. This dual purpose resulted in the students experiencing anxiety concerning self revelation, feelings of hostility, transference with the therapist and the need for support from the group. The third theme related to the leader as a role model for the students of art therapy. The leader role modeled the therapeutic persona and informed the students of the position of a therapist (Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife (2000).

### 3.5. Summary

The review of the art therapy literature thus far suggests visual and tangible quality of the artworks in the art therapy enhances non-verbal communication at multiple
levels in the group and stimulates the group dynamics (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Strand, 1990; Waller, 1993).

The artwork reflects the group dynamics, informing the therapist and enabling feelings and transferences to be expressed and contained in the group (Case & Dalley, 1992; McNeilly, 1990; Waller, 1993). Metaphors are sustained through the artwork and permit individuals to connect with each other so that a group identity may form (Skaife, 1990). Such metaphors permit the unconscious material to be recognised in the group through resonance in the artwork and the formation of a 'group image' (McNeilly, 1990; Springham, 1998). Metaphors in the artwork also have the capacity to hold opposing forces that are present in the group permitting tensions and ambiguities to be expressed and acknowledged (Sarra, 1998). The non-directive approach to art therapy groups permits unconscious material to readily enter the group but there is a need for some structure and containment to be established by the therapist to minimise feelings of being overwhelmed (Foulkes, 1964; McNeilly, 1990). Individuality is engendered in the group via personal artwork resulting in the stimulation of the group dynamics (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; McNeilly, 1990; Nowell Hall, 1987; Peterson & Files, 1989; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998; Wadeson, 1987). Group members are drawn into the group through their attachment to their own artwork and the curiosity of other member's work. The artwork in this way has the potential to catalyse the group, due to the personal and latent material being present. The artwork also reflects the dynamics of the group and assists the therapist in the containment of potentially overwhelming forces (Nowell Hall, 1987; Sarra, 1998; Springham, 1998; Waller, 1993). Art therapy groups conducted for the development of professional art therapists experience some difficulties because the content of the artwork displays personal material in the presence of the group (Gilroy, 1995; Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife, 2000).
Chapter 4. **ART THERAPY AND PROJECTION**

The tendency of an individual to attribute to others, or to objects, what is really found in their own psyche is termed *projection*. In psychodynamic art therapy it is a fundamental dynamic, being made possible through interaction with the art media as the individual externalises psychological tensions into their artwork. The art-making is a physical manifestation that can display psychodynamic relations within the person. Unconscious material may be projected by means of sublimation in the art-making process and become evident in the finished artwork. The art-making may involve the acting out of unconscious wishes (such as revenge), cathartic activity or be a display of metaphoric processes that are alive for the individual in therapy (Kramer, 1987).

When observing art-making in psychotherapy, Bolas (1999) discerns that it is a transsubstantial projective objectification. That is to say, elements of the psyche are transformed into elements of the tangible artwork and this is transsubstantial. This transsubstantiation occurs through the projection of unconscious and emotional material into the object of the artwork. The psychic material is therefore objectified for the individual and the therapist to observe. This objectifying of the psyche into the artwork permits the individual to distance unwanted or unknown psychological elements from themselves and later reintegrate this personal material to their conscious (Milner, 1971; Naumburg, 1958; Schaverien, 1992).

The artwork is presentational – that is, the artwork does not represent part of the psyche but shows the actual psyche (Bolas, 1999). What is present in the psyche is made tangible in the artwork while the art-making is a clear indicator of the unconscious dynamics alive in the individual in the potential space of the therapy (Winnicott, 1971). The artwork is presentational of the unconscious but is not to be taken literally for the individual's conscious life, for this could permit the acting out of unconscious material (Maclagan, 1985). The language of the unconscious is in visual imagery and the art-making activity, and has a metaphoric nature (Jung, Von Franz, Henderson, Jacobi & Jaffe, 1964; Kramer, 1987; Nowell Hall, 1987). This metaphoric nature of the artwork highlights ambiguity or possible hidden potentials in the life of the individual (Milia, 1996; Milner, 1971; Waller, 1993; Wix, 1997).
A brief chronological survey of the development of art therapy and projection theory will bring some understanding of the dynamics that are involved in art therapy and that may be evident in the research outcomes.

The making of the artwork, since it is a physical activity, gives the individual a natural space from their inner tensions and relieves pressure from the individual (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Adamson, 1990). This distance, with the time it takes to create the artwork, permits the individual room to accommodate the presenting material so that it is not overwhelming (Adamson, 1990). The art-making process and the externalisation of inner tensions leaves the initiation for change with the individual in therapy (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Adamson, 1990). This externalisation of the individual’s private life is made manifest to the public gaze of the group and the therapist (Cane, 1989). The individual benefits from this insight from the therapist for it acknowledges the individual’s true self (Schaverien, 1992). The artwork assists in containing the individual’s emotions and their projected material, while offering some relief from pressing psychological tensions with the hope that their burden can be made lighter and more manageable (Casement, 1990; Schaverien, 1992)

### 4.1. Jung and the Projected Image

Reflecting on Jung’s lifelong respect for unconscious imagery, Edwards (1987) noted that Jung related to an image as though it was an entity. The image was seen to exist with a nature and a vivacity to awaken consciousness animated by latent material. Jung encouraged his patients to interact with the content of the image or dream to promote integration and conscious appreciation of the image (Edwards, 1987). Emotionally charged pictures signalled projected material and alerted Jung to the unconscious process at hand. Both Edwards (1987) and Wallace (1987) note that projections express character and emotions concealing underlying secrets of the psyche and often play a compensatory function to the individual’s conscious awareness.

Edwards (1987) noted that after the person made their image in therapy that there was a sense that it had an ‘otherness’ distinct from its maker. It appeared to have the ability to communicate with its maker, as if it existed outside of the one who had made it. This autonomy of the projected image may be assimilated slowly, for if
forced it would produce vulnerability in the individual (Edwards, 1987). The therapist's support enabled the individual to be contained while facing the latent material. If the image was too powerful for the individual, the therapist may assist by supporting their ego and putting the image aside (Edwards, 1987). Edwards considered that if the image contained archetypal material it may potentially overwhelm the individual and would not be amenable to full assimilation.

4.2. THE SCAPEGOAT

The work of Schaverien (1992) has been inspirational in the development of analytic art therapy theory and has been grounded in art therapy practice. Her work boldly inquires into the manifestation of the unconscious through the art-making and the therapeutic relationship contained in the image. Unconscious content is made manifest through art-making and contained within the artwork and the therapeutic relationship.

Art therapy has the intention of bringing a person to a place of integration through the process of making art in art therapy. It is through the artwork, that the individual is able to 'split off' and externalise inner tensions, which can then be recognised and digested (Schaverien, 1992). The image may act as a scapegoat that bears intolerable and disturbing material away from the individual's psyche. Schaverien unpacks this process of accepting the latent material into the stages of identification, familiarisation, acknowledgement and assimilation of the individual. The therapist may also dispose of the image so that the individual need not take the contents of the image back into the unprocessed form (Schaverien, 1992). Art therapy enables the individual to project and reappraise those parts of their life that are held in the artwork to be congruent and integrated. The artwork assists in the externalisation of latent material and reconnection with this material in therapy.

4.3. PROJECTION WITHDRAWAL

Both Freud and Jung saw that the projections contained unprocessed material from the past and possibly early childhood comprising false characterisations and strong emotional affect. These strong emotional responses are often accompanied with an illusion of false assertion that does not seem incongruous to the person (Von Franz, 1993). The projections, Von Franz considered, served as a bridge that connected the
individual to other people and the external world. The projection may be seen as the first step towards positive change. Von Franz (1993) argues that change may transpire when there is an opportunity for reflection, containment of emotions and the ability to acknowledge the unconscious material.

Von Franz (1993) distinguished between a positive projection and a negative projection and the different course of actions that develop from these emanations. Positive projections may occur when a person esteems another person with a greater value and honour than normal. For example, when an individual highly admires someone for an impressive intelligence this may be a positive projection. The individual may, with reflection, come to the awareness that they too can be clever if they apply themselves to study and personal development.

Another example of positive projection may occur when, a person who has always received attention and emotional warmth from others, may find it necessary to become comforting and kind to themselves rather than continuing to expect attention and affirmation from others. These two examples of positive projection do not appear to be particularly harmful, but Von Franz considers that when the individual withdraws these projections they may become more responsible for themselves and closer to the fulfilment of their potential.

A negative projection may be felt as an intense hatred or a cold disdain towards an individual. This strong affect is an effective indicator that a projection is present and that a change may ensue. Upon reflection, an individual may realise that an element of what they project onto another person is a familiar aspect in their own lives. This is illustrated in the saying in Matthew 7.3 that “the speck that is evident in another’s eye reflects a log in your own eye”.

An example of a negative projection is when an individual sees another person as a liar, but when they examine themselves and withdraw this projection they begin to see how they also lie. The characteristic that they hated in the other person is within them. The negative projection, when it is to be withdrawn, brings the individual to a place of moral differentiation where they realise that the part that they rejected and judged in the other is their own weakness. The judgement that was passed on the other belongs to them, and to relinquish the other will free themselves from their own judgement. Acceptance of a negative projection Von Franz considers assists in the integration of the individual.
Von Franz (1993) argues that if a projection is sent and the unconscious content is not yet realised, the sender may experience a 'loss of soul' – that is, an illness that is greatly feared by some people groups. This illness produces symptoms of apathy, feelings of powerlessness, depression or constantly looking for comfort outside of oneself. Working with projections in art therapy will have an ameliorating effect on these symptoms within the individual.

Von Franz’s insight (1993) concerning the withdrawal of projection is valuable for the practice of art therapy because it gives more understanding to the qualities of the projected image. The unconscious appears to set the agenda for the therapy as it raises the projected material for the artwork that becomes the focal point of the therapy (Wallace, 1987). The image illustrates in some way the dilemma that the person is encountering and holds the key to the resolution of their personal situation.

The artwork contains both the elements of the problem and its solution for the individual, since it brings to light the dilemma and the possible resolution (Von Franz, 1993). The artwork in therapy enables the individual to be awakened to the projection embedded in the image. When the projection is realised, the individual has a choice that may take the form of more accountability for their personal life or addressing their personal inadequacies (Von Franz, 1993). The individual is therefore given the opportunity to re-own those parts of their psyche that were hidden and projected into the image.

4.4. Projection and Exploration

Lanham (1998) embarked on an inner exploration by pursuing the notion that an image appears to be 'alive'. Lanham recounted stories and myths where images were made and into them was breathed life of the maker. The object became the carrier of the maker's life and was made in the image of its maker, but it had an autonomous identity. The creator may recognise life in the image but an onlooker may not experience this phenomenon. The image may devolve from being an idol embodied with emotions, to an icon that is representational, to a reminder or sign of a former experience. Lanham tried to reconnect with an embodied image.
Lanham became fascinated with the face of a corbel carved on the exterior of a twelfth-century church in Herefordshire, England. This corbel image, and images that echoed its form, appeared in his own artwork and Lanham used his active imagination to dialogue and converse with these forms. As he engaged with his own artwork he experienced the image intensifying and becoming animated. Emotions and tensions appeared to come from the image and he reasoned that these images were carved into the church wall to bring life and inspiration to traditional Christian practice.

Reflection on his artwork enabled Lanham to explore personal projected material and he sought support from a therapist for containment of latent material uncovered in the images.

### 4.4.1. Projection Leads to Connection

Sarra (1998) worked as an art therapist with people expressing acute psychiatric conditions in a locked ward of a British hospital. The art therapy group was open to all the patients and was run once a week for three years. The hospital was the setting of this group and the patients were plagued with feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy. The art therapist struggled to engender connectedness and integration through the group art therapy process. Sarra was aware that there were two parallel processes at work within the institution: one a process of integration and connection and the other a process of splitting-off and disconnection. It was in the group art therapy that this ambivalence was addressed.

Sarra (1998) observed that when individuals projected their unconscious into their own images they felt relieved, a process he called 'disconnection'; a resistance to gaining insight into their therapy followed this. Ambivalence towards the therapist grew as an atmosphere of tension developed in the group. Sarra attempted to weather this out and managed to survive attacks within the group to contain the unbearable feelings. At these times, to bring connection back into the group, Sarra sought out an image or metaphor that was recurring in the art therapy room. The unconscious content in the metaphor and/or image contributed to the restoration of the group art therapy. Both the art therapist and the images held projections from the group members. He considered that projections towards the therapist and the artwork were designed by the individual to control the therapist and/or the artwork to behave to their expectation. Sarra (1998) commented that the group composition changed from week to week but that the group was increasingly able to contain the
feelings aroused by the art material. The art-making thus enabled the group to project unwanted material that was later moved closer to integration and connection.

4.5. Projected Material Covered

The art therapy described by Forman (1994) gives insight into the dynamics of regaining a sense of control and integration. She described a case study of an adolescent girl, fifteen years of age, who had experienced sexual and physical trauma. The girl entered a public hospital as an inpatient for acute psychiatric care; part of this care included art therapy sessions with Forman. The young woman was involved in three art therapy sessions during her short stay in the hospital. Although the art therapy was limited in time, Forman developed an effective relationship with the young woman.

Through art-making the young woman was able to sublimate emotions of the trauma in the artwork. Forman noted that the young woman’s art-making included the use of the art media to cover and uncover layers of material. She began to build up and at times scrape back the art materials. This use of the art materials brought a familiarity with the media and a connection with her emotional trauma. The young woman used the paint as a protective covering on the paper and explored her trauma. Covering and uncovering the image with the art materials enabled the young woman to gain a sense of being able to manage the trauma that she had experienced. This interaction with the art materials led the young woman to a place of feeling safe and sheltered in the art therapy environs.

Forman (1994) considered that the young woman developed a sense of self-acceptance through her art therapy experience. This sense of self-acceptance included a development of personal strength and a more intact identity. The young woman, through art therapy, was able to reclaim and shelter essential parts of herself that had been exposed and traumatised by her experiences.

The article by Forman (1994) adds further insight into the process of projection in art therapy for, although the interaction with the art materials assisted the young woman to contact her trauma, she was able to manipulate the media and metaphorically cover her trauma and exposure. The art-making enabled the externalisation of latent material and through metaphoric processes she began to
handle and cover the emergent conflict. The art-making may strengthen the ego of
the individual.

Naumburg (1958) argues that art therapy has the potential to strengthen the ego.
Latent material that is too raw to be exposed may be covered in the art-making,
interacted with at a metaphoric level and then be covered. This covering may be
viewed as a defence mechanism or as an enabling function of art therapy, where the
individual manages latent material in their art-making until there is sufficient ego
strength to address it.

Summary
The process of projection in art therapy begins with latent material being expressed
into the artwork. This externalises an aspect of unconscious material and relieves
pressure from the psyche (Baynes, 1940; Sarra, 1998; Schaverien, 1992). The
therapeutic relationship supports the individual to begin to uncover this material.
The uncovering of the material may lead the individual to possess the contents of the
artwork so that they either relinquish idealised concepts of themselves or
accommodate potentials that have not yet been realised (Von Franz, 1993). Some of
the projected content of the artwork may be overwhelming and cause the individual
to feel vulnerable and helpless. This material may be engaged with in the art-making:
through metaphoric processes it becomes manageable, but remains covered in the
artwork so as not to expose or re-traumatisise.

Combining the concept of the artwork acting as a 'scapegoat' developed by
Schaverien (1992), leading to assimilation or possession, with the notion that the
artwork may uncover and cover latent material, as described by Forman (1994), may
result in further insight into the function of projection in art therapy. It is interesting
to note that in the Hebrew ceremony (Leviticus 16) on the Day of Atonement there
were two goats in the ritual: a scapegoat to carry away defilement and the goat of the
covering to cover over the conflicts of the people. Art therapy is not Atonement but
may have some resemblance of this healing ritual with the combination of these two
functions for wholeness.

4.5.1. Scapegoat and Possessing
In analytic art therapy there is the concept of opposing forces being present within
the image, the group or in the therapeutic relationship (Lanham, 1998; McNeilly,
1984; Sarra, 1998; Schaverien, 1992; Springham, 1985; Wallace, 1987). These
opposing forces bring dynamism to the therapy and may reveal a line of tension that can be observed and monitored by the art therapist. This tension, whether in the group or the therapeutic relationship, will probably be visible in the artwork or through the art-making process. Therefore it may be said that, if a function of the artwork is that of a scapegoat, there may also be a function of assimilating or possessing; or if the function is one of covering as described by Forman (1994), then uncovering is also active in art therapy.

The artwork as a scapegoat, bears the rejected, unwanted, defiled material away from the individual into the art medium. This allows the person to distance himself or herself from this material, to relieve the burden of carrying such material and to vent and express intense emotions that have been associated with this unprocessed projected material (Kramer, 1987, Schaverien, 1992).

The opposite function of projecting material is to own and possess this unknown part. Terms that Schaverien (1992) uses, such as to ‘acknowledge’ and to ‘assimilate’, are appropriate in this function of possessing. To ‘possess’ something is to say that it belongs to or is part of a person’s nature. The scapegoat is driven out whereas the possessed material is accommodated and received as belonging to the person.

4.5.2. Covering and Uncovering

To cover something in the artwork may display a need to cover an aspect of the psyche (Forman, 1994). This may be a resistance or an action to manage conflicts of the psyche. Metaphorically, covering may bring protection for a person who feels vulnerable or exposed. Covering may provide comfort, shelter or solace. Coverings are used for decoration, aesthetic purposes and to maintain resources. Clothes act as coverings, some with the purpose of providing a persona. Babies need covering to keep safe and warm, the weak are covered too. Seeds need to be covered in the soil to grow. The dead are covered in burial.

Uncovering brings a contrasting concept, as it is to reveal and to make known what has been unknown. To uncover is to be peeled back a layer to show the underlying material this process is described by Forman (1994) The layers are folded back to disclose the treasure within. Something may be uncovered if it has been lost or forgotten or hidden away. It may be necessary to dig, scrape or peel away at material to uncover the underlying material. People uncover themselves if they become too hot or feel smothered in some way by the things that cover them. Wounds need to be
uncovered at times to be cleansed or for medical treatment to be performed. Though
dead things need to be buried an uncovering may come in the form of a chthonic
experience. Covering and uncovering are aspects of art-making that may
metaphorically display unconscious dynamics of therapy.

The polarities of the scapegoat and possession and of covering and uncovering are
dynamics in art therapy. If these opposites are then placed across an axis so that the
four functions maintain their polarities, but are in relation to each other, an
interesting and energetic phenomenon takes form. This vital connection clarifies a
vigorous process that is alive in art therapy.

4.5.3. A Metaphor of Healing

Schaverien (1992) builds the case that through the art-making process, projected
unconscious material is made manifest in the artwork through the scapegoat stage of
the art therapy. Conflict may be expressed into the artwork and the individual is able
to remove and discharge emotional pressure into the art-making. There is some
sense of relief that the image is completed — but this is only for a time. The therapist
and the individual can then stay and remain with the newly formed artwork. This
waiting is the time of uncovering as the individual observes what has been unknown
begins to disclose its contents. The individual now recognises the message that has
been drawn to their attention and there is usually a sense of surprise and
awkwardness at this time. The art-making unconsciously projected now waits to be
possessed by the one who made it.

Projection and possession meet and a dilemma is in hot pursuit. If the projection was
positive in content, the person may need to make a choice about his or her own
abilities and personal responsibility. Von Franz (1992) argues that if the projection is
negative, a moral distinction may be necessary to realise personal shortcomings and
withdraw projections that have been directed on others.

When the individual possesses the latent material there may be a sense of loss or
exposure as things are not the same as they were (Milner, 1971). The emotional
containment by the therapist and the group enables the individual to enter the
covering stage of acceptance and resignation to the latent material. Material that is
too overwhelming to assimilate or possess is made manageable and contained in the
artwork (Kramer, 1987). The artwork may cover unbearable material, hold
vulnerable aspects of the psyche or bury past issues. The covering stage of therapy

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makes conflicts of the psyche manageable for the individual (Forman, 1994). In this way projected material in the artwork is possessed, managed and contained in art therapy.
Chapter 5. **Psychodynamics in the Artwork**

The art making and the artwork may be a tangible projection from the participant’s psyche in therapy. This projection includes aspects of the therapeutic relationship. Schaverien (1989) and Winnicott (1953, 1971) argue that the therapeutic relationship combined with the activity of the art-making forms a potential space where a change in the participant’s psyche may occur. The metaphoricality of the art making illustrates the formation of the transitional object in therapy displaying the psychodynamics of the therapy and the transformation of the participant.

### 5.1. Therapeutic Relationship and Change

Bowlby (1971) has made the historical argument that human beings have a need to form attachments early in life and seek emotional relationships. The initial relationship is usually between the child and the mother and is fundamental for normal development. Winnicott (1971) argues that the child experiences the mother’s breast as an extension of itself and the source of life, both emotionally and physically. The child begins to explore its environs within the safe presence of the mother. To maintain a feeling of proximity to the mother while playing, the child may attach to a *transitional object*, such as a teddy bear or a thumb to suck. The transitional object is a representation of the mother’s breast for the child. The transitional object is at the beck and call of the child and is under his or her jurisdiction. A sense of control, and empowerment, is experienced as the child manipulates and holds the transitional object. Winnicott argues that the child’s relationship with the transitional object enables the child to attain emotional contentment even when separated from the mother.

Winnicott (1971) labelled the emotional area between the mother and the child ‘potential space’. In a healthy relationship, the potential space is an area of trust and security between the mother and the child. Within this place, play may occur and the child can develop and use toys. Symbols may be employed in play as representations of the child’s relationships. Mears & Coombes (1998) note that the child, in the potential space, feels entirely understood and the atmosphere is imbued with a sense of idealisation.

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The potential space may re-occur in therapy between the participant and the therapist (Winnicott, 1971). Through the therapeutic relationship a creative exploratory space may replicate the child's primary relationship with their mother. This potential space can be engendered between the participant and the therapist and, as Schaverien (1989) argues, it is a potential space where the artwork is the transitional object. Carr (2001, 2003) adds to this view arguing that the transitional object permits the individual to move from self to other without fear of engulfment or destruction. The artwork, as a transitional object, thus permits the participant to gain a sense of control in their life and facilitate emotional development (Schaverien, 1989). For example, participants with anorexia were able to substitute artwork as a transitional object in the place of food. The artwork fulfilled the role of a transitional object without the emotive, life-threatening connotations that food precipitated. Through the participant's imaginal expressions, Schaverien argues, they were able to contain their negative feelings, experiences of 'being out of control', and destructive aspirations. At the same time the artwork held emotional and unconscious material safely at a distance from the participant and others in the group. It was essential that the participant had control of the image, even if that meant that the therapist did not see the image or if the participant chose to destroy it.

5.2. TRANSFERENCE AND COUNTER-TRANSFERENCE

The potential space between the therapist and the participant prompts the psychodynamics of transference and counter-transference. Due to the security of the therapeutic relationship and the involvement with the art materials, the participant is able to revisit familiar patterns of relating. The physical interaction with the art materials stimulates previous sensations and embodied unconscious material and awakens these sensations and emotions into the therapy. Indeed, Bollas (1987) suggests that bodily positions, proximity of the child with its mother and sensations associated with care and nurturing may be touched upon through the individual's involvement with the art materials and their relationship with the therapist. The art-making experience may also produce an aesthetic that depicts the potential space for the individual displaying these psychodynamics of transference and counter-transference (see, for example, Case, 1996; Schaverien, 1992, 1993, 1995).

Conflicts that were alive in primary or significant relationships are also transferred onto the therapeutic relationship. The psyche of the individual carries feelings and
attitudes that may be displaced onto the therapist. The therapist may then have a counter-transference, where these feelings are displaced back towards the participant and their artwork. The transference of the participant is reinterpreted through the life experience of the therapist and then transferred to the analysand (Carr, 2001, 2003). This causes a disturbance that potentially distorts the therapy (Rycroft, 1995). The psyche may also misconstrue the perception of reality as a defence and this may be evident in the artwork, indicating the origins of the conflict. These familiar patterns of psychodynamics are imbedded in the artwork. Milner (1971) and Schaverien (1992) suggest when this is reflected to the participant by the therapist and seen in the artwork, the participant has the opportunity to become conscious of their defence.

5.3. Potential Space: The Place of Change

The work of Winnicott (1953, 1971) leads us to the conclusion that the potential space may be engaged during therapy due to the therapeutic relationship and involvement with the art media. This potential space is bounded by inner reality and external life, within the therapeutic setting, and is activated by experience – in this case, of art-making. It is a place of lived experience, into which inner reality and external life contribute and interrelate (Winnicott, 1953). The potential space is psychosomatically connected to the inner reality and the external life, creating this third space (Winnicott, 1971). It is where the art therapy experience is actuated, and change or alteration to the psyche can take place. The individual’s inner reality is mixed with the external art-making and creates the lived experience of change.

Art therapists, and analysts who have employed the use of art have observed this interactive space. When reflecting on her place of art-making, Milner (1971) perceived that it occurred somewhere between daydreaming and purposeful action. Neither daydreaming without active participation nor busy directed activity are places in which art is created. When regarding the artwork of his patient’s, Baynes (1940) noted that the drawings differed from dreams due to the conscious involvement and active participation of the patient. In art-making, conscious processes are held in abeyance while there is interaction and cooperation with the formation of the artwork. The activity of art-making differentiates art from dreamwork because it expresses both internal and external experiences in conscious space (Baynes, 1940). The cooperation of conscious and unconscious processes is necessary

T4usting the Artwork
for creativity to flourish and to explore the potential space between the art therapist and individual. The content of the potential space may be filtered through previous experiences of life for the individual (Winnicott, 1971). The specific contents of the potential space may therefore not be generalised due to personal content of the psyche but the movements, patterns or directions of the psychodynamics may be common to a wider population. These psychodynamics, or familiar patterns of psychological mobility, occur in potential space and are evident in art therapy.

5.4. THE RE-ARRANGEMENT OF THE PSYCHE

When writing about the analysis of dreams and of art, Schneider (1950) considers "the task in analysis is to alter ... the internal arrangement of forces so that normal impulses ... facilitate ego-control ... over intolerable antisocial behaviours. Psychoanalysis is the work of transformation" (p. 53). The internal arrangement of the psyche can be influenced so that the relationship of psychological components is changed and function more normally. Art therapy has the potential to influence this alteration and integration of the internal arrangement of the psyche. A change in the image or subsequent images is indicative of a change in the individual (Adamson, 1990).

Art-making has the capacity to bring change and prophetically display this change in the artwork before it occurs in the person’s behaviour. When observing the paintings of a participant, Jung (1968) considered that the art had changed and extended the participant’s unconscious and by objectifying their unconscious, it was possible to avert or reduce the danger of inundation of unconscious material into consciousness. In this way art therapy may help prevent mental disintegration and act as preventative therapy (Waller & Dalley, 1992). This concept of internal integration is also present in the writings of Milner (1971), who experimented with the use of art materials and objects to explore the properties of the psyche. She perceived that when the composition of the objects in the artwork were moved or altered, the scene changed, new possibilities appeared, different associations arose and the image could be viewed in a fresh way (Milner, 1971).

Altering the psyche requires a secure therapeutic relationship and an experiential activity to enter potential space (Winnicott, 1971). Both of these prerequisites are available in art therapy. To perceive psychodynamic change, it may first be beneficial
to observe a classical Greek myth as a metaphor of the quest for inner change as it can convey the dynamic action of the psyche.

5.4.1. **Perseus and the Medusa**

Perseus was sired by Zeus and his mother Danae bore him on the island of Seriphos. After the birth, Danae’s father sent his daughter and grandson off in a small vessel because an oracle had prophesied that Perseus would kill him. Dictys was a fisherman who found Danae and Perseus in the small vessel adrift on the sea. Dictys married Danae and together they raised Perseus. Danae was a very beautiful woman and Dictys’ brother, Polydectes, who was the local king, desired Danae for himself. Polydectes sent Perseus on a seemingly impossible and fatal mission to retrieve the head of the Medusa. The Medusa was one of three Gorgon sisters, who once were beautiful but had been turned into monsters. Medusa was the only mortal Gorgon and Athena had turned her hair into snakes for making love to Poseidon, the god of the sea, in her temple. Now Athena was eager to help Perseus on his heroic quest.

Athena was a virgin warrior-goddess who was the daughter of Zeus and the personification of wisdom. Zeus had swallowed her mother as the oracle had foretold that the child, Athena, would be greater than her father. Severe pain pounded in his head and became so great that he commanded that his head be cut open with an axe. This was done, and Athena came out of the wound in his head ready for battle. She was the patron of the arts and had the ability to hold creative and destructive forces. These forces were managed with strategy and genius. For Perseus to kill the Medusa, Athena lent him her shield that was polished brass, like a mirror of glass.

Hermes, a messenger god and protector of travellers, gave Perseus the advice to go to the Graeae who would tell him the way to the Medusa. Perseus had to trick the Graeae into telling him the whereabouts of the Western Fairies who would assist him on his journey. Perseus travelled to the other side of the North Wind to find them and asked for advice. The Western Fairies gave Perseus four gifts to conquer the Medusa: a helmet of darkness to make him invisible, a pair of winged sandals with which to fly, a sharp sword and a magic bag to contain the Medusa’s grotesque head. No mortal could look into the face of the Medusa, for one look from her would turn them to stone.

To find the Medusa, Perseus flew over the ocean just at dawn, before the Gorgons were awake. He saw their dormant outline and numerous stone figures that surrounded them. He flew down to alight on the sand. He needed to strike her before the sun rose and the other Gorgons awakened for they were immortal and would kill him. He used his cloak of darkness to come close to the Medusa. The Medusa stirred, and Perseus looked into the reflection of the shield to track her position. Perseus backed up towards the Medusa using the shield to guide him and hacked off her head. Quickly he bagged the head without looking at it and flew away.

From the Medusa’s bleeding neck Pegasus was born, whose father was Poseidon. On his return journey, Perseus rescued Andromeda, a damsel with whom he fell in love. They arrived home to give the Medusa’s head to Polydectes. Polydectes viewed the Medusa’s head and was turned to stone (Hodge, 1995).
Campbell (1988) suggests that the myth is a prototype that reveals a number of insights into the psychodynamic quest. The purpose of the Perseus’ journey was to decapitate the monster that could cause the individual to become lifeless and cold. The Medusa’s power to turn people to stone had resulted from Athena’s retribution to her for sleeping with Poseidon. Athena was born from the head of Zeus and may represent conscious wisdom, whereas Medusa is repulsive and has slept with the ruler of the sea. The sea may be associated with the unconscious world and so the Medusa is joined to the unconscious. Like Athena, the conscious may give rise to the monsters of the unconscious (Medusa, Gorgons) but it cannot battle with them because they have the ability to turn the conscious into stone. The scene of the slaying takes place at dawn, before the Gorgons are fully awake, and it is at the place between conscious and the unconscious in the potential space. Perseus personifies the courage needed to kill the inner beast and complete the quest. But this inner hero requires assistance and wisdom to accomplish the task. Perseus needed the wisdom and the combined forces of creativity and destructiveness that Athena gave him with her reflective shield. He also required the combined gifts of the Western Fairies to assist in the destruction of the Gorgon. The Western Fairies provided the helmet to protect Perseus from detection so that he was not consciously noticed and did not alarm the sleeping Gorgons.

Art-making has a similar manner of not consciously warning the participant to be defensive or alarmed. It has the ability to pass by the conscious inhibitions and access the significant psychological location (Milner, 1971). The winged sandals enabled Perseus to fly over the terrain and sea quietly and swiftly. The art-making effectively transports the individual right to the place in the psyche where there is conflict. It brings the person to the specific tension that is relevant. The sharp sword is in the hand of the inner hero and provides the lethal blow and severance to the Gorgon’s head. The artwork, made at the hand of the individual, has the precision to deal a mortal blow to the inner beast. The art-making enables the individual to strike, sever and decapitate the potential of the inner monster that has the cruel gaze. The shield that is the gift of Athena is polished like glass and acts as a mirror to guide Perseus to the Medusa. Sarra (1998) suggests that the artwork acts as Athena’s mirror to reveal the form and position of the terrible beast (see also Skaife & Huet, 1998; Wix, 1997). Conscious gaze on the Medusa turns one to stone, but through reflection the monster can be slain. Perseus’ use of reflection in the shield meant that he had to approach the scene in reverse and execute the fatal blow backwards. The unconscious provides this sense of confusion and reversal particularly through
defence mechanisms, but it is through the reflection in the artwork that orientation is found (McNeilly, 1990). The bag that the Western Fairies gave Perseus was able to contain the head of the Medusa with its hideous potential. The bag was strong and large enough and had the capacity to carry the Gorgon’s head. It was the bag that enabled Perseus to complete his quest and return the head of the Medusa to his uncle, Polydectes. It is the artwork that has the ability in art therapy, to carry the hideous potential, to cover it, make it powerless, and to transport it to consciousness. The individual is not transfixed by the Gorgon but holds the potential of the Gorgon in their hands. The artwork empowers the individual to engage in their own healing process (Adamson, 1990).

The quest of Perseus for the head of the Medusa is a valuable myth for art therapy, where reflection is the way to attain victory over immobilising inner power. The art-making and the artwork provide the equipment necessary to overcome and make manageable the individual’s internal conflict. When exploring myth and the artwork of his participants, Baynes (1940) writes that there are three main myths: the hero who kills the monster; the masculine and feminine coming together; and, death, rebirth and resurrection. The masculine and feminine conjunction in art therapy is explored at length by Schaverien (1992) and provides insight into the union of the masculine and feminine. Myths are a potent source to bring to life the dynamics that are involved in the psyche and the direction of the journey. The relationship of the elements or members of the myth permit connections to be made concerning influences and movements within the life of the psyche. The next section endeavours to articulate some of the mobility of the psyche, as seen in art therapy literature, to try to understand the life and nature of the psyche.

5.5. MOBILITY OF THE PSYCHE

5.5.1. Selection of a Conflict

Baynes (1940) notes that when participants enter art therapy they usually desire relief from emotional pain or to move towards completeness and the inner self. The engagement with the art media and the therapeutic relationship evoke a potential space for the person, in which inner reality and art materials mix to form an artwork of substance that bonds matter with psyche. This substantial artwork contains the organic nature of the psyche. Bolas (1999) states that the psyche is not static but
alive and actively manifests its attributes through the artwork. The life of the psyche contains functions and movements that ensure its health, development and safety.

During art therapy, the psyche selects a particular image, sensation or memory to be brought to the awareness of the participant in art therapy. Baynes (1940) comments that this selection procedure is mysterious but seems to be initiated by the unconscious. This selection may be paralleled in the decision of what is to be made in art therapy, and combines conscious choice with a spontaneous creative notion. The preference of how to construct the artwork may be indicative of the way stored information in the unconscious is isolated and moved towards the conscious. Naumburg (1958) notes that the art-making process accesses significant issues rapidly and in an uninhibited manner.

The representation of unconscious imagery in the artwork reinforces the notion of causality that is fundamental to psychodynamic art therapy. Storr (1983) argues that unconscious is able to select a specific conflict and penetrate through to the conscious. McNeilly (1984, 1989, 1990) and Deco (1998) highlight the need for psychodynamic art therapy to be conducted in a non-directive manner to permit internal selection and free association to be generated from the artwork. The selected material from the psyche is then externalised into the artwork, carrying the ambiguity and uncertainty of conflict. The artwork indeed may bear both the problem and the solution simultaneously for the participant and the therapist to observe.

5.5.2. **Holding of Opposing Forces**

One of the significant strengths of art therapy is the ability to hold ambiguity and the tension of conflicting forces in the psyche (see, for example, the work of Nowell Hall, 1987; Wallace, 1987; Cane, 1989; McNeilly, 1990; Schaverien, 1993; Lanham, 1998). Cane (1989) argues that the artwork displays creativity and destruction. The tangible artwork contains the relational proximity of these forces indefinitely. Nowell Hall (1987) and McNeilly (1990) comment on the importance of the therapist and the participant to observe and tolerate uncomfortable, uncertain predicaments in the artwork as a central tenet of art therapy. The therapeutic holding of awkward polarities by the therapist engages the participant in the process of resolving the conflicting tensions. The therapeutic relationship emotionally supports the participant to view both sides of a conflict and a freedom to move between the polarities and associated feelings. Wallace (1987) argues that the loosening of rigid
polarities increases emotional suppleness that results in the ability to cooperate within oneself more appropriately and function with more ease.

The metaphoric nature of the artwork in this way displays the tensions of the conflict and then brings these entities into relationship. Energy used to maintain the former constellation in the psyche may then be released.

5.5.3. **Accommodation of Unconscious Material**

Art therapy assists individuals to acknowledge and own behaviour or traits that have previously been unconscious or denied (Schaverien, 1992). The artwork is the product of the one who created it. While the participant and therapist gaze on the artwork, the participant recognises its familiarity, the participant bonds to the artwork and owns the work. The artwork then has a rightful place to be acknowledged. The projected material may then be withdrawn, owned and possessed by the individual. The previously neglected or rejected material may be reconciled. The artwork and its creation have made room for the projected material to be accommodated. The creation of the art facilitates the development of the psyche. This ability to enlarge the borders of the conscious and accommodate previously unrecognised material from the unconscious reveals a psychodynamic that is activated and applied in art therapy (Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992).

5.5.4. **The Psyche can Release Inner Conflict**

The new material possessed in the conscious mind requires words and language to define the change that has occurred. The participant and therapist may discuss the implications of the picture and develop language to describe the phenomenon (Schaverien, 1992). This ability to articulate and define validates the art therapy experience. The new material may have repercussions on the participant’s attitudes and relationships. Projected strong opinions or judgements held by the participant may be replaced with a more tolerant attitude (Von Franz, 1993). This lenient attitude towards oneself and others produces a freedom or openness to personal growth. Rigidity may then be replaced with a liberality and self-acceptance. The psyche has the ability to let go of hindrances and obstacles that impede self-acceptance. But with this liberality and relinquishment of projections, the individual may be faced with underlying fears. Milner (1971) when observing her art-making noted that it facilitated the relinquishment of rigid boundaries and encouraged her to face fears, even a fear of madness.
The letting-go of fixed concepts permits unconscious fears to be acknowledged and encountered. Jung (1968) stated that facing fears that are contained in the artwork and in dreams reduces the potential of the unconscious material from inundating the conscious. Externalised fears may then be withdrawn, releasing emotions that are attached to people or places with which the individual has had a projection. The recognition and possession of the unconscious material in the artwork allows the individual to experience a sense of release and to be kinder toward themselves. Von Franz (1993) argues that a decrease in unconscious destructive acting-out may result from a withdrawal of projection and an increased tolerance towards others

5.5.5. **Searching and Finding Hidden Potential**

Milner notes that the psyche may raise material from the unconscious that was not actively rejected or hidden but just neglected. The psychodynamic may not dissociate inner conflict, but rather search out and treasure the part that was lost or neglected. Von Franz (1993) notes that neglected parts of the psyche may not be destructive but passive. A lack of affirmation or devaluation of this unconscious material may result in its neglect. The psyche may raise this material in the artwork for recognition. The recognition of this type of projection in art therapy may result in the person accepting the neglected parts of the psyche and being able to access new abilities and strengths. The psyche, through the art-making, has the capacity to awaken dormant abilities in the individual and to bring nourishment to these weaker areas. Passive, neglected areas of the psyche can then be activated to create self-acceptance and new potential.

5.5.6. **Destructive Material can be Managed**

The artwork functions similarly to the magic bag of Perseus in that it holds the unconscious material that has the potential to destroy the individual. Perseus is safe while the grotesque head is in the magic bag, just as the unconscious is held at a safe distance from the individual while it is in the artwork. The Medusa’s head is still dangerous if gazed on but can be handled by the individual. The unconscious material, held in the artwork, still has the potential to be harmful but is tangible, externalised and restrained. Some conflicts can be projected into the artwork and may come to the conscious, whereas other conflicts are contained and covered in the art-making process and in the artwork (Forman, 1994). These covered conflicts are not in a state of denial but rather are recognised as a part of the individual’s psyche
that is accommodated by placing and containing them in the image. The image has the capacity to contain projections, as seen in the work of Lanham (1997), for increased self-awareness, to assist in the integration of the individual and to hold potentially destructive conflict.

5.6. SUMMARY

During art therapy, the process of art-making and the accompanying reflection of the participant on the artwork, within the therapeutic relationship, may lead to psychodynamic change. Interaction with the art media creates a potential space within a therapeutic relationship and promotes psychodynamic transformation in the individual (Winnicott, 1971). The art-making assists in the participant’s selection of the conflict, enables the projection of the conflict into the artwork (Milner, 1971; Wallace, 1987; Schaverien 1992; Lanham, 1998), holds and promotes the merger of opposing forces of the conflict (Nowell Hall, 1987; McNeilly, 1990; Lanham, 1998) and brings this material to the participant’s awareness in the presence of the therapist (Schaverien, 1992, 1995).

The conscious has the capacity to receive the new understanding through reflecting (Schaverien, 1992; Von Franz, 1993). This reflection can result in the release of inner conflict, the realisation of hidden potential, and the acknowledgement that destructive unconscious material is manageable (Forman, 1994). The work of Schaverien (1989), Winnicott (1971) and others leads us to the conclusion that art-making and the therapeutic relationship establish the creation of a potential space where inner reality and external experience meet and enable psychodynamic transformation.
Chapter 6. **Metaphoric Processes**

How a person makes an artwork in therapy reveals something of the nature of the conflict that is being externalised in the therapeutic setting. The art-making process may be metaphoric of the latent content, becoming a kinaesthetic response to their dilemma. It may contain metaphoric processes that are indicative of the presenting conflict. These metaphoric processes may relieve pressure through being experienced and so the art-making sublimates energy and libido into the artwork (Kramer, 1987). The removal of unwanted material from the psyche may occur during art-making (Schaverien, 1992). The art-making in therapy may also assist the individual in the preparation for the accommodation of unconscious material (Forman, 1994; Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978). The art-making and the metaphoric processes may also therapeutically alter the psyche (Adamson, 1990; Case and Dalley, 1992).

To explore metaphoric processes that are occurring in art therapy, it is valuable to review the literature concerning the psychosomatic connection in order to establish the link between the psyche and the body and the body and psyche. This relationship is also addressed in art therapy literature, where the art-making process is viewed as therapeutic (Adamson, 1990; Kramer, 1987).

### 6.1. Body-Ego

The formation of the ego is ‘first and foremost a bodily ego’ (Freud, 1923/1974 p. 16). The ego arises primarily from bodily sensations, chiefly those from the surface of the body. This concept of the body–ego connection was termed by Freud ‘the body-ego’. The surface of the body stimulates the formation of the ego, with a reciprocal relationship between external and internal perception. The sensations of touch and pain give external information to the ego regarding the general semblance of the body. The external environment informs the person of their own body and differentiates who they are in relation to others. The physicality of the body assists the ego being separate from the id and the development of identity.

Freud (1923/1974) argues that the body-ego also receives internal perceptions from the unconscious. These internal perceptions yield sensations arising from the deepest strata of the mental apparatus and are more primordial, more elementary, than
perceptions arising externally and come about when consciousness is clouded (Freud, 1923). These internal sensations may present as coming from different places and have opposing qualities but they are part of the language of the body-ego. Sensations come from two sources: they may enter the person from external stimuli or be generated internally in the psyche. Physical and external sensations may be converted into the formation of the body-ego, while the internal perceptions may convert to bodily sensations.

6.2. CONVERSION

How then does the physical sensation convert into a psychological perception, or vice versa? The process of conversion, as noted by Rycroft (1995), occurs as psychological elements change to physical manifestations: this is considered by Freud to be caused by activated affect. This occurs when a complex of ideas, desires and feelings are exchanged for a physical symptom due to the related incumbent affect. Emotions convert material of the psyche into physical symptoms in the body. The metamorphosis of material from the psyche to a physical state may be activated by the person’s emotions. This psychosomatic passage, Freud (1923/1974) argues, may flow from the psyche to the soma, or it may also run from the body to the psyche as in the case of the development of the body-ego. The external stimulation of the body influences the development of the ego and the individual’s psyche.

The early work of Jung with the Word Association Test described by Storr (1983) displayed a vibrant psychosomatic relationship in the human psyche. Unconscious responses overflowed into the Word Association Test through time delays, unusual responses, grimaces and body changes. Jung saw this as indicative of unconscious communication that was expressed through bodily responses.

6.3. PSYCHOSOMATIC RELATIONSHIP

The direct relationship between the psyche and bodily responses was investigated by Jung (Storr, 1983). Kelsey (1991) notes that Jung, like Freud, was a competent medical practitioner who was acutely aware of the psychosomatic connections within the individual.
The association of ideas and a physiological response was known through the work of Pavlov with his work with dogs. Dogs were trained to associate the ringing of a bell with food and eventually would salivate when the bell was rung with no food being present. The association between the ringing of the bell and salivation in the dogs clearly shows the connection of the stimuli of food and a physiological response. Further work done in the area of association was carried out by Franz Riklin (Storr, 1983). The concept of word association was pioneered by Riklin, who investigated the way mental contents were linked together by similarity, contrast or continuity in time and space (Storr, 1983). Words were given verbally to participants who then responded with the first word that sprang to mind. From this information Riklin recorded connections and associations.

Jung became interested in the Word Association Test and explored its use to study unconscious material that appeared in the test. Jung examined the time and kind of responses by patients to verbal stimuli (Storr, 1983). Slow and unusual responses and facial reactions to the verbal stimuli were recorded and analysed to indicate an apparent psychological complex. The constellation of unusual or delayed responses registered some interference of an emotional unconscious nature. A group of unusual or faltering responses displayed an organisation or constellation of the ‘complex’ that was active in the individual.

Jung based his concept of complexes on the results of the Word Association Test. Such a complex had the ability to interrupt consciousness. Bodily responses were also indicative of a complex and displayed unconscious material interjecting consciousness. The unconscious was able to interrupt consciousness by means of halting a normal response, and replacing it with an unusual but unconsciously significant one. The physical responses, hesitations and unusual answers were somatic devices recruited by the unconscious to communicate the life of a hidden, but active, unconscious complex. Mc Lynn (1996) notes that the psychosomatic connection was clearly depicted through Jung’s work with the Word Association Test.

Riklin and Binswanger went on to develop the galvanometer, a machine that recorded a subject’s respiration, pulse and blood pressure; it was a forerunner of the polygraph (Mc Lynn, 1996). A vital relationship between the individual’s psyche and physiological responses was established at this time.
6.3.1. The Psychosomatic Dynamic

The psychosomatic connection is clearly apparent in art therapy, especially during the art-making process when the person is physically engaged with the artwork.

The link between the psyche and the body was observed by Milner (1971) through her spontaneous artwork. Upon reflection on her art-making, Milner perceived that her body responded to her unconscious verve with corporal movement. This movement was expressed, created and imparted into the artwork. She noted that her art-making grounded her exploration of the psyche and bound the unconscious material into a palpable and fixed form. Unadmitted feelings were provoked by the art-making due to the manipulation of the medium. These feelings bypassed censorship through appearing in the artwork before permission was consciously granted. The nature of the art-making kept Milner attentive to the present, but simultaneously captured past memories in her awareness. Milner (1971) permitted her body to respond to the persuasion of the unconscious in the art-making. This art-making connected her with the affect associated with the artwork, and so, on reflection, she became conscious of its content.

Art-making was also valued by Kramer, an early American psychoanalytic art therapist, for through it patients engaged in externalising, re-experiencing and resolving conflicting feelings (Waller & Dalley, 1992). The art-making permitted the patients to sublimate of instinctual energies into the artwork. Sublimation included displacement, symbolisation, neutralisation of drive energy, identification and integration (Kramer, 1987). Aggressive and destructive forces in the person could be actively displaced into the artwork, resulting in the artwork being a container of the emotions. Through art-making the person was able to hold their emotions and so prevent acting out destructive behaviour (Waller & Dalley, 1992). The affect and libidinal forces activated during the art-making were contained in the art, and so enriched and strengthened the patient’s ego (Kramer, 1987). Art therapy may be understood to stimulate the development of the body-ego (Freud, 1923). This may include the augmentation of the individual’s identity as being separate from others and their ability to define their ego as differentiated from their id. The forces that are active in the psyche may be expressed in the artwork through the art-making but in return the sensory input from the art media feeds back to the psyche.
6.3.2. Psychosomatic Connection

The psychosomatic connection is significant to psychodynamic art therapy due to the physical nature of art-making. Engagement with art materials produces sensations that may influence ego development and the individual’s psychodynamics. The person’s affect may produce the conversion from a physical state to a psychological one, or vice versa. The affect that converts this change of states accompanies the art-making and is expressed in the artwork. The art-making makes this conversion possible because it is a physical vehicle and ‘emotional container’ for the psychodynamic processes (Kramer, 1987). The physical involvement with the artwork supplies external stimulation to the body-ego and possibly alters the arrangement of the individual’s psyche (Adamson, 1990). Schaverien (1992) argues that art-making, in psychodynamic art therapy, influences psychodynamic elements in the unconscious and permits a physical and tangible expression of the state of the individual’s psyche.

Internal sensations in the individual may be expressed through bodily movements and art-making. Engagement with the art materials may demonstrate the internal sensations through patterns of movements and intensity of action (Milner, 1971). The affect expressed in the art-making may be viewed as a catharsis, with a release of psychological energy through artistic expression (Kramer, 1987). The physical involvement with the media may release body tensions that help emotional release – this was observed by Case and Dalley (1992) with children using clay in therapy. Art-making permits the expression of emotions that the participants are not able to articulate Case and Dalley noted that the style of art-making changed, reflecting a possible transformation in the participant’s psyche.

Interaction with the art materials may be impulsive and uninhibited and appear as acting-out by the participant, since the behaviour may seem to substitute cognitive awareness of past causal experiences. But the art-making sublimates unconscious energies and permits the emergence of unconscious memories and associated physical movement with emotional impetus (Kramer, 1987). The art-making influences the individual, permits expression of internal sensations and perceptions, raises unconscious memories and movements, and sanctions the cathartic release of emotional energy (Case & Dalley, 1992; Milner, 1971; Kramer, 1987). Psychodynamic art therapists are acutely aware of the psychosomatic relationship that is activated in art therapy.
Maclagan (2001) proposes that the psychological aesthetic includes both the art making process and the artwork produced. The physical handling of the art materials enables subliminal and unconscious responses to be expressed through the body into the artwork. The aesthetic experience in this way embodies unconscious and libidinal material that is then contained in the painting. The painting becomes an aesthetic response that contains feelings that are experienced as both sensations and emotions. Art making in this way arouses emotions and unconscious conflicts that are changed into an aesthetic response. The psychological aesthetic, Maclagan explains, brings the individual into a new territory that may simultaneously feel strange and familiar.

6.4. ADJUSTMENT OF THE PSYCHE

A retrospective look at thirty-five years spent as a hospital artist provides Adamson (1990) with a valuable vantage-point to understand art as therapy. He writes of the time spent with Adrian Hill in the 1950’s working as an artist in a tuberculosis sanatorium and later to a large psychiatric hospital in South London, Adamson experienced art as having a significant creative and restorative capacity. He established a studio in the hospital and welcomed the patients into this creative place. As an artist in a psychiatric hospital environment he defined his role as a facilitator for the patients to be able to paint. He explains that he did not direct the patients, for he noticed that when he talked with the patients concerning their ideas about their art he found that they would then go off and usually paint something other than what had been discussed. At times, Adamson (1990) decided that it was needful to wait with a patient as though on a vigil, in anticipation that creativity would come. He maintained an emotional holding capacity for the patient to contain paradoxes that arose in painting, with the expectation that difficulties could then begin to resolve. At these times he stayed with the emotional confusion and fear of the unknown felt by the patient that had been raised by the artwork, until the participant felt more comfortable. During his time as a hospital artist, Adamson (1990) felt that it required a watchful eye to be actively prepared for the unexpected to happen. He saw this expectation was effective, since it facilitated and, at times, catalysed the emergence of art as healing.
Through the process of making art, the individual could gain physical and objective distance from their inner tension so that the therapeutic-process was not overwhelming. Adamson (1990) regarded that the art-making placed the central responsibility for change upon the individual, rather than on the external treatment.

6.5. SENSORY-MOTOR INPUT

Sensory-motor processes occur in art therapy when the sensory input from the art materials and the therapeutic environment enters into the participant's body and brain. The sensory input from the art materials provokes a motor or bodily response from the participant. Simon (2001) argues that the motor response in the production of the artwork in turn has an effect on the psyche of the individual. The sensory input from the art materials has an influence on the psyche of the person.

This is evident in the art therapy described by Forman (1994) with her work with a female adolescent who had experienced both physical and sexual trauma. Engagement with the art materials in art therapy enabled the young woman to revisit her trauma and gain a sense of control over her experience. The physical manipulation of the art materials, in the presence of the art therapist, not only permitted the young woman to safely revisit her experience but also bring comfort and protection into her exposed and wounded self. The application of art materials granted the young woman emotional comfort and healing to her unconscious wounds (Forman, 1994). The participant engaged with the art-making and experienced alleviation of emotional pain with a sense of consolation in relation to the trauma that she had experienced. The sensory-motor involvement in art-making had the ability to convalesce the injured psyche.

The sensory-motor participation of the participant is an important dimension in psychodynamic art therapy because it arouses movement in the unconscious. Touching, handling and bodily interaction with the art materials can be soothing and healing to the psyche (Estep, 1995; Forman, 1994). Estep (1995) observed that interaction with the art materials had the potential to soothe and comfort an individual incest survivor in therapy. The art-making in an art therapy group consisting of girls who were self-mutilating was described by Milia (1996) as a metaphorical formation of skin for the protection of the psyche; this permitted therapy to occur in the session (Milia, 1996). The physical and sensual properties of the art-
making may also deliver consolation, integration and re-organisation to the individual (see examples in Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Kramer, 1987; Adamson, 1990; Forman, 1994). Integration of the psyche, through the participant’s art-making in therapy, contributes to better mental health.

The psychosomatic relationship in the human psyche is clearly visible in psychodynamic art therapy. The psychic forces are expressed in the art-making through metaphoric processes involving the physical interaction with the art materials. The art medium in turn feeds back sensory information to the person’s psyche and stimulates motor responses to the art-making. This relationship is intrinsically combined with emotions that have the capacity to convert psychic reality into a physical actuality in the artwork (Rycroft, 1995). Manipulation of the art materials evokes emotions and sensations that are carried back to the person’s psyche (Forman, 1994). The affect involved in the art-making has the potential to convert material between the psyche and the body. Interaction with the art media elicits memories and emotions in the presence of the art therapist.

6.6. MEMORY AND AFFECT

The neuro-physiological experiments conducted by Wilder Penfield contribute to an understanding of the connection of experience, memory and emotions (Harris, 1975; Sternberg, 2001). During the course of brain surgery on patients with focal epilepsy, Penfield conducted a series of experiments over several years. The patients were under local anaesthetic and were conscious throughout the operation and were able to talk to Penfield. Penfield touched parts of the cerebral cortex – in particular, the temporal lobes – with a galvanic probe. A weak electric impulse was used to stimulate the cortex and the patient’s responses were recorded. With great detail, the subjects were able to recall memories. They were recorded with great fidelity. Memories recalled were singular – that is, not jumbled or generalised – and contained images, sound and other sensory information.

Memories recalled by the patient when the brain was stimulated were made conscious. Not only were past memories recorded but also the feelings associated with those events were recalled. Penfield discovered that the memory and the associated feeling were inextricably locked together so that one could not be evoked without the other. Memories, with associated involuntary feelings, produced a sense

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of reliving the experience and were accessible through stimulation (Harris, 1975; Sternberg, 2001).

Milner (1971) argues that he physicality of art-making taps into a reservoir of emotions within the individual, and this then flows to the present reality. The bodily involvement with the art materials stirs emotions that then drift into the art therapy. Caught in this flow of emotions are forgotten memories. Memories are made real by the art-making, and surge with emotions (Forman, 1994). The art-making channels these emotions and memories into the presence of the art therapist. Past experiences that have influenced the individual, and require resolution, are then available to the individual and the art therapist. Both the presence of the therapist and the individual’s corporal interaction with the art materials may bring about potential space in the Winnicottian sense that connects the individual to early pre-verbal embodied memories (Bolas, 1987). The involvement with the art-making may then result in past experiences, feelings and sensations being made present, accessible and emotionally alive for the participant in art therapy.

Handling the art materials to form an artwork may connect the individual to emotions and physical sensations. Keyes (1992) has noted that the manipulation of materials has the capacity to release blocked feelings. Trauma and grief have the ability to stop thoughts, memories and feelings but through the sensory motor interplay with the art materials locked feelings can be accessed and recovered, and psychodynamic functions can be restored.

Art therapy has an important role in accessing repressed and traumatised emotions. Therapeutic intervention with five traumatised children was conducted by Kozlowska and Hanney (2001). The therapeutic strategy involved adjunctive group art therapy with a child psychiatrist and an art therapist. Parental violence and family separation had traumatised the young children aged between four to eight years. The therapeutic intervention involved the children’s artworks, which had the potential for the children in therapy to revisit issues around the trauma with minimal recursion of trauma.

Kozlowska & Hanney (2001) discussed trauma and its associated memory in children and concluded that a child from about the age of two or three years is able to have declarative or verbal memory. Prior to this a child has implicit memory that includes procedural and imaged memory. Procedural memory refers to knowledge encoded in
patterns of movement, posture, habits, skills and gestures. *Imaged memory* includes sounds, darkness, smell, visual images, bodily states and feelings of safety or danger. Exclusively verbal therapy, Kozlowska and Hanney suggested, was limited when working with very young children or children that have been traumatised at a young age. This is due to their inability to articulate experiences and store declarative memory at the time of the trauma. Art, they argued, may express implicit memory and grant the child access to past experiences and feelings. Feelings may comprise of emotions and sensations that were recorded in the memory at a pre-verbal age. Artmaking permitted a physical, procedural memory to be re-experienced during therapy.

While the children were painting, Kozlowska and Hanney noted that emotions and memories emerged for the children. Some of the children became energetically active while art-making, and this was accompanied with strong emotions. Following the art-making the children in the group were encouraged to talk about their art-making experience. Kozlowska and Hanney were able to help the children express how they felt in their art-making and to begin to articulate their life experiences displayed in the artwork. The children were then able to desensitise anxiety concerning family relations through the group art therapy. The art-making made it possible for the children to access unpleasant bodily sensations and to express these sensations in their art and talk about these impressions with the help of the therapist. The art-making assisted the children access and label their emotions. This then permitted them to recount and record their personal narrative (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001).

Interaction with art materials in art therapy has the potential to evoke memories and feelings, but may also be an indicator of information processing that is occurring in the person. Engagement with the art medium gives some indication of the level of objectivity and understanding the participant may have developed in their art therapy experience (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978).

### 6.7. **Cognitive Approach to Art Media**

The *Expressive Therapies Continuum* is a conceptual model for art and expressive psychotherapies designed by Kagin & Lusebrink (1978). The model examines the manner with which people interact with the art media and places this interaction into four possible levels. The levels of interaction indicate the stage of assimilation the
individual expresses through their interaction with the art material. The physical interaction with the art material is seen as an indicator of the information processing that is occurring in the art-making during therapy.

The Kinaesthetic/Sensory level is the first level of the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC), it is here that the person releases significant energy through the body during the creative process. The movement may be facilitating or resisting the expression of latent material. This kind of kinaesthetic interaction with the art materials stimulates arousal and may allow energy to be discharged in the art-making. The psychic energy is discharged or utilised through the motor behaviour involved in the art production. This enactive stage may connect the person on a physical level with past events. When the person is physically involved with the art material there is minimal reflective distance, and so the individual only has a slight understanding of the therapeutic experience. The reflective distance is the physical distance of the person with their involvement with the art materials, which in turn, reflects their ability to cognitively assimilate the therapeutic experience. The closer the engagement with the media, the less the reflective distance – this results in an undifferentiated experience with minimal understanding of the therapy. The greater the reflective distance, the more likely it is that the person will have a more cognitive symbolic awareness of the process of their expressive therapy. The rhythm of movement that develops during therapy promotes healing in the individual, because undifferentiated psychic energy is patterned and expressed through the body (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978, p. 172).

The Perceptual/Affective level of the ETC involves haptic movements which permit the person to express primitive sensations which have not previously reached the individual’s awareness. The movement promotes inner organisation in the individual, with an interaction between the body and awareness. During this level of interaction with the art materials there is an increase in the reflective distance from the previous levels (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978, p. 173).

Abstract thought is evident at the Cognitive/Symbolic level, when there is an internalisation of actions and forms with an emergence of mental images associated with these forms. The individual experiences a release from the immediate present and endeavours to process some of the more complex information that has arisen. To do this work there is an intuitive conceptual formation with a realisation and actualisation of symbols (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978, p. 174).
The Creative level of the ETC is generated in the individual as a synthesis takes place between the inner experience and the outer reality. This synthesis involves transformation and integration, and is seen in the creation of new forms and compositions. The intrinsic qualities of the media impress an influence on the individual’s self-actualisation process. The method of art-making is real at the time of the therapy and displays the individual’s connection with unconscious processes. The artwork is substantial and carries meaning for the individual through its formation (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978, p. 177).

Interaction with the art materials may be viewed as an indicator for the method of information-processing that an individual is operating during art psychotherapy. Minimal reflective distance during art-making permits expression of sensations, discharging of energy and recollecting past events. Increased reflective distance, with awareness of internalisation of actions and art-making, assists in the development of symbols. With greater reflective distance the person becomes aware of this synthesis of inner experience and outer reality (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978).

6.8. SUMMARY

The physically interactive nature of art therapy influences the psyche of the individual in the therapeutic environment. Handling and application of the art media permits the conversion of latent material to physically manifest in the artwork (Adamson, 1990). The art-making or metaphoric process may permit expression of internal sensations and perceptions, raise unconscious procedural memories, and sanction cathartic release of emotional energy (Milner, 1971, Kramer, 1987). Art-making may stimulate sensations that arouse emotions and impressions of memories for the individual. The activated affect has the potential to convert the sensual art-making experience into influencing the psyche (Rycroft, 1995). This in turn releases the internal perceptions to be metaphorically expressed into the artwork psychophysically.

The unconscious in art-making may be expressed directly through the body and interrupt conscious thought (Storr, 1983; Wallace, 1987). The psychophysical interaction awakens memories due to activated affect, causing a sense of reliving the experience (Harris, 1975). Through the art-making process, emotions, sensations and
memories can be stimulated and brought to the present awareness of the individual. Manipulation of the art media reveals metaphoric processes that engage the physical interaction of the individual and stimulate the involvement of the unconscious.

Memories, with associated emotions, may be awakened through the process of art-making, revisited and assimilated into consciousness (Milner, 1971). The presence of the art therapist during this art-making may result in the formation of a potential space where elements of the individual's formative environment and primary relationships are expressed in the therapy (Bollas, 1987; Case, 1996; Winnicott, 1971). Memories that are locked due to grief may be accessed as feelings and sensations of the grief released (Keyes, 1992; Case & Dalley, 1992). Traumatic memories, even if they are from a pre-verbal age, may be safely revisited through art-making in art therapy (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001). These memories allow the expression of emotions and sensations connected with trauma. The art-making also gives licence for the individual to articulate traumatic experiences that have previously been silent. The freedom and ability to express memory or physical sensations in the art-making enables the person to utter the unspeakable. Memories and feelings can then be incorporated and assimilated into the person's life (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001).

The physical interaction in art-making enables cathartic discharge of emotions, promotes restoration and facilitation of latent potential in the psyche (Milner, 1971). The metaphoric processes expressed in art therapy promote the integration of the psyche. Sensory input from the art materials may galvanise sensations that embody unconscious material for the individual. The sensory qualities of the media may stimulate a sensual form of free association that accesses early procedural memory. In this way the art-making may be seen to cause regression that stimulates the transference with the therapist in art therapy (Deco, 1998). These sensations and accompanying emotions create an atmosphere in which the individual and their art-making exist and where past experience may appear to be present and real in the therapeutic environment.
Chapter 7. **SUBJECTIVITY**

The process of making art in therapy, the artwork and the understanding that the participant forms of the experience is the data for this research. Listening to the participant concerning their experience may give insight into group art therapy and validate the participant. Listening may also have the detrimental effect of the researcher colluding with the participant and the artwork being used to defend the individual.

### 7.1. **ATTITUDE OF NOT KNOWING**

The psychoanalytic work of Casement (1985) is directed to the analyst’s ability to listen and be guided by the patient. He encourages the reader to have an attitude of not knowing and to wait for the patient to give links to personal information. Casement (1990) found that it was of value to ‘not know’ in an interview so that he or she responded to the immediate issues that arose. The therapeutic material emerged from within the patient and was not determined by the therapist. Casement (1990) considered that the unconscious cued the analysis and brought appropriate material to therapy. Listening to the patient in analysis developed trust in the therapeutic relationship. This trust led to communication at a conscious and unconscious level. Trusting the unconscious communications of the patient and responding to them brought the relationship to a deep level of interaction. Casement’s (1985) experience indicated that genuine therapy brought the therapist into touch with the patient’s feelings to the extent that they felt those feelings themselves. He called this experience ‘analytic holding’ and it enabled the therapist to contain the patient’s overwhelming feelings. This containment by the therapist enabled the patient to grow and develop a capacity for self-containment.

In art therapy the participant is listened to and the images are observed so that both conscious and unconscious material is brought to the attention of the therapist. The capacity for the therapist to contain this material assists and enables the participant to establish emotional containment and integration of the psyche.
7.2. **LISTENING IN THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP**

Listening to the participant encourages interaction between conscious and unconscious material. Respect for the images made in art therapy, paying attention to their unconscious content, develops a sense of cooperation rather than opposition to consciousness. The recognition of the images affirms the individual and validates their true self. A deep level of communication is engendered between the individual and the therapist through respecting the artwork. Schaverien (1992) argues that the unconscious is therefore given space within the therapeutic relationship to express itself, to be attended to and acknowledged.

Listening to the participant's experience and explanation of art therapy is helpful because it may contain further understanding and insight into art therapy itself. Gilroy (1992) suggests that the individual's assessment of their art therapy experience is valuable data for research.

7.2.1. **Listening Engenders Self-Acceptance**

The participant's assessment of the outcomes of their art therapy was the focus of a study by Quail and Peavy (1994). The research performed an in-depth phenomenological examination of art therapy, specifically focused upon one participant's experiences. The researchers considered that it was important not to impose theoretical terms or concepts on the development of the art therapy. The aim of the research was to return to the subjective experience of a female participant and to explore new understandings of the art therapy phenomenon. The participant had completed an art therapy program, and was able to articulate her experience. The data for the research included a participant's description of her art therapy experience and an art therapist's observation of the art therapy process. The data also included the artwork, the transcripts from the taped conversations and the audiotapes from the interviews, and focused on the art-making phase of the therapy (Quail & Peavy, 1994).

The art materials and the art-making process, Quail & Peavy (1994) observed, connected the participant to childhood memories and brought past experiences to her present awareness. Intense emotions were expressed through the art-making process and were acknowledged by the participant. The participant felt exposed and vulnerable because of the art-making process. Through the art-making process, however, the participant discovered that she was developing a growing awareness.
and understanding of herself, and concluded that through the art therapy experience she came to an acceptance of her authentic self.

7.2.2. **Listening Validates**

To listen to the participant's experience of therapy may shed new light on the therapeutic process and hear their side of the story (Campbell, 1997). Campbell (1997) is a family psychotherapist who aims to understand the experience of families who take part in family psychotherapy. He considered that to understand the therapeutic process required listening to the experience of the participant. To listen to the participant validated their experience of therapy. As a researcher he gives the participant a voice in negotiating the therapeutic relationship. Campbell attempts to raise his own awareness about the obstacles that he encounters when listening to the participant's experience – it is, after all, not a lesser truth than the view of the therapist.

7.2.3. **Limitations to Listening**

Listening to the participant's experience is valuable but Carr (1999) raises the concern that psychoanalytic research may become a redefinition and reinterpretation of the research material from the participant's perspective and that their voice may become just part of the text. Carr argues that some postmodernists view language as reality and that this includes metaphoric and linguistic information. This perspective substitutes the causation of psychoanalytic dynamics, transferences between the therapist and patient, and/or the existence of the unconscious with hermeneutic and linguistic inquiry. The result of such a move may involve the participant and the therapist in a relationship based upon shared language and metaphors. Such a position may encourage a form of collaboration and negotiation to develop into a situation where stories are made and retold and a collusive fantasy results in the therapy becoming ineffectual (Carr, 1999). Psychoanalysis, however, is well grounded in research that clearly indicates causal theory. According to this point of view, the causal influences, the unconscious and the transferences of the underlying psychodynamics, are imperceptible and invisible to the metaphors and language of the research. The text does not reveal all that is happening in psychotherapy and language is not consistent in its meaning (Carr, 1999).

The data, however, of this research was not subjected to linguistic analysis but to an inquiry into how the art-making and the artwork informed the researcher of the

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unconscious material, resistances and transferences that were operating in the art therapy group. The research was designed to listen to and give voice to the participants' experience in a way that gave expression to this material. The inclusion of the artwork into the data collection introduced the latent unconscious material. The language and metaphors of the participants were analysed from a psychodynamic framework that exposed underlying unconscious material, transferences and resistances both in the artwork and in the group dynamics.

7.3. SUMMARY

When approaching art therapy research it is necessary for the researcher to listen to the individual and to have an attitude of 'not knowing' in order to be receptive to the individual (Casement, 1985, 1990). Listening to the individual and respecting the unconscious material in their artwork may develop trust, communication and cooperation rather than opposition to therapeutic process (Schaverien, 1992). Quail & Peavy (1994) observed that listening to an individual's experience of art therapy brought self-acceptance. Listening to the participant helps to clarify the experience of art therapy and to elucidate the effectiveness of the therapy. The responses of the individual to therapy may raise the awareness of the therapist to issues that are occurring in art therapy generally (Campbell, 1997). Care needs to be taken when listening to a participant, particularly when examining the text of the therapy, that the associations made by the participant are also recorded and that the text is only a part of the therapeutic experience. It is essential that the researcher be aware that there may be a tendency to collaborate with the individual and in so doing avoid the impact of the unconscious, transferences or resistances (Carr, 1999).
Chapter 8. **METHODOLOGY**

Phenomenography is a research methodology that is used in this research and may be of use to art therapy at this time. It originates in an educational perspective that began in the 1970s at the University of Göteborg, Sweden. Phenomenographical research specialises in “the qualitatively different ways in which people are capable of experiencing various phenomena” (Marton & Booth, 1996 p. 167). The aim of this particular research is to study the qualitatively different ways people experience group art therapy.

Hawke (1993) as an art educator perceived a need for a phenomenographical research approach that accommodated the plurality of visual arts with the expectations of education. Hawke envisioned research into art as a way people conceptualise various issues as well as experience the art-making process. Phenomenography is designed to cope with the diversity that is expressed in art. The complexity of influences that may impact on art favour a phenomenographical research approach. Therapy differs from education in that art education is aimed at teaching students art, whereas the intention of art therapy is to use art as a medium through which an increased awareness and integration of the individual can occur.

Phenomenography deals with this level of diversity and variety. The aim of phenomenography as stated by Marton & Säljö (1984) is to ascertain as many qualitatively different meanings from a shared experience as possible and, from this variety, search for commonalities, contrasts and diversities. Similarities are grouped together into categories of descriptions and form the basis for conceptions that can be succinctly expressed and defined.

Phenomenography deals with subjective experience in social context and can therefore be used to research group art therapy. The art images are then used as data that provide further meaning and understanding of the experienced phenomenon (Stokrocki, 1990).

Stokrocki (1990) first analysed and interpreted photographs of a pottery instructor teaching how to handle clay. Stokrocki documented, through photographs, the significance of different types of touch. This research is valuable in that it included

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the art-making process. This form of image collection confirms the applicability of phenomenographical methodology, in that “experiences are reflected in statements about the world, in acts carried out, in artefacts produced ... and we have to look at the statements, acts and artefacts in order to find out what ways of experiencing particular aspects of the world they reflect, regardless of their validity, skilfulness and functionality” (Marton & Booth, 1996 p. 147). An artefact or artwork is any object that remains after a person has completed their act of creativity on any materials or media of art.

The way a person experiences a phenomenon is the object of this research. For the phenomenon to occur there is a relationship between the participant, their artwork and the process of making their art (Gerber, 1994). This is true in group art therapy, where the art-maker is in an intense relationship with the art, the therapist and the group. To remove the art-maker or the art would be to damage the creative/therapeutic dynamic: the phenomenon would cease. It is the relationship between the person and the particular task from which a concept of understanding can occur (Prosser, Trigwell & Taylor, 1994). It is often during this experience that meaning, understanding and new awareness may develop.

8.1. SECOND-ORDER PERSPECTIVE

The process by which an object is made is often taken for granted and at times the person is not aware of it. Usually the person is focused upon the end result rather than the art-making process or phenomenon. The therapist has an important role in helping the person stay with the phenomenon so that, where possible, awareness and understanding can occur. The use of personal experiential knowledge is the grounds for phenomenography being described as a ‘second-order perspective’. When the focus is on the artwork, the art therapy may be seen as a first-order perspective. On the other hand, in order to study the intention of the art-maker, and to see how the work was made, and the meaning and the understanding derived, the phenomenon is viewed through the eyes of the art-makers themselves and becomes a second-order perspective. Art therapy focuses on the intention, the creative process and the therapeutic relationship of the art-maker (Gerber, 1994; Hawke, 1993; Marton & Booth, 1996; Prosser et al., 1994).
8.2. **INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP**

Phenomenography, Marton & Booth (1996) explain, incorporates into its methodology both the individual and the group. The individuals who are interviewed are given time and space to express their experiences and the meanings drawn from those experiences. The perspective of the learner is recorded and valued. There are no right or wrong responses, and so the person is at liberty to honestly express what they mean. The individual's subjective knowledge is then transcribed from the interviews and the variety of different meanings is collated. It is the experience and understanding of the group as a whole that then forms the basic unit of analysis in phenomenography. The copious information is gathered to form a structure of understanding that can house the qualitatively different meanings the individuals have expressed.

8.3. **THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

Another mechanism in phenomenography that contributes to the equilibrium of the research methodology is described by Marton (1994) as the balance between the internal relations and the external horizons. The internal relations are the meanings the individual receives from becoming aware of the dynamics of the phenomenon between themselves (the subject) and their works of art (the object). This is called the *referential* aspect of the phenomenon. The external horizon is the way the phenomenon fits into the environmental context. This is the external experience of the individual to the phenomenon. Both the internal relations and the external horizon form the *structural* aspect of the experience. A structural change cannot come about without a change in meaning, nor can a change in meaning come about without changes in the structure. The structural and referential aspects of the research are dialectically related to each other.

The implication of this for art therapy is that the experience of art-making in a therapeutic situation leads to an increase in the individual's increased understanding of themselves. This increase in understanding will then affect the way they relate to art-making and the group art therapy. Changes in the art-making with therapeutic intention will lead to a change in the person's understanding, because it is a reciprocal relationship between the personal experience and the group therapeutic environment.
Marton and Booth (1996) argue that the ability to learn involves innate knowledge and external input. Plato's concept of learning was that knowledge originated from within the soul and not from the external world. Kant, Descartes and Chomsky all believed that knowledge was innate and that from this well of knowledge people gained understanding of the world and themselves.

8.4. AWARENESS

Phenomenography looks at knowledge from the point of view of different levels of awareness, from the outer external world to the inner subjective world of the individual. The concept of awareness in this research relates to the dichotomy of inner and outer worlds of consciousness and unconsciousness. An image made by a person may come from the concrete world around them, how they are feeling, the thoughts they are experiencing, the social context of their life, their place in time, bodily sensations, their spiritual space and intuitions, metaphoric images as well as other material from the unconscious. Any of these images may be drawn to the surface and into the awareness of the person, or made into an art form, and reflected upon for their metaphoric content and not their literal interpretation (Marton & Booth, 1996).

Phenomenography is a research specialisation that records people's qualitatively different experiences and categorises them (Bruce & Gerber, 1995; Marton & Booth, 1996; Sversson & Therman, 1993). The aim of the present research is to study the qualitatively different ways participants experience group art therapy.

8.5. ORIGINS OF PHENOMENOGRAPHY

As mentioned earlier, phenomenography is a research specialisation that developed during the 1970s. The area of interest was to discover why some people are better at learning than others. The research investigated:

I. What does it mean, that some people are better at learning than others?
II. Why are some people better at learning than others?
The studies were conducted by holding individual sessions in which students were asked to read a text. The students were informed that after reading the text they were going to discuss their understanding with the experimenter (Marton, 1994). The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim and scrutinised. On being scrutinised, the transcripts of the students' accounts showed how they had remembered and understood the text. The responses that were similar were grouped together into categories of description that typified the few distinctively different ways of understanding a phenomenon (Bruce & Gerber, 1995; Laurillard, Martin, Marton, Masters, Ramsden, Stephanou & Walsh, 1990; Marton & Booth, 1996; Marton & Säljö, 1984; Prosser et al., 1994). The different categories of description were seen to be distinct and hierarchical according to different learning strategies. The question, “What does it mean, that some people are better at learning than others?”, had now been answered in the different categories of description.

The answer to the second question related to the way the students studied the text. Some of the students focused on what the text meant. Others tried to remember the facts and cram the information into their heads. The first method provided the students with a higher, more sophisticated understanding of the text and this was called a deep approach. The second method of retaining the facts gave the students a poorer understanding and consequently only a surface approach to the text. The different approaches contained a combination of 'how' the students learned and their 'intention' in learning the texts. The process of 'how' the students learnt the information had a definite influence upon the meaning they received from the text. That is, 'how' one does something, and the 'intention' with which one does it, will influence the meaning and understanding one gleans from the experience.

Consequently, the answer to the second question is that some people better at learning than others because people differ in their approach to learning tasks (Marton, 1994). This qualitative research procedure has been adapted to this research because it addresses the 'how' and the 'intention' with which participants interact with phenomena.

8.6. INTENTION AND CHANGE

From the research it is evident that the approach a person has to a task is a combination of how they go about the operation and their intention. Prosser states, “In using a deep approach, the students' intention is to understand the material
being studied in terms of extracting personal meaning from the learning task at hand. When adopting a surface approach the students’ intention is to reproduce the material being studied, often through rote learning” (Prosser, 1994 p. 192).

When contemplating the definition of art therapy, the issue of intention is significant. An individual seeking help through art therapy may come with varying intentions. When initiating their art-making they may want to extract personal meaning from the experience or understanding of the process of group art therapy, as in the case of art therapy students. The intention behind ‘how’ a person makes artwork and ‘what’ that artwork comprises both contribute to therapeutic change.

8.7. Validity

Validity is “the extent to which a method of data collection represents or measures the phenomenon which it purports to represent or measure” (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990 p. 225).

The phenomenon of group art therapy is best described by the collection of a diversity of data from different media and this is known as recursion. Recursion is an iteration of data collection using different media and enabling the generalisability of the research outcomes. The present research data includes the artwork, the transcripts and the audiotapes of the interviews. Both tape-recording and verbatim transcripts are faithful and valid forms of data collection (Minichiello et al., 1990). There is a difference between the written and oral responses where the oral responses reveal intonations in the voice and expression. Pauses, laughter or crying may be recorded in the transcript and analysed for their contribution to the meanings of the text (Svensson & Theman, 1983).

8.8. Pilot Study

Before the research interviews were conducted, a small pilot study was run to test if the questions were applicable and the role the artwork would have in the interview (see chapter 9).
8.9. METHOD

8.9.1. Ethical Considerations
The research was conducted with the approval of the University of Western Sydney’s ethics committee, according to their strict guidelines concerning the confidentiality of the information and the participants’ identity, as well as the storage of the participants’ personal data and its disposal on the completion of the research. The participants signed permission releases regarding their involvement and photographs of their artwork, and provision was made for their withdrawal from the research if they so desired. If the participant felt distressed by the material that was raised in the research, they were able to receive assistance from a qualified art therapist.

8.9.2. Sample
In statistical terms, the ‘population’ refers to the entire set of people that the research is intending to study while the ‘sample’ is the subset of that population that participate in the research.

The sampling procedures adopted were qualitative techniques known as ‘non-probability sampling’ and ‘theoretical sampling’ (Minichiello et al., 1990). The research consisted of a non-probability sample in that the people did not represent a cross-section of society, and a theoretical sample because the participants had been involved once a week in non-directive psychodynamic group art therapy for at least eight weeks. There were two groups in Sydney that fitted these criteria and the therapists’ consent was sought to interview group members a couple of weeks after the conclusion of their final session. The therapists gave their approval and explained to the group members that this was an opportunity to be involved in art therapy research at the completion of their final group. The research interviews were held after the completion of the group therapy to minimise the effect of the research on the group. There were three women who had been involved in an art therapy group at a women’s centre that had run for eight weeks, and six women who were art therapy students training as art therapists. The total sample was therefore nine women who had experienced group art therapy. Harriet Wadeson (2002) suggested (in a personal conversation) that the two groups be treated as a whole for a variety of meanings for phenomenography but that they be separated when analysing outcomes of the groups. The reason for this was that Group 1 was conducted for personal therapeutic

Tusting the Artwork
purposes and Group 2 was a professional training group. The two groups may then be compared.

When all the varieties of meanings are included in a phenomenographical research, the sample is said to ‘reach saturation’. Saturation “refers to a process where no additional data can be found that will add to the categories being developed” (Minichiello et al., 1990). It is not assumed that saturation was reached in the research because the sample was divided between those participants in personal therapy and those undergoing professional training to be art therapists.

**8.9.3. The Interview**

Each participant was asked to bring some of their artwork to the interview. The participants were interviewed individually and the interviews went for approximately one hour. The interview was audiotaped and involved five semi-structured questions in relation to artworks made in group art therapy. At the completion of the interview the artworks were photographed. The tape recording of the interview added to the validity of the research, because it was an exact record of the oral information expressed. The tape recording gave the researcher an opportunity to maintain eye contact with the participant and to focus on the artwork. The tape freed the researcher from taking notes and permitted a re-examination of the raw data after the session.

The interviewer put on hold her own experiences, views, judgements and presuppositions in order to create a non-threatening and receptive atmosphere and to obtain a faithful rendition of the interviewee’s view of the phenomenon (Minichiello et al., 1990).

The audiotapes were then transcribed.

**8.9.4. The Research Questions**

I. How did you make this artwork?
II. Is this what you intended to make?
III. What does it mean to you?
IV. How did you find doing art therapy in a group?
V. What does the term art therapy mean to you?
These questions are known as 'wicked questions' in qualitative research because they contain basic assumptions and fundamental premises that are in themselves open-ended. In everyday life the answer to such question is often taken for granted and is self-evident to the individuals.

The interviews began with casual talk before the researcher commenced recording. The artwork was introduced immediately to enable the dialogue to be influenced by the images.

There were the five primary questions and further questioning to elucidate the answers. It was also possible for the participants to avoid answering material that they did not want to disclose. It was mutually understood that the interview was not a therapeutic environment and that the participants need only express what they felt comfortable to share.

**Question 1: How did you make this artwork? Could you tell me about it?**

The purpose of this question was to acknowledge and value the art-making process at the commencement of the data collection (Schaverien, 1993; Wallace, 1987). This question revisited the art-making experience and possibly engaged memories of feelings and sensations of the therapy. The art-making process may reveal some of the psychodynamics of the art therapy experience through the selection, interaction and the sequential construction of the artwork (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001). How an individual makes an artwork may be understood as a metaphoric process that may be an expression of unconscious material. The process of making the art may contribute to the meaning of group art therapy (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Marton & Booth, 1996).

**Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?**

This question was asked to view the difference between what was intended and what was actually created. In the context of group art therapy, the intention of the conscious mind combined with the affects of the unconscious create artwork that form a potential space where inner realities and external material meet (Winnicott, 1953, 1971; Nowell Hall, 1987). The creation of the artwork develops a transitional object (Schaverien, 1989). The transitional object may enable the individual to regress to primary relationships or other significant memories through the tactile and regressive nature of the art materials (Deco, 1998). These regressive aspects of
the art-making may unintentionally stimulate a transference and counter-transference with the therapist and the group.

Furthermore, where the participant has created an artwork unintentionally, it may appear to the participant as being magical or numinous due to its unconscious content (Schaverien, 1992).

**Question 3: What does the artwork mean to you?**

The purpose of this question was to discover if the participant was aware of the metaphoric content in their artwork and if they had found meaning from the group art therapy experience. The participant might acknowledge that unknown or unwanted feelings or personally significant material were evident in the artwork. The group art therapy may have assisted them to manage difficult material or see new potential in themselves.

**Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?**

The responses of the participants to this question may reflect the effect of the artwork on the group dynamics and individual transferences.

Art therapy groups differ from verbally based psychodynamic groups due to the non-verbal, visual component of the art-making and the artwork. The artwork has multiple functions that influence the group dynamics. The artwork may act as a communication to the group from the individual (Springham, 1998). The group may respond indirectly to the individual through the artwork (Nowell Hall, 1987). The individuality of the members is expressed through the art-making and the artwork (Skaife, 1990; Case & Dalley, 1992, Deco, 1998; Springham, 1998). The image may act as an interface and carry hostile feelings and emotions raised during the group art therapy experience (Greenwood & Layton, 1987; Waller, 1993; Sarra, 1998). An artwork may bring unconscious material to the attention of the group and communicate what could not be said publicly (Waller, 1993). An artwork may also carry a collective meaning for the group and hold the focus of the group (McNeilly, 1984, 1989, 1990; Skaife and Huet, 1998; Springham, 1998). Similar images in the group may indicate a resonance of unconscious material that draws the attention of the group to a common theme (McNeilly, 1984, 1989, 1990). The artwork may reflect and catalyse group dynamics and enhance the therapeutic process (Springham, 1998; Waller, 1993).
Participants may not have been aware of a transference with the therapist or the co-therapist or other group members, and may not have mentioned it to the researcher although it may have appeared in the artwork and impacted on the group (Bion, 1961).

**Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?**

The purpose of the question was to ascertain a variety of answers as to what does art therapy mean and so possibly enrich the understanding of art therapy.

Question 3 was concerned with the specific meaning of an artwork for the participant. This last question explored the overall meaning the participants developed from art therapy, grounded in the experience of group art therapy. The specific meaning gained from an artwork might differ from the overall meaning of art therapy. Or the specific meaning related to the participant’s artwork might transfer to the more general meaning of art therapy. The students of Group 2 might have a more informed and articulate response than the participants of Group 1. But the students of Group 2 might be less likely to disclose personal material due to professional training than participants in Group 1 (Gilroy, 1995).

**8.9.5. Varieties of Personal Meanings**

The recorded interview was then transcribed. The transcripts and their artworks were studied to view the relationship of how the participant made the artwork and what was the significance of the group art therapy experience to the participant. Familiarity with the transcribed data slowly led to the identification of representative statements and metaphors.

An interjudge who was also the art therapy supervisor examined the transcripts with the artworks to ensure that the researcher remained true to the data and helped establish the varieties of personal meanings. Two judgements are necessary to substantiate the validity of the outcome of a phenomenographical research (Marton & Booth, 1996).

**8.9.6. Research Outcomes**

There will be three main outcomes to this research:

- The relationship between the metaphoric processes of art-making and the metaphor contained in the artwork.
- A variety of personal meanings derived from the phenomenon of the group art therapy.
- A comparison of personal therapy and professional training.

8.9.7. Limiting Factors

The methodology of phenomenography was developed by cognitive educators but in this research it was applied to art therapy that is psychodynamic. The variety of personal meaning contains metaphoric material that can not be understood literally but has to be understood in terms of unconscious causation, transference, projection, resistance or some other dynamic.

The research may also be limited by the fact that the therapist responsible for the professional training at the university was also the supervisor for this research and this may have biased the interjudging the material.

The researcher sought to 'bracket' her own thoughts and feelings but was subject to human error. The artwork being present also facilitated free association in the interviewer and may have influenced the research. The researcher also is a female occupational therapist rather than an art therapist, and this may have influenced the research (Minichiello et al., 1990).
Chapter 9. **Pilot Study**

A small pilot study was performed with two participants who were recognised artists and who had not experienced art therapy. They were informed that the interview was a pilot study for research in art therapy. Ethical guidelines were adhered to in relation to this pilot study. The participants were asked to have some pieces of their artworks in the interview. The interviews were conducted in their respective homes.

The overall purpose for the pilot study was to ascertain if the interview technique and questions would be effective in revealing significant information for the research. Would the presence of their artwork in the interview act as a catalyst for an exploration of their art experience?

The questions were kept to a minimum and were open-ended to allow for reflection and exploration by the participant. The questions were not directed towards personal issues but rather the researcher hoped that the artwork would reveal its own story and meaning.

The four questions to be trialled were as follows:

1. How did you make this artwork? Can you tell me about it?
2. Is this what you intended to make?
3. What does it mean to you?
4. What do you think the term ‘art therapy’ means?

The conversation developed around these questions. The researcher was careful not to direct the answers but to clarify the participants' responses.

A level of trust needed to be established in each interview so that personal information might be shared, if the participants were willing and felt comfortable. The pilot study was performed to evaluate whether the interview technique would yield sufficient information for the research. If the pilot study interviews were effective, it would be possible to run the interviews with the research participants and collect relevant data.

*T充斥 the Artwork*
The researcher was concerned that the interview would contain the emotions and personal content that would surface. The pilot study participants were artists, whereas the research sample had experienced group art therapy and may still have had issues that were alive and active from their therapy.

The pilot study interviews were recorded with a cassette player so that the researcher could gain experience in data collection. Photographs of the artworks were not taken in the pilot study. The audiotapes of the pilot study were not transcribed and this was a limitation of this study.

9.1. JEAN

The first participant had the pseudonym ‘Jean’. Jean is an accomplished carver in shell and recently turned eighty years of age. She has worked will shell-carving for many years and also carves semi-precious stones, bones, whales’ teeth and cameos. She teaches these skills to adults and children on a weekly basis and judges other carvings in exhibitions and shows. Jean brought a three-dimensional carved shell with a floral pattern and a long bone carved in the shape of a mermaid. The researcher began the interview with the question:

“Jean, could you tell me how did you made this carving?” She then began to explain how she chose the shell from a large horn shell that was pink inside and white on the outside. She carved it from the white side so the pink began to show. The flowers had pink centres and white petals, and stood off from the background shell. The telling of this process of ‘how’ she carved the shell took some minutes due to the detailed work that was involved. This question did engage Jean in remembering the process of her art-making.

To the question, “Is this what you intended to make? Tell me about it”, Jean explained that working with natural materials required avoiding fault lines or difficult spots and changing the design to suit the materials.

The researcher then asked, “What does this mean to you?”. Jean found this question difficult. The researcher rephrased it: “What does your carving mean to you?”. Jean said that it kept her busy and maintained her health. The main reason she continued to carve was that she felt that she could teach others and in particular she could teach
children the love of carving. Jean explained how she had wanted a big family but she only had one child; however, through her ability to carve she was able to teach many children. Jean said that the children were the ‘real gems’ that she worked with. When asked, “What does the term ‘art therapy’ mean?”, Jean reiterated the thought that it would mean to help people, particularly children, to develop skills and abilities that would help them relate in their lives. This was so that they could be functional members of the society.

While the interview with Jean was in progress the question of how she had made the carvings was answered easily and with great detail. Jean was comfortable with talking about the materials, tools and skills that she had worked together to form the carvings. This process was planned, sequential and completed in a clear, well thought-through manner. The materials at times dictated the shapes of the carving due to their organic nature and Jean needed to adapt to these variations. This slightly changed the outcome of the carving but was not a hindrance to her intention but added interest and challenge to the carving, process. As she planned her work it was open to alterations due to the nature of the materials and her overall intention of the carving was not frustrated. The carving process itself was a sensory experience that Jean enjoyed and could spend hours working on without noticing the time.

Jean spoke of her personal loss of not having a larger family than she had hoped for and that this was the motivation for teaching children. Jean related to the children who came to her carving classes and enjoyed their company. She thought that teaching children skills in carving was important, as it enabled them to be useful members of the society.

The question about art therapy brought a similar response from Jean: she felt that art therapy would help people, particularly children, to find ways to be active, healthy, involved members of the community.

9.2. Lois

The second participant of the pilot study was Lois. The interview was held in Lois’s dining room where her well-used easel was standing. She was in the process of oil painting: on the easel was a painting that was still wet that. The subject of the painting was of a banksia tree with five banksias on the plant and a black banksia.
man. As we sat down Lois began to talk about her house, her family and the study she had done. After sitting at the dining table for some time recounting a number of rich stories, she looked at me and said, “Now what is it that you want to talk about?” It was now my turn to speak, and so I told her of the research and the four questions that were involved in the interview.

Lois sat for just a moment while I set up the cassette player and then began to unfold her experience of art and what it had meant to her. She had remembered the questions in order and spoke freely about her life and the role art had fulfilled in her. Her paintings were of Australian native flora – she was a Doctor of Botany and had a great love of plants. Lois had learnt a skill from an artist colleague of hers of applying paint in a three-dimensional technique that raised the flower off the canvas. The plants were technically detailed and aesthetically pleasing to her. Lois was artistic as a child but it was not until adult life, after establishing her career and having a family, did she return to her art. She told how she went to art classes for her ‘sanity’, because her life was very busy and her children were adolescent and demanding. The social interaction with others in the art class and with her teacher was valuable and she loved painting. Lois told of two experiences that had influenced her to trust the artwork and its contents.

The first story was of a time Lois went to the Art Gallery of Sydney with the famous artist and her personal friend, Joshua Smith. Joshua Smith had been a close friend of William Dobell, who had painted a well-known picture named ‘The Cypriot’. Lois and Joshua were standing in front of this picture on this day. Lois asked Joshua who was the Cypriot – meaning the person – and how did Dobell know him? Joshua answered that it was a time when he and Dobell were working together and there was this Greek labourer who worked down the street and at lunchtime this labourer would sit for Dobell for this painting. Lois was studying the painting as this information was told to her and she said, “But the hands, Joshua, are gentle and are the hands of a kind, sensitive and intelligent man.” And Joshua answered, “Those are my hands. Dobell painted my hands in his place.”

The second story that Lois told was about Lloyd Rees, who was another great Australian artist, and also another of Lois’s friends. He rang her on the phone once – he was in his nineties at the time – and said to Lois, “Please come over. I want to find my way to God.” Lois made arrangements and went to see him. Lois knew that he had tried different religions and that he also was aware that Lois was a Christian.
though she had tried not to say anything too direct about her religion to him. When she arrived at his home she soon found herself looking at his pictures and she noticed that in many of his pictures he had lines that were almost concentric circles or whirling lines that seemed to swirl. These lines occurred in most of his work and so she asked, “Lloyd, what are these lines that you make? They are in most of these pictures.” And he answered, “Ah, that is the vortex of creation...” Later he said to Lois, “I knew that you would tell me.”

These two stories of Lois’s were very inspiring, because in each story she trusted what was in the picture to be true. The hands in ‘The Cypriot’ were not the hands of a labourer and Joshua Smith confirmed this to be fact. In the case of the swirls and movement in Lloyd Rees’ work the answer to his question was already in his work and Lois had the pleasure to help him see the ‘vortex of creation’. These stories encouraged the researcher to trust and listen to the images in the research to hold the answers. The researcher decided to stay with the images that would be brought to the research since they are valuable data that can inform the research.

There were a number of conclusions that were drawn from the pilot study. The presence of the artwork of the participant was invaluable as a reference point during the interview. The initial questions were oriented towards the artwork and reinforced the priority of the art. The artwork grounded the interview in the actual experience of the art-making process. The artwork also gave the interviewer a place to meet the participant ‘on their own turf’ – that is, in the participant’s personal space. This artwork was then the instigator for the meaning of the art-making experience.

The engagement with the artwork seemed to develop trust within the relationship between the participant and the researcher, and this would prove valuable for the research interviews. As the researcher valued the artwork too, there grew a freedom in the information that was shared by the participant.

The semi-structured questions were effective in permitting space and flexibility in the interview. One participant, Jean, wanted the interview to be quite structured with clear questions and to respond with her answers, while Lois listened to all the questions at once and did not want to be interrupted in her well thought-through response. Since the interview had few questions it was possible to allow for a flexible format and to accommodate personal responses.

_Trusting the Artwork_
The practice in using the recording equipment was an important part of the pilot study and decreased the anxiety of the researcher.

The pilot study had limitations in that the interviewer knew the pilot study participants but would not know the research participants. The pilot study participants were artists and the research participants had experienced group art therapy and so may have experienced a different types of art experience and so might respond differently. The research participants had been involved in psychoanalytic therapy and may have included latent material in the artwork.

The pilot study was not transcribed and so there may be areas of the study that were not analysed to the point of gaining understanding before entering into the research. The artworks were not photographed in the pilot study and this lack of experience of photographing another person’s artwork in their presence was another limitation of the pilot study.
Chapter 10. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research data included the image or images that the participant brought to the interview that they chose to talk about, their comments and responses to the interview questions, and information and feelings noted by the researcher after the interviews. Some of the images and parts of the transcripts are presented in this results and discussion chapter, but the full transcripts are in Appendix 1.

There were nine participants and their interviews are reported individually in the results. Each report shows the participant’s answers to the five semi-structured questions of the interview in the context of their artwork and their group art therapy experience:

1st Responses to the first question were informative of the art-making process and the unconscious processes that were involved in the art-making (Milner, 1971). The manifestation of unconscious material was demonstrated in how the participant made the artwork and this is termed ‘metaphoric processes’.

2nd The responses to the second question were informative of the intention of the participant to the making of the artwork and may include evidence of the development of potential space in therapy.

3rd The responses to the third question were informative of the meaning that the participant gave to the specific artwork that was present in the interview. The artwork, with the meaning that the participant provided, was termed the ‘metaphor’. The metaphoric process, the metaphor and the artwork interrelate to bring the unconscious material to the conscious awareness of the individual to form the meaning that they formed from the group art therapy.

4th The responses to the fourth question were informative of the participant’s experience of the group.

5th The responses of the fifth question were informative of the individual’s assessment of the art therapy experience.

Individual identities have been concealed for ethical reasons and pseudonyms have been given to the participants. These names are in alphabetical order with the first three being participants from a Women’s Counselling Centre (Group 1), and the other six participants being art therapy students from the University of
Western Sydney (Group 2). Their responses were analysed individually with reference to the work of the theorists raised earlier in this thesis.

10.1. AVER (WOMEN’S CENTRE)

Aver was pleased to talk about her art therapy experience and brought all her artwork to the interview in her folder. She pulled out the artwork and placed them on the floor in a heap. She began to sort through them and select images to talk about. When she had selected an image the first interview question was asked.

10.1.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

During her explanation of the art-making Aver stated:

"Most of my pictures have to do with anger, so I painted a lot of anger, and a lot of anger, they are quite big pictures... This is my angriest one [painting]. I mean, there is a certain amount of physical involvement you can do with your hands... and... I didn’t like all that white paper so I ripped it off."

Aver was aware that her paintings contained anger and was vigorously and even violently involved with the art materials. Aver sublimated her anger, the primitive impulses, into the art-making (Kramer, 1987) (see Figure Aiii). The metaphorical process of ripping the artwork depicted the unconscious process of separation that was happening for Aver during the art therapy group (see Figure Ai). Her physical and emotional energy were cast into the artwork as though she would not live with it any more (Schaverien, 1992). The process of art-making enabled Aver to project her primitive impulses and into the artwork (Keyes, 1992; Kramer, 1987).

In a different image, Aver tells how she layered black paint onto paper:

"I just layered black on black, and layered and layered, and had fun with it ... There is depth and beauty in blackness, to some extent, but it is black and is horrible. There is something there, it is not just rubbish, there is something valuable."

The action of layering paint was enjoyable for her. The sensory-motor interaction with the material, assisted Aver in a metaphorical process to be able to bring relief from conflicting feelings and receive a sense of value from the dark image. The sensual properties of the art medium calmed and refreshed Aver so that she was able.
to receive a sense of pleasure and enjoyment from art-making. Aver was able to receive an element of consolation from the art therapy group (Estep, 1995; Forman, 1994; Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001).

The art-making assisted Aver to project her anger into the images and relieving her inner tension and emotional pressure. The expression of anger in Aver’s art-making came before a sense of consolation could be received. Her engagement with the art-making embodied the image with unconscious energy forming an emotional attachment with the image and an involvement in therapy (Schaverien, 1992). The art materials functioned as a vehicle to sublimate emotions and to promoted sensory receptivity and comfort to her psyche (Forman, 1994).

10.1.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

“Yeah, I just did it in five minutes. It had just been inside me for weeks and weeks so I just got it out.”

The image that Aver painted has been with her for weeks. She was conscious of the presence of this image in her mind and art therapy gave the opportunity to externalise it. As though it came rapidly, as though it were delivered, and came with a sense of relief. There was pressure to rid herself of this unwanted material and the art-making made this possible (Schaverien, 1992).

There was a sequence that was important to Aver in the art-making. “I sat down and thought, ‘I want to do that image’” but “I couldn’t do that one first before this one.”

One image was necessary before the next would come. Aver did not seem to plan the art-making but rather there was a sense of order and continuity that was unconsciously directed (Adamson, 1990;).

Aver also explained:

“I always started in the middle of my paper for some reason. I start with the middle and it just ends up that I want to put all my things here, and then block this figure off from my life ... I ripped it off.”

Aver started her artwork in the middle of the paper but then the image grew in a certain direction. The position of the different elements in the image was important.
for her, and their relation to each other was also significant (Milner, 1971). Aver, on completion of the work, was able to reassess the situation that was depicted in the artwork and alter it. Ripping off unwanted parts of the image enabled her to explore alternative scenarios for her life. She was able to alter the composition of her artwork and this engendered the courage to change the composition of her life and the relationships that influenced her. This rearranging depicted her re-evaluation of her life and empowered her to take initiative.

Aver explained that her overall intention was to work through her anger and attempt to paint her anger in her artwork. She moved through her overwhelming anger and then found herself confronted by exhausting sadness (see Figure Aiii).

10.1.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

Aver explained, “Most of my pictures have to do with anger. ... The course was helpful to me because I never thought I would get past expressing anger. I did, I started going into some sort of sadness. ... I got a lot of clarity from doing these pictures, an expression leading to clarity.”

Art therapy assisted Aver through her anger to a place of sadness and developed clarity about her life.

10.1.4. Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

“The others would talk about their stuff and I would think, ‘Oh yeah, that’s happening to me.’ It would start sparking things off in me, finding similarities ... You had to share the times and at times it was a bit stifling. Everyone got a chance to say something if you wanted to, but ... I sort of felt, ‘Oh, an hour’s up.’ I could go a lot longer, but I found it good.”

Aver had mixed feelings about the group experience. Other members’ comments were helpful and affirmed her (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998). She was able to identify with the other members’ experiences so that she did not feel isolated in her situation. The group was a safe place for her to talk with others who had similar life stories (Waller, 1993). At times she found the group stifling as she limited herself to enable everyone to have a turn. This created frustration in Aver because her inner conflicts and emotions were great and she wanted to relieve the pressure. Aver experienced the group as being receptive to her artwork and her responses, and this

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assisted her to contain her emotions within the art therapy environment (Bion, 1969; Kramer, 1987).

Twice, Aver presented an image to the group, and while the group was looking at it she altered the image. One image had a figure that she tore off (see Figure A1). The other image had a small black figure in clay that she trod on, leaving her footprint in the figure (see Figure A1). Aver explained her actions by saying:

“I had to go back and alter them when I got back in the group ... In this one, the black figure here, it was a round sort of doll figure and when I brought it to the group I felt it was dominating. I had made it that way, and they suggested that maybe there may be some therapeutic value in making him not so dominating, and I just took my boot and stepped on it.”

Aver's actions to her artwork may be indicative that her psyche was accommodating her increased awareness of her conflict. Her psychophysical responses of treading on the figure, or ripping the image, may not just be a reaction of rejection of the other, but cooperation with the changes that were occurring in her in the art therapy (Adamson, 1990; Forman, 1994; Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Kramer, 1987). The group support was essential in the making of these actions and encouraging Aver to change the composition of her life for the future.

The group witnessed, validated and empowered Aver to take action. Aver was expressing anger in the artwork and in the group she was initiating action and taking responsibility for her life. The image was able to take the anger and revenge that Aver placed upon it. There may be phantasies that Aver had around the action of treading on the image – that this retaliation would happen to the one the image represented – but the revenge was sublimated into the artwork so that Aver possibly did not feel the need to act it out. She became conscious that her actions depicted the desire for retaliation against the one who had hurt her. The art therapy group and the artwork permitted her to become aware of her revenge and the motivation of her actions in a public environment. The group witnessed Aver's struggle that was objectified in her artwork and this added credibility to her emotional suffering, which in turn empowered her to overcome victimisation to re-evaluate her life and separate from a destructive relationship.
10.1.5. **Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?**

Aver commented that it's about "getting in touch with my feelings and being able to express them in a way that was a purging ... Once I expressed something then it actually gave me more clarity on what it was, instead of it being all confused with jumbled, pent-up feelings."

Aver continued:

"It feels a lot different, like a real shift ... I don't have as much anger inside me but I certainly have an incredible amount of this ... sadness."

Art therapy for Aver had meant a significant movement in her emotions, with an increased clarity of thought about the actions that she would take to redirect her life.

10.1.6. **Discussion**

In the interview Aver had brought all her artwork and poured it into a heap on the floor. This brought a feeling of being overwhelmed by the material and this echoed her feelings about her tumultuous emotional state. Aver was able to select artwork that was appropriate for the interview and tell of her experience of group art therapy and of the emotions that she expressed. The artwork in the interview displayed the immense emotional content of Aver's psyche that had been touched in the art therapy group. Aver was able to select significant artworks that she could talk about in the interview. The artwork was still potent during the interview of the research but was manageable for her (Nowell Hall, 1987).

Aver entered into the art therapy group with the intention to express her anger. Art-making permitted her a vehicle to express this anger through her vigorous art-making and place it into the visual form (Bolas, 1999; Kramer, 1987). She was able to sublimate her anger into the artwork and this decreased her desire to act it out on others. She felt as though it was a 'purging' of emotions as they passed through her body and into the artwork (Kramer, 1987). The physical art-making was energetic and permitted this transsubstantial movement of emotions and psychodynamics to be manifested (Bolas, 1999).

Anger was cast into the image, to Aver's relief, and she acted out revenge as she trod on the image. The image acted as a scapegoat for her unconscious conflict.
(Schaverien, 1992). She acknowledged her action of anger towards the artwork by saying, “I just took my boot and stepped on it.” This acknowledgement assisted Aver to recognise her feelings of revenge so that she could take action concerning this relationship in her life. Her projection into the artwork permitted Aver to recognise how she was really feeling about her relationship and the need for her to take action (Milner, 1971; Sarra, 1998).

During the group art therapy Aver was also able to draw succour from her interaction with the art media. Aver received emotional comfort from painting layer over layer of paint. This activity soothed and calmed her and gave her relief from her emotional turmoil (Estep, 1995; Forman, 1994; Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001).

Aver tore a figure from the rest of her image and in this way she was metaphorically removing the presence and influence of this other person from her life. She was dissociating from this figure, letting them go. Though it tore her, it also relinquished her, so that the negative projection that Aver had held towards this person was relinquished in the tearing of the image (Von Franz, 1993). She was able to think about the future without the presence of this person dominating her thoughts and thus metaphorically alter the composition of her life.

The group witnessed her emotional suffering, her overwhelming anger, the projected material in her artwork and her growing empowerment and validation. The art-making in the therapeutic setting permitted Aver to handle her emotions in the safety of the group and to become an active agent concerning her life choices (Winnicott, 1971).

Through the group art therapy experience Aver was able to receive comfort from the art medium, sublimate her acts of revenge into the artwork, let go of negative projections, which is in accord with the work of Von Franz (1993), and release herself from the power of a destructive relationship.
Ai Aver tore a figure from the artwork as she was going through separation from her partner.

Ai Aver trod on a figure in the artwork as she had feelings of revenge toward her former partner.
Aiii Aver expressed anger that led to sadness with clarity of thought.

Bower painted the paper black and then added lines that were roads. Through this she realised that there was a way out from her circumstances and she had hope for the future.
Dorie folded tissue paper and remembered her mother who made flowers from tissue paper and this reminded her of the love that she had as a child. The artwork also reminded her of the story of Thumbelina, the little girl who was nearly lost but survived a difficult journey.

Dii The layered tissue was covered with pink tissue that felt like skin for Dorie. The group art therapy gave Dorie a sense of emotional containment.
Dii Dorie painted the group members as different colours. These colours did not blur but worked together into an artwork. This artwork reflected the group dynamics for her.

Ei Elip was aware that in making this collage great care was taken to place the media in the correct place. The order and position of the materials was important for Elip and gave a sense of personal control.
Eli explained that the group was a place of growth and interaction as seen in the image.

Fi Florn painted the image and then distinguished the tree by going over it in another media so that it was separate from the background. She reconnected with herself in the therapy and established her individuality in the group.
Fii Florn dropped ink on the page to form these rings. At first Florn felt that it was a haphazard action with little significance but the group appreciated the artwork and felt it was an image of unity and life. This response from the group was affirming to Florn.

Florn began to paint a bird wing but the image changed into an angel. She felt that this unintentional metamorphosis enabled her to recreate herself.
Hi Hoddy resisted making art in the group until she could express her feeling of stuckness. The bricks were painted first and then extra background paper was needed to allow for the energetic explosion. Hoddy realized that she was stuck in personal relationships and this was a breakthrough for her.

Hi Hoddy found it odd to paint with others looking on, particularly a therapist. Again she added on extra background paper to accommodate her personal development in therapy.
Ii Indy layered media onto this artwork until she began to feel that it was fluid like the sea. The little boat and the cat were vulnerable and Indy expressed that this was how she felt in the group but that she was able to cope and be contained. She was also aware that she was observing herself trying to cope and this was represented by the eye.

Iii Indy made another image that involved layering material until she felt it had a fluid quality. The boat again was vulnerable but she had a growing confidence in herself in the group art therapy.
10.2. Bower (Women’s Centre)

Bower brought with her three paintings made during group art therapy and unrolled them when the interview began. The top painting had a black background and looked like a street map (see Figure Bi). The dark painting evidently carried more intense emotions whereas the other paintings were bright, warm and colourful. Bower began with the colourful paintings that formed a safe place to start the interview.

10.2.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

Bower pointed to an image of colourful concentric circles and said:

“I felt good when I did this one, it felt good going round and round ... To me it gave me a sense of hope ... I know it puts me in a head space where I feel free and takes me away from my problems while I'm doing it, so that is a good thing ... I tried not to pick dark colours, not black. Nice light colours. That is how I want to feel all the time.”

The metaphoric process of painting the circles brought hope to Bower. The sensory-motor activity was pleasing, and permitted her relief from the pressures of her life. The art-making in the group created a potential space, providing an asylum for Bower. (Adamson, 1990; Winnicott, 1971). The art-making fulfilled the purpose of inhibiting or restraining her conscious thoughts and so provided a boundary to permit unconscious compensations to function (Milner, 1971; Wallace, 1987).

It was not only the sensory-motor functions that were activated in the art-making, but also the bodily and visceral responses that affect the psyche (Freud, 1923; Bosnak, 1997). Bower discovered that painting the colours with a circular motion of brushing promoted hope. She was small in stature and it was necessary for her to stand and lean over her work. This posturing of the body for the formation of the artwork may have stimulated psychophysical associations and accessed early procedural memory or traumatic memories (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001). The gross motor activity may be seen to facilitate an interactive experience for the formation of potential space within the therapeutic relationship (Deco, 1998).

When explaining how she made the dark image, Figure Bi, Bower answered:
"I painted the paper all black ... I was really trying to express my depression, but I found it difficult."

Bower wanted to address the depression in her life and to do this she painted the background black.

"I found I'd start doing something depressing and then I'd have to go over it, do something nice to cover it up."

Bower was trying to express the depression but would then cover it up. In Figure Bi she covered the page black and then added roads to form the map.

10.2.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

"I found it really hard to put down negative images. At one time I tried to draw my brother's face, a representation of my brother. I started doing it but for some reason I had to cover it and turned it into something else."

Bower intentionally tried to express the subject of her depression and the conflict she felt. To confront the source of the conflict was too difficult and Bower withdrew from the image and fragments of her memories by covering them again. The paper was covered with paint, and so the images that disclosed the unconscious material were covered with paint. The oscillation between uncovering this material and covering it again constituted a metaphoric process. The 'covering' of her brother's face embodied emotional conflict. The emerging material in the artwork could not be fully accepted or exposed. This metaphoric process carefully handled the sensitive material, but at a distance. The unconscious material may have been too shocking for Bower to consciously acknowledge or there may have been a purpose in this evasive disclosure.

She was aware of the unconscious material and the need to handle it, but it may have been harmful or even re-traumatising to expose it. The Medusa's head could turn Perseus to stone but, through the reflection in the shield, the unconscious beast could be seen (see chapter 5). The interaction with the art materials permitted Bower to be in control of the disclosure of the unconscious content. The psychophysical involvement with the art-making could therefore strengthen her ego that seemed to have been damaged by past traumatic experiences (Adamson, 1990; Forman, 1994; Kramer, 1987; Naumburg, 1958; Nowell Hall, 1987).
The process of covering may not have been a defence mechanism but a process of strengthening her ego to handle past trauma. The repetition of this metaphoric process of uncovering and covering unconscious material displays a healing process that was activated in art therapy, where unconscious material was managed and played with in potential space (Bolas, 1999, Forman, 1994). The art-making in art therapy provides the individual with the time, space and resources to strengthen the damaged ego and explore unconscious projected material. The art-making also permitted her unconscious to interact with the conscious thoughts in the potential space.

10.2.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

"I know it puts me in a head space where I feel free and takes me away from my problems while I’m doing it ... It gives me a sense of hope."

Bower had been struggling with depression and through the art therapy group she was able to experience relief from these pressures and take more control of her life. There was an exchange of opposing moods that occurred through the art therapy experience. It was not a total change from depression to hope, but rather a developing confidence concerning her development. This emerging expectancy made Bower feel less immobilised by depression.

10.2.4. Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

"It was worthwhile ... meeting other women who had similar issues and I did not feel so alone ... They were pretty positive, they sensed I was on a journey."

The group art therapy assisted Bower to realise that she was not isolated in her experience of life (Peterson & Files, 1989; Waller, 1993). She noticed that as the other members of the group observed her artwork week by week they became aware that she was on a personal journey. The artwork in the group assisted the members to watch each other develop (Deco, 1998; Naumburg, 1958; Skaife & Huet, 1998; Springham; 1998; Waller, 1993). Bower recounted how the artwork stimulated group discussions and brought a level of satisfaction to her personally and to the group. She found group art therapy affirming (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998).
10.2.5. **Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?**

The interview focused on the image that had a black background with marks like a road map, Figure B1. Bower began to quietly say, "It brought up feelings of... memories of being out there alone." While we kept staring at the image she noticed that one of the roads went off the page and this made her aware that "There is always some sort of help available and I don't have to live that way. I don't have to mix with those people. I think the art therapy has given me hope. Yeah, that's what it has given me, hope for the future."

The image of a road leading off the page was a meaningful metaphor for her. It was during the interview that Bower realised that this road went off the page and if she followed it she could leave that area of her life. The artwork metaphor permitted Bower to leave the familiar patterns behind to find a new route.

10.2.6. **Discussion**

The metaphoric processes engaged in Bower's art-making were significant, as they were indicative of the therapeutic process in her art therapy experience. Bower commented that when she painted the image of concentric circles it gave her a sense of hope and that hope was the meaning that she found from her art therapy experience. The art-making and the feeling that was evoked by the experience signalled the development that was occurring for her before she was conscious of the meaning of the artwork, for it was only in the interview that Bower became aware that the art therapy had given her hope for the future.

The metaphoric process of uncovering the face of her brother and then covering it again may be indicative of the ego reclaiming control over areas that had been abused in the past. This strengthening of the ego in the face of traumatic memory is an important quality of art therapy, where the recollection of trauma does not re-traumatise but is contained in the art-making (Forman, 1994; Kramer, 1987; Naumburg, 1958). The action of covering the face of her brother may be seen as a type of repression where Bower is excluding his memory and its associations from her conscious awareness, or she may be aware of these memories and feelings but covering them to gain sense of control and closure. These metaphoric processes are indicative of the psychodynamics that are occurring in the group art therapy.
The artwork (Kramer, 1987), the therapeutic relationship (Casement, 1985, 1990) and the group (Bion, 1961) combined to contain her feelings of depression and engender hope. This emotional containment permitted Bower to receive the unconscious content of the artwork without being overwhelmed by its contents. Both the depression that Bower was experiencing and the hope of a way out of her predicament were evident in the artwork, so that the artwork, due to its metaphoric nature, held both the dilemma and the solution simultaneously (Bosnak, 2001). These elements of Bower's dilemma, depression and hope, were not static but fluid and mixed like colours on a palette. The depression was not separate from her hope but began to merge in art therapy. This mixing and integration was made possible by the art-making in the therapeutic environment forming a potential space. Bower realised that she was not trapped in the past but there was a way forward for further personal development.

10.3. CREOLE (WOMEN’S CENTRE)

Creole brought one artwork to the interview as the focus of her art therapy experience. The image was a painting of a small stick figure walking along under a large arch. The background was a wash of colour and appeared to have been painted with copious amounts of water. The interview focused on this one artwork, but unfortunately no photograph was taken of this image and so there is no record of this artwork in the research. The participant had cancelled three appointments for the interview and the image was not captured and this created a feeling of loss in the researcher. A feeling of loss was the main theme of this interview.

10.3.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

“It’s just paint,” Creole replied. It felt awkward and foolish to ask such an obvious question but as we kept our attention on the artwork she continued to explain her work.

“I liked that free-flowing brushstroke ... it just felt, like, liberating. That expression of flow ... it was quite watery. That actually represents a state of mind around me ... watery and unclear.”
The application of the paint onto the paper had a liberating effect for Creole. The flowing of the brushstrokes permitted expression of emotions and a sense of release. The sensory feedback from the art-making assisted Creole in the release of her emotions (Keyes, 1992). Her ability to interact with the art medium catalysed the therapy and stimulated psychodynamic activity. The watery nature of the paint and the large sweeping brushstrokes reflected Creole's unclear and watery emotional state. The metaphoric nature of her art-making displayed her unconscious state of grief and the artwork embodied her unexpressed loss, enabling her to grieve (Schaverien, 1992). The watery qualities of the paint metaphysically depicted her lack of clarity and the tears that flowed in the therapy. Creole was aware that she had unresolved grief but it was the sensation of watery paint, in the therapeutic setting, that stirred her to cry in the art therapy group.

10.3.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

Creole commented, “It felt good to pick up the paint, I was really drawn to certain colours.” The art materials were attractive to Creole in a pleasing, seductive manner and beckoned her to engage in the art-making. Her involvement with the art medium and her free association with the materials began before Creole had planned what to create (Jung et al., 1964; Waller, 1993). On other occasions Creole knew what she wanted to express: “Some weeks I knew what I wanted to express and other times it just came out even if I didn’t know what I was going to do ... it was quite easy to realise what was happening.”

Either way, Creole found the experience meaningful, whether she had planned the artwork or if it came of its own volition, imbued with life and significance (Schaverien, 1992). “I wasn't really consciously thinking about a lot of stuff but it was coming up”. Spontaneously created artwork produced surprise and curiosity in Creole as to the significance of the work (Milner, 1971). Accompanying this surprise was a feeling that the artwork magically appeared, since conscious volition was not obviously conscripted for the art-making event (Schaverien, 1992). This awareness that the artwork had a verve gave Creole a sense of awe and engaged her in the art-making with a respect for the therapy.

10.3.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

“I was feeling very confused and numb ... I knew the issue I was dealing with but it is a thing to theorise about it, but it is another thing to face the emotional impact ... Sometimes in the morning I would be coming to art therapy, I'd be crying all the way
here. I'd actually be preparing for things to come up. ... I found it very potent. [The art therapy group] started off a process, a process of grieving."

Creole initially came into the art therapy group feeling numb and confused. She had some understanding what she was experiencing but had not felt the emotional impact of her grief. Art-making in the art therapy group assisted Creole to physically access the grief that was in the form of an embodied numbing. Creole accessed this embodied grief through the art-making process and permitted the grief to be physically expressed. The watery paint and her large brushstrokes helped to release the emotions (Keyes, 1992) with the result that Creole stated, "I am not numb any more."

10.3.4. Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

'I think it was really good to do it in a group. I found that everybody in the group was supportive of each other, and when they commented on artwork it was, like, supportive and positive. ... We were finding things in common that we could relate to, certain feelings ... rather than being isolated. ... You could relate ... different experiences but similar feelings and that was really good."

Creole was amazed at the responses of the group to one work she did because they "knew what was happening to me emotionally" and what she had wanted to express. Group members pointed out to her that there was a positive side to what she was going through, and so she could see the artwork in that way, too.

Creole felt well supported by the art therapy group and it was a safe place where she could express herself and permit her emotions to be seen. Her sense of connection with other members was greater than her feeling of isolation (Peterson & Files, 1989). The group assisted Creole to contain her feelings that were aroused in the art-making. She found the group to be responsive and affirming to her artworks and she felt that she could personally receive a benefit from the attention that her artwork caught (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998).

Creole experienced the group as contributing different perceptions of her artwork and offering alternate scenarios to her understanding. Creole acknowledged what "I wanted to express". In one group session Creole "was actually honest with myself and named a couple of the issues" that she was dealing with. The group gave Creole the
courage to address the real issues that were troubling her at the time. This gave her a sense of empowerment in the group as her personal plight was acknowledged. Being involved in the group connected Creole with the other group members, decreased her sense of isolation, assisted her in naming her dilemma and gave her hope.

**10.3.5. Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?**

Creole explained that from her experience of art therapy,

> “I have a much clearer understanding and I am more willing to deal with things on a more practical level because I’ve dealt with the way [the grief] affects me emotionally.”

**10.3.6. Discussion**

The bringing of a singular artwork may indicate Creole’s resistance to divulge personal material and an attempt to protect her valued inner objects depicted in her other images (Mann, 1991; 1997). She guarded her artwork in this way as it was a metaphor for her embodied grief. The metaphoric process of painting watery colours permitted and actuated the expression of her grief. Her artwork expressed her embodied grief and enabled her to name it, to experience the loss and to become more practical. The expression of loss coincided with the change in sensation that Creole experienced where she “was very aware of a numbness that I had and since getting in touch with emotions I am not numb any more.”

The feeling of numbness may be similar to a state of being turned to stone in the Medusa myth. The Medusa had the potential to turn the onlooker to stone. The plight that Creole experienced had turned her numb. Art-making released her embodied grief through the psychophysical interaction with the art media. Reflecting upon the artwork in the art therapy group disempowered her disappointments and so made the grief manageable. In the myth of the Medusa, Pegasus (a flying horse) was born from the body of the Medusa. The decapitation of the Medusa permitted the birth of Pegasus, a creature of great strength with the ability to fly above the limitations of the earth. Pegasus was able to engender greater potential than that of a normal horse. As in this story, Creole addressed the issues that were numbing her and this resulted in her being able to meet life’s demands and deal appropriately with practical situations. The art therapy assisted Creole to come to a place of expressing her plight and to access more of her life’s potential.
10.4. DORIE (ART THERAPY STUDENT)

Dorie brought all her artwork from the art therapy group at university. This work she placed on the floor and began to sift through it to find the one that she wanted to talk about. At first the quantity of artwork appeared to be overwhelming but she soon focused on a single work. It was an image of a frog sitting on a lily pad made of tissue paper and Dorie began to tell the story of how the artwork was made (see Figure Dii).

10.4.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

While we gazed on the image Dorie responded by saying:

‘This kind of tissue I use in my own work and crush it, then press it out flat and put it on my paintings and make little wooden sculptures and stuff. I like building things up from nothing. ... The tissue ... was like a skin thing. ... The skin has that sensitivity to touch and I guess I was imbuing the feeling of that, I was using pink for sensitivity.’

The art-making experience for Dorie involved using the art materials in a manner that was familiar and comfortable for her. It involved the crushing, flattening and building up the art materials into an artwork. The sensual properties of the tissue paper evoked associated sensations about skin, sensitivity and touch. The sensory input from the tissue paper stimulated sensory associations for Dorie and brought memories forward that were related to handling tissue paper and the emotions that were connected with those memories. The memories triggered were of her mother making flowers with similar tissue paper when Dorie was a child. The sensation of the tissue paper and her involvement with the art materials accessed early memories of her mother and contributed to the development of the potential space in the therapy (Bollas, 1999, Winnicott, 1971). The sensory input from her art-making made the experience of her mother’s presence during the process real and palpable.

The sensory-motor interaction with the art materials engaged psychodynamics that brought unconscious material to the present for Dorie in a tangible and malleable form (Bollas, 1999; Bosnak, 1997), and metaphorically revealed the embodied unconscious processes. The tissue paper was pliable, soft to touch and felt like ‘skin’ (see Figure Dii). This pliability and sensitivity between the individual and the material may be a metaphoric process activated by the art-making.
This art-making facilitated the sensory arousal of the art materials in the therapeutic environment and activated potential space. The psychophysical interaction with the art materials permitted the embodiment of the potential space as she felt she was actually with her mother, which gave Dorie a sense of containment. Her art-making with the tissue paper as skin may be seen as a metaphor of the meaning that she found from art therapy as being a container of her emotions where the skin is sensitive and protective and forms the surface of the body.

10.4.2. **Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?**

Dorie responded to this question by saying:

"Usually, when I start a work I really have no idea of what I am going to do, or if I do have an idea as soon as I start working with the media that will often take over. ... It is an emotional thing ... The image ... appears on the paper."

Dorie was spontaneous with her art-making and the materials prompted her creativity. Her intention to create a specific art product was not conscious, but her involvement with the art materials led the image-making. The image appeared quite magically for Dorie: the outcome was not planned or expected (Schaverien, 1992). The art-making included free association as the materials and interaction with the materials prompted the development of the artwork (Waller, 1993). Dorie was familiar with this art-making procedure and experienced it as an emotional happening.

She focused intensely on the artwork and explained:

"When I was a little girl Mum used to make these tissue paper kind of flowers. ... I made this lily pad and this frog on the water and I was thinking, 'Oh, it is just like Thumbelina.' When she gets thrown into this current ... there was no control over it - you were just going along. But I enjoyed making this. ... I was remembering the time with my mother and that kind of very ... that very one-on-one, that very, very special time. As I was making this I was thinking and feeling that actual space. ... I felt that I was actually in that space again. ... I was a little kid and I was just enchanted with the flower and then the frog."

The art-making had made alive a memory concerning her relationship with her mother. The activity of the art-making had accessed the potential space between her mother and herself that was created with the group and the therapist (Winnicott, *Trusting the Artwork*).
The evoked memory felt both emotionally and physically present with her mother. The art-making made present and accessible past memories and sensations, and brought them into the therapeutic setting (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001). The art-making had stimulated a transference with the therapist in the potential space, and this had had the potential to alter her psyche (Adamson, 1990; Winnicott, 1953). The memory of her mother was a very positive one and was enjoyable. It was this image that Dorie wanted to bring to the research, for the memory of the love of her mother was made real for her. Art therapy had brought her in contact with a positive and affirming memory that assisted her in accessing greater potential for her life (Milner, 1971).

10.4.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

Dorie commented, “At the time ... I’m not really thinking, I’m just doing it.” Dorie explained she was not thinking about what she was doing but later she thought about it and began to realise that it may have related to her life. The art-making for Dorie held her conscious thoughts in abeyance while she cooperated with the art materials (Baynes, 1940). The sensory stimulation from the art media and possible direction from her unconscious (Milner, 1971) may have directed her art-making. Dorie did not explicitly mention unconscious direction in the interview but there was for her a magical component to the art-making that explained unconscious material being present in the experience (Schaverien, 1992). Dorie was aware that the artwork was about ‘Thumbelina’, a tiny girl who was being chased by a toad down a river, and this became the metaphor for her artwork. It was interesting to note that Dorie felt like a small girl again with her mother as she made her artwork, and this is consistent with the Thumbelina metaphor. She felt that the Thumbelina image was significant although she was not consciously aware of the content of this metaphor.

10.4.4. Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

Dorie felt that her art-making (see Figure Diii) was influenced by the group and reflected the group dynamics (Waller, 1993):

“I think my work is very related to the group and I am very conscious that most of my work is connected to the group,... revealing secret messages, as you do in a group.

“I’ve got the colour of the individual group members and often the numbers in other group members’ work related to the people in the group – like, there would be ten trees
[in the artwork] so that was interesting. ... I started really getting interested in the different colours people bring to the group. I was using the different colours to symbolise different people in the group. I didn't really think of it at the time but when I looked back through the work I noticed that I'd done this. ... I wanted the colours to work together but not actually blend in. I was aware of the different perceptions and colours people bring to the group, yet you could still have that group unity."

Dorie was aware that at times the art communicated to the group secrets and expectations that she could not say directly (Naumburg, 1958; Waller, 1993). She was able to use the image as a communication that was an alternative to verbal communication with the group (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998; Waller, 1993). Dorie realised that she used colours in her artwork to represent individuals in the group. These colours she carefully placed in her artwork and did not blur the colours for she "was aware of the different perceptions and colours people bring to the group, yet you could still have ... group unity." Individuality of the members was acknowledged in the artwork, but they worked together in the group (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; McNeilly, 1990; Nowell Hall, 1987; Peterson & Files, 1989; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998; Wadeson, 1987). The artwork displayed the group dynamics and reflected the group in a visual form (Skaife & Huet, 1998; Springham, 1998).

10.4.5. Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?

For Dorie art therapy "trigged memories, feelings and sensations ... and ... contained me somehow." The sensual experience of art-making accessed her childhood memories and emotions, assisting her in manage them.

10.4.6. Discussion

The metaporphic process of touching and fashioning the tissue paper stimulated sensations and memories for Dorie in the art therapy group experience. This creativity projected the transubstantiated psychic material and objectified it into the artwork (Bollas, 1999), thus facilitating the creation of potential space in the therapeutic relationship (Winnicott, 1971). The art-making therefore enabled unconscious material to be embodied, present and accessible for therapy. The sensation of the tissue paper acted as a metaporphic skin for Dorie, through which she became sensitised to her psyche and gained a sense of emotional containment (Kramer, 1987). An early memory with her mother was accessed during the art-making phase of the therapy and this permitted Dorie to feel as though she was

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actually present in the memory. This experience was valuable since it affirmed the
trust and intimacy with her primary maternal relationship and gave a sense of
containment.

The transference with the therapist and the group provided the environment for the
artwork to function as a transitional object (Schaverien, 1989). The metaphoric
process of touching and forming the art materials was inextricably linked to her
metaphor of the material being skin and the feeling of being emotionally contained
by her art therapy experience. The creation of a potential space enabled her to receive
acceptance, love and containment from the mother (Adamson, 1990; Kramer, 1987;
Winnicott, 1971). Art therapy not only raised Dorie’s forgotten memory to be
conscious, but assisted her in receiving and developing emotional affirmation.

Dorie’s experience of group art therapy permitted her to contact emotions,
sensations and memories. Her art-making was spontaneous and sublimated her
emotional energy (Kramer, 1987). The materials inspired the art-making process and
the artwork was formed without her conscious planning (Schaverien, 1992). Dorie
used her artwork to communicate directly to the group and her artworks reflected the
group dynamics back to the group in a visual form. The experience of the group was
at times frustrating for her, but she witnessed that the group accommodated the
individual members and had a sense of unity. Dorie had little understanding of the
personal meaning of her artwork other than it contained her emotions.

10.5. ELIP (ART THERAPY STUDENT)

Elip came to the interview with all her artwork from the art therapy group that she
had attended at the university. She placed her work on the floor and selected a
collage made with tissue paper and another one made from printed magazine
pictures. The interview began when Elip chose an image (see Figures Ei and Eii).

10.5.1.  Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

“What I did was to collect a bunch of art materials – so that there would be a range of
crayons, tissues, the basic white paper – and find myself a spot to work. ... I’ve just torn
up tissue, selected bits and glued it down. ... [There was] a very sure-footed sense of, this
needs to go there, this needs to tuck under that, this needs to go over here.”
Elip selected a collection of art materials with which she could make art. She collected a range of materials so as not to feel limited in her art-making. She was aware that the art-making process may require materials that she had not yet planned to use and so she chose material that she was attracted to. She then found a place to work.

Elip experienced clear direction as to how to construct her images even though she was not conscious of her objective. She felt to follow the prompting that was within her at an unconscious level and to cooperate with this prompting. Elip's art-making was concerned with the position and relation of the selected art material on the paper.

The organisation of the different elements, how they related to the composition and if they were overlapping or layered was important to her. The precise process of selecting, ordering and adhering elements of the artwork became a metaphoric process that may have expressed unconscious movement and ordering in her psyche (Robbins, 1987). It may be that this art-making needed to be accurate to present the reality of her psyche (Bollas, 1999) or that there was movement occurring in the elements of the psyche and Elip was observing this phenomenon (Adamson, 1990). Her ability to respond to the promptings of the unconscious and to obey this inner direction may be a healing process in itself since it brings together the unconscious promptings with her conscious (Wallace, 1987). To achieve this effect Elip restrained her conscious thoughts while permitting her art-making and creativity to flow (Baynes, 1940).

Her actions of tearing and gluing externalised her unconscious directions without conscious inhibition (Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992). An example of this process occurred when “I was scribbling and up came these beans”. When Elip permitted herself to scribble, shapes began to form that were familiar to her. This activity involved the cooperation and integration of her sensory-motor system with her unconscious and conscious. Elip physically interacted with the art materials in a regressive way and this permitted her conscious mind to be held at a distance and the unconscious to express itself through the art-making (Milner, 1971). The unconscious selected and assisted the creation of images (Milner, 1971; Naumburg, 1958) through a metaphoric art-making process that embodied the present verve of her psyche (Bollas, 1999).

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10.5.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

“I didn’t start with any idea in my head at all. ... It was very much from ... tearing up the materials.” When Elip physically engaged with the materials the sensual properties of the media catalysed a psychodynamics and a creative response of free association (Waller, 1993). Elip described this as “being seduced by the material”, for they were sensually attractive to her. The sensory qualities of the art materials stimulated a response and a motor engagement with the art materials. One material triggered the next action in the art-making that developed the formation of the artwork.

The artworks were formed in this spontaneous way and led to a chain effect where the images were linked together into a sequence: “I did this one first, I couldn’t do that one before I’d done this one.” One image could not be made before another, for each one influenced the development of the next (Milner, 1971). During the art-making Elip found herself in an interactive potential space. This potential space was entered into by her interaction with the art materials in the presence of the art therapist and the group.

10.5.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

Elip thought that her images meant:

“... different things at different times ... My feeling about the artwork is that it can be read in so many different ways. So you could read it as that, but it could also find many levels of meaning and different ways of understanding it.”

The meaning was fluid and she did not want to be specific about her artwork’s meaning. There were motifs that repeated throughout her work and these motifs, such as bean shapes, were observed to appear in her work, grew and developed in subsequent artworks. Elip noted these patterns in her artwork and realised that they were important and familiar but that they did not have a definite, fixed interpretation.

It was interesting to note the contrast between the precise positioning of the elements of the image with the fluid meaning of the image that could change at any time. The art-making was exacting and a metaphoric process of the dynamics of her present unconscious material (Bollas, 1999), but the metaphor represented in the artwork meant “different things at different times”. These metaphors are also...
connected, which causes a tension where the precision of the art-making meets the fluidity of the meaning and the artwork compensates for the verbal explanation (Robbins, 1987). This tension seemed to form an impulse and energy that may possibly have moved and changed the psyche in some way. The presentation of her psyche in the art-making may have brought about a fluid response and sparked an impulse towards integration and development. Maintaining this open-ended interpretation stimulated the unconscious material to remain alive and may have energised a change in the psyche. A premature interpretation on the meaning of the work would cut the tension short and limit the unconscious verve and purpose. Quick, clean and accurate interpretation would enhance conscious understanding and assimilation of unconscious material but may have interrupted the potential effective work of the unconscious (Bosnak, 2001).

Another scenario may be that Elip was resistant to share the meaning of the artwork for some personal reason, or because she was an art therapy student she may be more reticent about divulging personal material due to a fear of unconscious meaning (Gilroy, 1995).

10.5.4. Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

"I think the beany bits and the shoots too are probably some thoughts about us as a group growing and emerging from the soil. ... It is to be in a group, what it is to be an individual, how that balances. ... But the other part of it is being part of what other people are doing and seeing what they do and what they say about their work ... it is just amazing." [See Figure Eii.]

Elip could see evidence of the group in her artwork: there were little bean shapes that appeared and represented the group members, a place of growth and development. She found it necessary to explore her relationship as an individual in the group setting (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998). She may have experienced tension between exploring her individuality and the group dynamic (Von Franz, 1993). She was fascinated by the other members' art therapy experience as depicted in their artwork and this was a source of enjoyment and wonder for her (Nowell Hall, 1987).
10.5.5. Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?

Elip explained that art therapy was "allowing things to be revealed to yourself". For her it was a process of growth: "I think the art ... keeps you up-to-date with yourself." Art therapy performed a reflective function that stimulated personal development.

10.5.6. Discussion

Elip experienced art therapy as a way of interacting with and observing her unconscious. She permitted the art materials to attract her attention and then followed unconscious prompting to spontaneously form an image. During the art-making she engaged in physical activities that sublimated her unconscious verve and permitted Elip to glimpse a possible organisation of her psyche, or gain a sense of order to her psyche (Kramer, 1987; Robbins, 1987). Her intention was to actively cooperate with unconscious promptings to observe what was created. What appeared in the artwork seemed real and familiar. Elip may be at a stage of familiarisation where the projected material is in the process of being integrated and the unconscious material is enchanting and perplexing (Schaverien, 1992).

Elip may not have felt safe enough in the interview to disclose the personal content of her artwork. The research interview was a single interview and it was the first time the researcher had met any of the participants and so there was no relationship or prior knowledge of the researcher or of the type of questions that were going to be asked. The unconscious material that appeared in the artwork may have been concerning something else that Elip was not aware of – for example, the images may be connected to bodily functions that she had not yet realised. Or she may have had some resistance to acknowledge the material in the artwork. As a result, it is not conclusive as to the meaning that Elip found from the art therapy group experience. Other participants may have struggled with similar concerns.

But it was apparent that the art therapy group was a rich environment for growth and provided immense interest as other members' artwork developed. The art therapy group was a place where she could observe her unconscious material and be involved in her personal growth and the development of others in the group.
10.6. Florn (Art Therapy Student)

Florn was a university student who brought two images to the interview from her art therapy sessions. Her first image was of a tree on a hillock and the second image was of three concentric circles (see Figures Fi and Fiι).

10.6.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

“I started off using watercolours and it was pale, and so I wanted it more distinguished. And so I used pastels and went over the watercolours with those. I also used pencil and crayon, it’s quite funny how the tree is in pencil and the rest is with pastels with broader strokes. So I guess that is saying something.” [See Figure Fi.]

The image that Florn originally made was in watercolours but it was pale and she then went over the image of the tree with pastels to distinguish it. The tree was in pencil, and separate from the rest of the image. She was not conscious of the importance of the art-making but was aware that it was significant in some way. Florn worked the image over with different media to give it more clarity and differentiation, and this became a metaphorical process for Florn in the art therapy. Reflecting on how the image was made in the interview raised questions that Florn had not previously pondered. The presence of the artwork in the interview, with reflective questions, revealed that the image was still potent for the participant (Nowell Hall, 1987; Schaverien, 1993).

In the second image Florn continued to explain her process of art-making:

“That was just with ink and a lot of water, just wetting the paper and letting the ink drop on and used two different colours. ... Things I approached haphazardly ... and down the track a few weeks I look back and see there is a lot more in that than some kind of nothingness.” [See Figure Fiι.]

The image seemed to defy Florn, for although she had made it haphazardly with a sense that it was not important, in time the image became significant. Her haphazard manner did not detract from the artwork expressing unconscious processes and over time it became important.

This image may be viewed as diagrammatic as Florn intentionally tried to communicate to the group through it and avoided embodying the image with

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personal material. The image was therefore discussed at length in the group and meanings were suggested for the image.

'I think it would be wrong to say that this is a cohesive group but that is how I felt ...and I wanted to share that with everybody in the group...(it) took on lots of meanings in the group, like a cell or an egg, and even though it was a complete circle it was not ended – that there was growth in there.' (page 218)

The image, being diagrammatic evoked conversation and displayed Florn’s transference with the group (Schaverien, 1992).

10.6.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

Florn pointed to the image of the rings and then to the image of the tree and said:

“This one was done unintentionally, the other one I did specifically ... but it took on a life of its own.”

The image of the rings of ink was made unintentionally, but later had significance. Florn was not aware of any intent while dropping ink on the page, but the significance came later when the group gave the image a meaning and she reflected on the image. On the other hand, the tree image was made with intent and represented a tree that Florn had seen. She had made this image with care and had considered its form. Florn perceived that the image, once completed, became animated and vital. The image appeared to awaken and embody unconscious energy (Schaverien, 1992). This ‘life’ of the image surprised Florn as it “took on a life of its own”. The artwork developed its own independent and autonomous characteristics (Lanham, 1998). Florn acknowledged that the art therapy group became a ‘creative space’, where art-making was stimulating, energising and surprising. The art-making in the group brought Florn into a potential space where she felt creative and alive (Winnicott, 1971). The relationships that Florn formed in the group, coupled with the art-making, made a creative space that felt real and dynamic.

10.6.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

Florn felt that both images referred to the art therapy group. The image of the tree had a double meaning that carried opposing ideas about the group. From one direction the group was inviting and interesting but from the other direction it was “a chaotic experience that you are in, which you could be engulfed by”. The image of the
tree contained the tension of these forces that operated in the group. Florn became aware that the image held the unity of the group despite potentially destructive forces operating in the group.

Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

“I had a whole range of experiences; I found it really difficult a lot of the time, really frustrating in the group experience.” At times Florn found the group frustrating, as her desire to make art was held up or resisted by other group members wanting to discuss issues rather than make art (Skaife, 1990).

Being “the youngest member of the group, that sort of started those things with me, being young and how I was in the eyes of the other members of the group and coming to terms with getting mature.” Florn felt positioned in the group to be the youngest and with the need to be more mature. The group may facilitate multiple transferences in the individual that then become evident in the artwork (Poulkes, 1964; Freud, 1939; McNeilly, 1990; Skaife & Huet 1998; Springer, 1998; Ulman, 1987).

“I think the meaning develops in the group. I think there are layers of meaning. Initially, there is one meaning from that picture but from that meaning sparks off all these other little concerns. ... I learnt a lot from the interaction.”

Florn observed that the group gave value and meaning to the artwork that in turn catalysed the group dynamics (Waller, 1993). At times the group was “quite a scary experience, quite challenging ... all the dynamics that went on within it and how difficult they were”. In response to these dynamics, Florn painted the image of the rings and commented:

“I really saw a way of symbolising containment and the unity of the group. I think I wanted to make that a statement on paper itself as a way of completing, and I wanted to share that with everybody as a way of finishing.”

Thus her artwork communicated to the group unity and containment (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springer, 1998).

10.6.4. Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?

“It is about making this connection, through doing your own artwork, with this kind of voice inside yourself and ... learning to listen to it.”

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Art therapy for Florn was about relating to her inner voice and her unconscious prompting. The art therapy effected Florn for when she reflected on her art therapy experience on her own, she “found I just started to cry as there was a sense of something slow and subtle ... slowly sinking in.”

10.6.5. Discussion

The specific meanings of the images from question 3 were explained by Florin to be in relation to the art therapy group. The general meaning of art therapy in answer to question 5: Florin explained was concerned with learning to listen to an inner voice. This tension between her relation to the group and listening to her inner voice was a conflict that was dynamic for Florn in her art therapy experience. Simplified, it may be that Florn’s metaphor was for ‘connection’, connection with the group and connection with herself.

It is of value to bring in the metaphoric process that was active in the art-making in the two images that Florin brought to the interview for further insight into this conflict. In her image of the tree Florn went over the pale image with pastels and pencil to distinguish the subject of the tree. Florin needed to differentiate the tree from the background. There was a desire and intervention to have a clear separating line of the subject creating a delineation of the figure/ground component of the artwork. To distinguish the subject was a metaphoric process that was active in the formation of the image of the tree and this process was significant for Florn in the art therapy group experience. Her emphasis on the tree and, by going over it, it may have been a cry to be heard in the group. To be separate and an individual within a group context may be a dynamic that Florin was encountering that influenced her ability to connect with the group (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998).

In the image of the ink rings Florn had a haphazard manner in her art-making as though she did not seem to care and appeared to be detached from the image but over time it grew in significance. The image was made with minimal intention and little involvement, when resulting in a sense of detachment. But as she reflected on the image it was as though Florn made a connection with an inner voice.

These metaphoric processes of distinguishing the subject from the background, and being detached but becoming aware of a personal inner voice, are indicative of the
unconscious processes that were activated for Florn in art therapy. These metaphoric processes display the movement and nature of the metaphor of connection. Florn distinguished herself as an individual in the group and developed her link with her inner voice. This resulted in a sense of connection with herself and affirmed her identity in the art therapy group.

Florn experienced the group as being threatening and potentially overwhelming. She used her artwork to explore how she experienced the art therapy group. With the fear of being swamped by the unconscious material in the group Florn responded by communicating back to the group through her image (Gilroy, 1995). Florn discovered that the image could hold the forces of the group and function as a visual communication back to the group (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998). The image not only carried her experience and desires to the group but may have become a catalyst for the group dynamics, since the group responded to her image (Waller, 1993). The group was stimulated by the images and responded by giving meaning and validation to her artwork. This encouraged and established Florn as an active and valued member of the group (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998).

Florn valued the artworks, reflected on their significance and became aware that they embodied her personal material (Schaverien, 1992). The images held ambiguity and tensions as she explored the dynamics of the group that contained her personal conflicts (Nowell Hall, 1987; Wallace, 1987; Cane, 1989; McNeilly, 1990; Robbins, 1987; Schaverien, 1993; Lanham, 1998).

10.7. GUAN (ART THERAPY STUDENT)

Guan brought a number of images and selected three to talk about during the course of the interview, placing them on the floor to be observed.

10.7.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

Guan explained that she had made the artwork by using pastels:

"I enjoy using pastels. I feel comfortable with them ... I feel that I am able to control them and I have worked a lot with pastels. ... I like being able to blend the colours and the feeling that they will do what I want them to."

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The medium was familiar to Guan and gave her a sense of control. When she used watercolours in another image, the feeling was different:

"I really enjoyed making that. Because it is the ocean, I didn’t worry so much about control. It is not something structured – I could just splash it on as the sea splashes."

The watercolours were a pleasurable experience for her and gave her a sense of liberty. She noted that this way of working the medium was more physical and vigorous, and it engaged her in the art-making. This engagement let Guan to be less controlled with the medium and this was accompanied with a feeling of enjoyment. A feeling of liberty was also found using materials that had a spontaneous quality and she delighted in the way the colours ran with the watercolours. The sensory properties of the watercolours that Guan splashed onto the page aroused feelings of pleasure and freedom, whereas the pastels gave her the feeling of competency and control. The interaction with the media produced sensations and emotions in Guan. The application of the media to the artwork paper and her response to this activity displayed metaphoric processes occurring during art-making, where the pastels gave her a sense of control and the watercolours a sense of freedom.

10.7.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

Guan explained that as she started to apply the art media an embodied image emerged (see Figure Gi). This is evident when she commented:

"Well, this one came up... [I started by painting] a wing of a bird and it sort of metamorphosed into an angel."

This changing of the image during its creation may have displayed the ability of the unconscious to intercept the art-making through the psychodynamic of free association with the materials (Waller, 1993; Storr, 1983). The unconscious directly influenced Guan’s art-making without the awareness of her conscious mind in the decision-making of the composition (Storr, 1983). Guan felt surprised by the outcome of the artwork, because the art appeared to have a magical component without her conscious intent (Schaverien, 1992). The psychophysical interaction with art materials enabled the creation of a potential space where alterations may have occurred in her psyche to be witnessed by her conscious mind and the therapy group (Ballas, 1999).
10.7.3.  Question 3: What does it mean to you?

Guan explained that the image of the angel was influenced by a lecture that the group had heard on shamanism, and that she was “trying to tap into the feeling of the group or the group’s unconscious”. Her desire was to assist the group as she had a sense of duty towards its functioning and well-being (Freud, 1939/1952). Guan did not explain how she tapped into this feeling, but trusted that the image was a response of the group unconscious. She felt that the way the image transmogrified from a bird to an angel was significant and recognised that the image contained unconscious material. The image was explained in relation to the group and not personally. Guan implied that the image had shamanic qualities due to its metamorphosis. This metamorphosis is a metaphor of her artwork. Guan had consciously chosen to express a shamanic work by connecting with the group’s feelings, but in so doing the image appeared to have a life of its own and changed its form (Schaverien, 1992).

10.7.4.  Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?

The non-directive nature of the group was of interest to Guan for she found that it altered the “whole dynamic of the group” (Waller, 1993; McNeilly, 1984). She explained that through her artwork she was “responding to other people’s artwork and what others had to say.” Guan used her art-making to tap into feelings of the group and to give the group her feedback. Receiving messages from the artworks in the group and responding to them through her art was a way that Guan communicated in the group. The group then gave her “new ideas to consider” (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998). Guan used her artwork to dialogue and respond to the group and this stimulated her involvement and her art process. (Waller, 1993)

10.7.5.  Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?

Guan did not directly answer this question but indicated that she understood that the art therapy reflected a true image of herself and empowered a personal change which formed a metaphor of her metamorphosis.

10.7.6.  Discussion

The sensual properties of the art media assisted Guan in being aware of feelings of enjoyment and pleasure. Interaction with the art materials displayed the unconscious

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metaphoric process of control and at other times freedom with the different art materials. By responding with the art materials a form of free association developed and produced spontaneity in her art-making (Waller, 1993). Her spontaneity permitted new images to arise on the paper and in this potential space a sense of security and confidence was established as she embraced a metaphor of change. Her image appeared to be magical and to transmogrify in the art-making. This was due to the unconscious content in the artwork and Guan’s cooperation with the psychophysical process (Schaverien, 1992). The artwork content changed before her eyes and may have reflected a change that was happening in her during therapy (Bolas, 1999). She described this change as “recreating” herself (Adamson, 1990).

This ability to experience personal change in the group may be due to the non-direct nature of the psychodynamically conducted group, the expression in the artwork and the containment of the therapist and the group (Bion, 1969; Krammer, 1987; McNeilly, 1989, 1990). Non-directive groups are more likely to have personal disclosures shared in the group than more structured groups (Lieberman, Yalom & Miles, 1973). The art-making in the group was non-directed to promote communication in the group and permitted unconscious thoughts to be expressed where words may have been inadequate (Naumburg, 1958; Nowell Hall, 1987; Waller, 1993). The artwork communicated directly to the group, received meanings from the group (Greenwood & Layton, 1987; Nowell Hall, 1987; Sarra, 1998; Springham, 1998; Waller, 1993) and interfaced between Guan and the group (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998).

Guan’s art-making expressed a metaphoric unconscious process that portrayed a growing freedom to permit and accommodate the transformation that was occurring in therapy. While the image was being made, a transformation occurred in the subject matter of the artwork, and may have reflected the change for Guan. The art-making accommodated this transformation that was occurring in her at the time of the therapy (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Kramer, 1987; Adamson, 1990, Forman, 1994). This transformation formed the metaphor that Guan experienced in group art therapy (Wallace, 1987; Edwards, 1987; Schaverien, 1992).
10.8. Hoddy (Art Therapy Student)

10.8.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

“I started on the black piece of paper and then as I started drawing the figure, I felt the need to have a white piece of paper ... then I glued the white piece of paper to the black piece. ... I just sort of started to make these curvy lines which turned into the figure.” [See Figure Hii.]

Hoddy explained this phenomenon of needing more background material as though “I could get out of this and get relief” by adding more paper. The background may be experienced as a limiting factor; adding supplementary background may permit a sense of relief and space. Conversely, a prescribed background size may permit a sense of containment. It was important for Hoddy that she was not limited to the original background paper and added extra paper. Adding the background material was a metaphoric process and was evident in the two images that she presented. This addition to the artwork refers to the formation of the transitional object and is a reflection of the dynamics activated in potential space in the therapy (Schaverien, 1989).

Alterations to the potential space would include her relationships with the therapist and the co-therapist, in the group environment. These material additions are indicative of relationships with the therapists and contribute to the metaphoric enlargement of the potential space (Case, 1990; Schaverien, 1990, 1992). The altering of the potential space in the therapy is inextricably linked to the transference with the therapist and the artwork. The added space to the image may also be an increased capacity in Hoddy’s psyche to contain the new material that was developing during the art therapy. The image has this expansive capacity to accommodate the development of the psyche (Edwards, 1987; Jung, 1968; Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992).

10.8.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

“What would come out in the art is that even if you did not want that to come out loud, it would come out.” Hoddy observed that if she did not want to express something in the art therapy group it would come out in the artwork. If her intention was not to express an idea, the artwork clearly brought the issue to the group (Milner, 1971; Naumburg, 1958; Sarra, 1998; Storr, 1983; Waller, 1993). During art
therapy the conscious may wish to resist or inhibit impulses but the unconscious infiltrates by means of the art-making (Baynes, 1940).

Hoddy’s art-making was also stimulated by the desire for a specific art material when she says, “I felt the need to have a white piece of paper.” Hoddy had a desire for the paper and from this her artwork developed. Her conscious intention was not apparent but a desire for the art material was sufficient to initiate art-making.

**10.8.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?**

Hoddy explained that she found it unusual, while making art to be “observed by two people, one being the therapist and one being the co-therapist...”. The image that she was referring to contained two painted eyes that were placed separately in the artwork (see Figure H1). Hoddy explained that these represented the therapist and the co-therapist. This image may have depicted her transference with the therapists. The eyes appeared to be all-seeing and the artwork emanated from a feeling of being observed. The eyes appear to be watching the one making the art and the onlooker simultaneously. The transference in the art therapy was evident in the artwork (Schaverien, 1992). Hoddy’s awareness of the eyes of the therapist’s on her work may also be linked to a fear of losing valued inner material to the therapist. Her defensive behaviour expressed in the artwork may have made it difficult for her to verbalise her experience due to her exposed unconscious conflict (Mann, 1991; 1997).

This image had the extra background paper glued on to permit the work to expand. It may be possible that the metaphoric process of adding the paper portrayed her need for more potential space. It is in the making of these transitional objects that the metaphoric processes of the psyche reveal the functioning of the unconscious (Bollas, 1987; Case, 1996; Deco, 1998; Schaverien, 1992, 1993). It may therefore be stated that the presence of the therapist and the art-making process enabled Hoddy to enlarge the potential space to accommodate development and movement of her psyche (Edwards, 1987; Jung, 1968; Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992).

Another artwork that Hoddy brought to the interview was that of a dark brick construction with what appeared to be an explosion on one side of a wall of bricks (see Figure H1). This image had also required additional paper to become the background of the image. Hoddy had found it difficult to decide what to create in the group and had stopped the group from art-making until she felt comfortable to continue. This raised frustration in the group but Hoddy was definite in not

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beginning to make art, or permit the group to make art, until she had an idea of what it was she wanted to form. Eventually Hoddy decided to represent the 'stuckness' that she was feeling and explained:

"By putting down the symbolic 'stuckness' it came to me then that I had been worrying about this relationship that I had been in. And I was feeling like I couldn't do anything about it at the time."

Hoddy brought to light her feelings about being restrained and stuck in her life. The group experienced feelings of frustration due to being held back. This frustration resonated with other members of the group. Hoddy represented the metaphor of being 'stuck' in the artwork by painting dark brick shapes. She then added an outburst of energy in the form of explosive colour. This libidinal rush was liberating for her. The eruption of energy had personal significance and related to her relationships in the group as well as in her personal life. The metaphor of being 'stuck' was represented in the artwork as blocks of paint and the energy was painted onto extra paper. The artwork was expanded to accommodate her energy release.

10.8.4. **Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?**

Hoddy was aware that both her behaviour and her artwork were being observed and this was not comfortable for her:

"I felt like I needed to convey about this being an unusual experience about being observed by two people – one being the therapist, one being the co-therapist ... I felt people looking at this could say, 'Gee, there is something going on for this person'."

Being in the group was a public arena for her personal material to be scrutinised. Hoddy was conscious that others were going to look at her work and make judgements as to whether she was mentally stable. The artwork made personal aspects of her life public and open to comments or criticism. This made her feel vulnerable because other people might assess her as unstable due to the material in the artwork.

She wanted to maintain her individuality and privacy and at times she resisted the direction of the group (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Skaife, 1990; Springham, 1998). The artwork "represent[ed] my individuality and that it is
OK for me to be different to the others." She related that at one time, "I was holding them [the group] up. And I had to maintain that this was my need and it was relevant as anyone else's." This caused frustration and hostility but she persisted in maintaining her position and representing her feeling of 'stuckness' in the artwork (Greenwood & Layton, 1987; Nowell Hall, 1987; Sarra, 1998; Springham, 1998; Waller, 1993). The presentation of this artwork communicated to the group Hoddy's 'stuckness' and the energy release brought understanding to the group of her metaporphic process (Skaife & Huet, 1998; Springham, 1998).

Hoddy noted that during the art-making she felt isolated as she immersed herself in the art-making for "it felt like an isolated experience because ... you weren't looking at anyone else. ... I was immersed in what I was doing and I got the impression that others were also at that time."

Hoddy's response to the feedback about her work enhanced and expanded its meaning and significance (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998). At times she felt that some of the comments were not helpful, so she would let these comments go but only take the feedback that she found relevant:

"Sometimes it was more a projection of somebody else that they could extract from your work and other times it did bring it onto another level so it was relevant – it would enhance the meaning I suppose of the painting or the drawing, expand it in a way."

The artwork entered the public domain of the group and could be used as material to project on, and it was the responsibility of the group to discern if comments from the group were relevant or not. This may place an individual in the situation where they either agree with the group or believe in the understanding that they have concerning their artwork. Placing the artwork into the group may become a threatening experience, for it calls for a response from the group (Gilroy, 1995). Individuality expressed in the artwork comes into the group's domain and becomes the property of the group.

Hoddy found that the artworks disclosed the true feelings people were experiencing in the group (Naumburg, 1958; Waller, 1993):

"This girl in the group who didn't want to disclose ... but suddenly it came out in the art. Then she processed it in the group and said that she had been angry with us all, and I
think it was a big relief for her to have said those things instead of not saying them. And in some ways it was a bit of a relief for me to hear those things, as I was feeling that way too. But for whatever reason I was not ready to talk about it."

On this occasion, Hoddy recalled and was relieved that this member disclosed her ambivalence towards the group through the artwork and communicated common unconscious material (McNeilly, 1984, 1989, 1990). Hoddy noted that when one disclosure came in the group, others would follow and that the contents of the disclosure were in the artwork. “I found that sometimes after the trust had been built up in the group ... there was a large disclosure ... then other personal disclosures seemed to follow.” The artwork carried this unconscious material and stimulated the dynamics of the group (Waller, 1993).

10.8.5. Discussion

Hoddy expressed her individuality in the art therapy group through her artwork and by resisting the pressures of the group to paint at a certain time. Her resistance caused frustration to rise and Hoddy responded by feeling angry towards the group. Hoddy’s resistance was experienced as ‘stuckness’ and her artwork then portrayed the metaphor of ‘stuckness’ and the group’s frustration. Although artwork contained Hoddy’s personal conflict, the group amplified its frustration to her. The artwork with its extension of paper permitted the creation of space for a release of libidinal energy. The increase of space permitted the release of energy to be contained in the artwork (Kramer, 1987). The metaphoric process of adding on extra paper revealed a developing capacity of her psyche to embody a libidinal energy released. This permitted Hoddy to move from being ‘stuck’ to libidinal release due to the art-making process in the therapeutic relationship.

The therapeutic relationship, in conjunction with her art-making, enabled the development of her psyche (Edwards, 1987; Jung, 1968; Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992). This energy was not discharged off the page inappropriately, but sublimated and contained in the artwork (Kramer, 1987). The artwork was then a communication to Hoddy, and the group, of the growth and the breakthrough that had occurred (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998). By reflecting in the group it became apparent to Hoddy that this conflict was also alive in a personal relationship. The resolution of this tension had repercussions for her personal and social life. Where Hoddy had been ‘stuck’ and restrained she was now becoming self-reflective.

Trust the Artwork
10.9. Indy (Art Therapy Student)

Indy brought five artworks to the interview that she had made in the art therapy group.

10.9.1. Question 1: How did you make this artwork?

The artworks were similar in their style and Indy commented on this and explained that she used a variety of media to produce “layers that I looked through or into ... to build up the subtlety.” She went on to explain, “I certainly enjoyed doing them, especially layering them using the tissue paper and mixing the colours ... to get the feeling of water.” (See Figures Ii and III.)

Indy found building up the layers to be pleasurable and the purpose of this activity was to create a feeling of water. This process was time-consuming and engrossing for her. She was involved with a metaphoric process of mixing media and placing down layers of tissue paper to create an embodied image with depth and fluidity. This metaphoric process of using art materials to express an unconscious process was an essential component to her therapy.

10.9.2. Question 2: Is this what you intended to make?

Indy explained that she “usually had something brewing” and had a vague idea about what it was she was going to create. She began the art-making by “rapidly choosing the colours I wanted ... and I’d really let an image come up ... I’d simply go with that and let it develop on the paper and the idea of collage drew me and the idea of layering.”

There was some idea of what to create but there seemed to be urgency about getting it down on the paper. This urgency may show the expediency with which the unconscious wants to project unwanted or unknown material into the artwork so as to relieve pressure and to become conscious of this material from the psyche (Adamson, 1990; Edwards, 1987; Lanham, 1998; Milner, 1971; Sarra, 1998; Schaverien, 1989, 1992). The direction of the art-making was in relation to the free association with the art materials (Waller, 1993). The physical interaction with the media and unconscious verve combined to form the evolving artwork. The artwork began to reveal its nature and form during the art-making process (Schaverien, 1992). It did this quietly so as not to arouse the conscious mind but at the same time was a significant presentation of the latent material of the psyche (Bollas, 1999;
Indy acknowledged that her images brought personal past experiences into the group when she explained, “Each piece has a history. ... I thought, ‘Oh, why don’t I try and sketch what I experienced?’ The feeling then returned about how profound, how I’d never really processed it”. In the art-making Indy revisited a near death experience, personal loss and a relationship breakdown to gain closure on their significance and content. The potential space, created in the therapeutic relationship and the group, permitted the artwork to function as a transitional object bringing past experiences to the present (Schaverien, 1989). The potential space where unconscious content meets and interacts with conscious thought was evident in the creation of Indy’s artwork and it was in the therapeutic environment that Indy’s past experiences were accessed and interacted with (Babits, 2001; Bolas, 1999; Nowell Hall, 1987; Milner, 1971; Winnicott, 1953, 1971).

10.9.3. Question 3: What does it mean to you?

Indy spoke about the metaphor of the sea that was present in a number of her images:

“The sea has been one of the main symbols, the power of the sea, I am attracted to, and the fear of the sea. It is like the unconscious ... the art therapy triggered my feelings ... of being at sea or being swallowed up. ... [There is] a boat on stormy waters ... and I have a cat in the boat. It is such a bizarre image because cats don’t really like water.” [See Figure II.]

The metaphor of the sea, and being at sea, was the way Indy experienced art therapy. The sea was powerful and at times could swallow her, but the presence of the cat on board the little boat made the voyage rough, but possible. The cat in the image brought a sense of the bizarre to the image. The metaphor holds the opposing elements of the powerful and fearful sea on the one hand, and the cat safely aboard the boat on the other hand (Milner, 1971; McNeilly, 1984, 1990; Wallace, 1987; Nowell Hall, 1987; Case, 1990; Schaverien, 1992, 1993; Lanham, 1998; Springfield, 1998, Sarra, 1998). The boat may represent the containment of the group (Bion, 1961) or the therapeutic relationship (Casement, 1985, 1990; Schaverien, 1992) or the artwork (Kramer, 1987); Indy was not specific as to the origins of the

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boat/containment, but noted that it was seaworthy and the cat was surviving the voyage. The artwork permitted Indy to observe this predicament of feeling overwhelmed and yet safe at the same time (Milner, 1971; Naumburg, 1958; Nowell Hall, 1987; Wallace, 1987, Adamson, 1990; Schaverien, 1992). The image precariously held together the overwhelming fear of the sea and the safety of the boat.

10.9.4. **Question 4: How did you find doing art therapy in a group?**

“I’ve learnt a great deal in the group ... about my own emotions ... of feeling angry, blaming or wishing things were done ... and primal feelings.” In art therapy group her strong emotions surfaced and she was able to examine herself. Indy also found the artworks of the other members to be valuable “Watching other people’s work progress ... often the metaphors appearing again and again. ... Each week you got a little deeper, more understanding of the other.” The artworks made apparent the experiences of the other group members and the group dynamics.

10.9.5. **Question 5: What does the term art therapy mean to you?**

Indy explained that the artwork was an externalisation of conflicts that enabled the processing of life experiences.

“The art therapy helps me process a lot of what has gone on ... in my life...You have something happen.... you process it and then you leave it behind.”

Indy perceived art therapy to be a way of dealing with issues in her life where it was possible to project them onto the art paper, assimilate this material and then to be able to let the issue go. The issue, once it had gone through this process, lost its potency and could be left behind.

10.9.6. **Discussion**

The metaphoric process was the layering of mixed media to attain a sense of water. This process engaged Indy in the formation of a transitional object, the artwork, in the therapeutic relationship. The transitional object involved the interaction of Indy’s conscious and unconscious in the physical activity of the art-making (Schaverien, 1989). The formation of the artwork, in the potential space of the therapy, portrayed the projected state of her psyche. Due to its immediacy, the artwork was
presentational of her unconscious (Bollas, 1999). The cooperation of the psyche with the psychophysical aspects of the art-making created a metaphorical process that engaged Indy in a transition in therapy. This metaphorical process of creating the feeling of water with mixed media is connected to the metaphor of the sea and is embedded in the potential space of the therapeutic relationship. The potential space became fluid and malleable as the psyche engaged in integration. The fluidity of the art-making process permitted the psyche to be malleable in the hands of the individual in therapy.

The metaphorical quality of the image provoked the psyche to accommodate the unconscious dilemma. The metaphor of the sea and the boat brought together the elements of the composition to interrelate and network. The sea was attractive due to its power as well as being overwhelming. The networking of the unconscious components of the artwork flowed into a powerful metaphor that brought integration where fear and resistance had existed (Milner, 1971; Wallace, 1987).

10.10. SUMMARY

10.10.1. Metaphoric Process and Metaphor

It is curious to note the sequence and development of the art therapy experience. The metaphorical process preceded the conflict resolution. The art-making came before the artwork and was indicative of the direction and form of the therapy prior to the conflict being recognised or resolved (Adamson, 1990; Milner, 1971; Schaverien, 1992; Wallace, 1987). The metaphorical process made a way and a space in which therapy could occur. The potential space, formed by the therapeutic relationship and the participant’s engagement with the art materials, stimulated the formation of the embodied transitional object (Schaverien, 1989; Winnicott, 1971).

It is during the formation of the artwork that psychodynamics are activated and latent material engages with present art-making. The person, in the therapeutic environment, manipulated the art media that correlated or reflected aspects of the psyche. The substances of the psyche were transformed into the physical properties of the artwork while objectifying projected unconscious material and disclosing the psychodynamics of the psyche (Bollas, 1999). It is these psychodynamics that reveal the integration that is occurring in the potential space of the art therapy.

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For example, Aver ripped and trod on her image as she expressed her anger and revealed a process of separation from a destructive relationship. Bower painted large circles that gave her a sense of hope and she also painted a map to find a way out of her hopeless situation. Creole painted with copious amounts of water and accessed her unexpressed grief. She had felt numb when she entered therapy but found that this sensation left her, and normal functioning returned. Dorie found the tissue paper felt soft, comfortable and pliable and while she worked with the tissue, she remembered being with her mother and felt emotionally contained in the therapy. Elip’s art-making was very exacting as to the ordering and placement of her compositions, and she was able to gain a sense of control and order in her life. Florn distinguished a tree in her image by going over it with another medium and in this way emphasised her individuality in the group and connection with herself. Guan began an image that changed its form as she made it and felt she was empowered to recreate herself in the group art therapy. Hoddy added extra paper to her artworks to contain the expanding material and libidinal energy that was forming in the potential space of the therapy. Indy used mixed media to create a feeling of water and though at times she felt overwhelmed she was able to keep afloat on her journey in the therapy.

The art-making was a metaphoric process that permitted the substantial manifestation of unconscious material to be manipulated by the participant in therapy. This interaction stimulated the transformation of the psyche and displayed the nature of the therapy in the individual (Milner, 1971; Wallace, 1987). This art-making in therapy formed a potential space and engaged psychodynamics and memories that enabled the individual to work with the substances of their psyche (Bollas, 1999).

10.10.2. Variety of Personal Meanings

There was a variety of meanings that the participants expressed concerning group art therapy (Marton & Booth, 1996). The first three categories of meaning were from the participants of the Women’s Centre in Group 1. The next six categories of meaning were from the participants who were training to be professional art therapists in Group 2.

- An expression of anger over relationship breakdown and clarity of confusion.
- An expression of victimisation and the instillation of hope for the future.
- An expression of grief and emotional release.
- An expression of containment of feelings.
- An expression of personal control of inner life.
- An expression of intuitive guidance.
- An expression of personal metamorphosis and change.
- An expression of resistance that leads to self-acceptance.
- An expression of the realisation of personal vulnerability and coping mechanisms.

**Characteristics of Group 1**

This group of women from the Women’s Centre was able to deal with personal issues in their lives through their art therapy experience. The art therapy group that they were involved in was experienced as supportive and positive, and assisted them in expressing personal issues. The group decreased the member’s sense of isolation and victimisation by witnessing and validating their personal journey. The primary purpose of the group was to support and emotionally contain its members as they dealt with these issues.

**Characteristics of Group 2**

The purpose of Group 2 was very different, since these women were training to become professional art therapists. The main area of tension was how to maintain individuality and be an active part of the group: to be aware of personal material in the artwork but refrain from it detrimentally influencing the group.

The metaphoric processes of the members reflected this dynamic of the group. For example, Dorie created sensitive tissue skin that gave her a feeling of containment as she was in the group. Elip positioned and organised the components of her collage to assist in revealing herself in relation to the development of the group. Florn distinguished the figure/ground image of a tree and became aware of connections between herself and the group. Guan made an image that metamorphosed in its formation into a communication to the group. Hoddy resisted the art-making of the group and held back the whole group from art-making, resulting in the frustration of some of the group members. She placed her personal needs before the group’s direction and experienced a level of hostility from the group, who may have experienced the expression of her personal material as being inappropriate to the professional development of the group. This incident was mentioned by other

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members of the group as being highly frustrating and a challenge for the group to accommodate. Yet Hoddy seemed to have become aware of the personal content of her actions and through the experience modified her behaviour to be in line with the objective of the professional development. Indy, experiencing frustration and anger in the group, realised her own emotional responses to the group. She felt a fear of being overwhelmed but found a way to cope, even though at times it felt tumultuous.

10.10.3. Personal Interpretation of the Research

In Group 2 the artwork was seen to reflect the group dynamics and revealed the development of the group itself and individuals within the group. Group 1 was not as aware that the artwork reflected the group dynamics to the extent that Group 2 was. The artwork in Group 1 revealed the therapeutic process the individuals were experiencing in the group. Group 2 acknowledged that the artwork communicated from individuals to the other group members and to the group as a whole. This communicative function of the artwork was seen to bring the group to a new level of relating, brought an element of satisfaction to the members but also a sense of vulnerability to individuals. In this way the artwork expressed what the group members were unable to verbalise (Naumburg, 1958; Nowell Hall, 1987; Waller, 1993).

At times the artwork was seen as exposing personal material and members felt vulnerable. This may be a contributing factor to Hoddy holding up the art-making, for not only did she feel ‘stuck’ but she also had a fear that she would be exposed by the artwork to the onlookers. These feelings may be due to the level of exposure that the artwork brought in the group context. Other members of the group reported having overwhelming and engulfing feelings when sharing the artwork with the group. The art therapy students felt the exposure of their personal material in their artwork might affect their professional development as art therapists and their assessment by the university.

Whereas Group 1 members were in therapy for personal issues and the art therapy group was effective in achieving some level of healing and integration, Group 2 members were in a professional training group where their awareness to the group dynamics of an art therapy group were heightened and personal issues were more contained. This result would indicate that it is necessary for therapists to have a level of integration before conducting art therapy groups; otherwise, some of their personal unconscious material will flow into the group. There is expectancy that art
therapy students should contain their personal material while exposing their artwork and learning to conduct art therapy (Gilroy, 1995).

Group members’ individuality was inherent in their artwork and this entered the group domain. Group 2 members focused on maintaining individuality and personal expression in the professional milieu of the group. The discipline imposed by containing their personal unconscious material in the context of the art therapy group resulted in tension. This dilemma, coupled with a fear of being exposed and questions being raised as to their performance as professionals, resulted in anxiety in the group members. Where personal material was expressed in the group and the expectation was to behave as professionals, members felt frustrated and threatened.

Avoidance of personal material may have led to evasive and inconclusive comments concerning the artwork in the research. Focusing on their own artwork was designed to develop in Group 2 a professional discipline of being conscious of personal content and an awareness of the dynamics of the group. In the training environment art therapists need to be aware of the personal content of their artwork and also develop a professional approach to art therapy (Rhyne, 1973).

Two main themes emerged from the responses of Group 2. The first was that there was a tension between maintaining individuality and the group dynamics. The second theme was that observing other members artwork was a fascinating process and in some ways more interesting than observing their own. This may be a type of vicarious participation in the group, where members become involved in the group through other members’ artwork. This is possibly why the group was threatening to some members. Passivity in the group may have indicated vicarious participation and a fear of the unconscious content of the individual’s own artwork. These are similar findings to Gilroy (1995) who found that as art therapy students’ feeling of belonging to the group increased they became increasingly cautious, less willing to share and their spontaneity decreased. Actively participating group members were less likely to fear unconscious material in the group than more passive members (Gilroy, 1995).

Both the group of art therapy students in this research and in Gilroy’s research were psychodynamically conducted groups for the purpose of training professional therapists. The research findings of both the English and Australian art therapy students indicate that the art therapy group affects students in similar ways, where they learn to contain their personal material while developing professional roles.
The development of the professional role may be seen in relation to the development of the ego-self axis that Edinger (1973) describes, where the ego of the individual is connected with the group dynamics and the self is person centre of the psyche. The artwork increases the awareness of the self in the context of the group and so the individual needs to develop the connection between these aspects of the psyche. The professional development in Group 2 may therefore be an increased awareness of this connection, fostering the ability to move awareness between the condition of the self and the management of the ego. This development of the ego-self axis may also assist in the individual training to be a therapist, giving insight into dynamics of transference. The individual becomes aware of the ego-self axis, so the awareness of a transference and counter-transference maybe detected more easily.

The research conducted by Gilroy (1995) involved art therapy students who were in experiential art therapy groups and the research of Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife (1998) involved students who were inquiring about art therapy training. Both these groups may give further insight to the running of professional training for art therapy students. As mentioned above, art therapy students became more cautious, less willing to share in the group and less spontaneous (Gilroy, 1995). The group leaders in the study by Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife (1998) became aware of the need to permit the group process to proceed while addressing the questions and issues that emerged on a cognitive level.

The art therapy students in this research experienced the group as both an educational and therapeutic experience. The divided nature of this experience produced anxiety in the students concerning self revelation, competition with other group members to perform successfully, an ambivalent relationship and transference between the group leader as a teacher and as a therapist and a need to maintain professional competency. These findings are very similar to those found by Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife (2000). The students also understood that latent material in the artwork may disclose material that they did not want to verbally express and there was defensiveness and transference with the group (Foulkes, 1964; Freud, 1939; McNeilly, 1990). At times, students related to the group vicariously through their images to avoid exposing personal material or relating directly. The artworks in this way caused tension in the group due to personal content expressed in a professional learning setting.
It may be possible to conclude that it is necessary to support the group process, for participants who are interested or involved in the profession of art therapy, with cognitive and theoretical explanations of the dynamics that are active in the group. This may make the learning more effective and the students less guarded to the unconscious processes in the group (Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife, 1998). The evidence of an increasing defensiveness of the students regarding the artwork in the group, in this research and the researches mentioned above, is a concern (Dudley, Gilroy & Skaife, 1998; Gilroy, 1995). The purpose of training of professional art therapists is to develop a competency with the art therapy process, not to develop caution and defensiveness. The comments from individuals in the art therapy students that the group was overwhelming can be understood to be from the group as a whole (Bion, 1961). An art therapy group can be overwhelming and a place where members and the therapist may feel attacked and impotent. The ability to weather and survive attacks in the art therapy group is necessary in order to minimise collateral damage (Sarra, 1998).

The professional training of art therapy students may require the conductor to appropriately apply cognitive and theoretical explanations so that the students develop professional confidence in the presence of the potentially overwhelming unconscious material (Gilroy, 1995). The conductor may also need to be an active monitor of the group and manage the potent unconscious forces (McNeilly, 1990). Foulkes (1964) comments that the group requires some structure and that, as the conductor attends to the group, the individuals are then able to look after themselves: this, too, may be an appropriate emphasis for professional art therapy training groups.
Chapter 11. CONCLUSIONS

The participants' description of art-making made evident the metaphoric processes that expressed personal and latent material. These metaphoric processes enabled the formation of the artwork that expressed what could not be put into words. The metaphoric processes engaged psychodynamics and formed a potential space where change was sited (Schaverien, 1989; Winnicott, 1971). The art-making actualised the therapy, causing memories and affects to be experienced as real, and forming transferences with the therapist and other group members. Imbedded in the artwork were metaphors that were recognised by the participants as significant elements of their work. These metaphors often resonated with the metaphoric processes and the psychodynamics. Shifts and personal changes were observed to have emerged from the interplay of the metaphoric processes of art-making, the psychodynamics, the metaphor of the image, the potential space, and the meaning the participants derived from their group art therapy experience.

11.1. PSYCHOPHYSICAL EXPRESSION

This progression of the therapy was evident in the following metaphoric processes:

- Aver ripped and trod on her artworks and layered black paint repeatedly on one image.
- Bower painted large circles and painted over an image of her brother's face.
- Creole painted a stick figure in a wash of paint.
- Dorie folded and layered tissue paper.
- Elip made a collage that required cutting, tearing and adhering.
- Florn distinguished an image by going over it with another medium, and in a second image haphazardly dropped ink on paper.
- Guan had control over crayons, but felt freedom with watercolours.
- Hoddy attached extra paper to the background.
- Indy layered materials to give a feeling of water and fluidity.
These metaphorical processes stimulated external and internal sensations that affected the participant’s psyche (Adamson, 1990; Freud, 1923/1974). The selection of the materials, the composition and the application of the media enabled conflicts of the psyche to be isolated and brought to therapy (Naumburg, 1958). Conflicts were then externalised into the artwork to relieve pressure from the psyche of unknown or unwanted material (Baynes, 1940; Schaverien, 1992). These art media enabled expression of emotions and latent content of the psyche while grounding the therapeutic experience in a tangible form (Bollas, 1999; Milner, 1971).

The metaphorical processes also raised memories for Bower with the painting over her brother’s image, Dorie remembered her mother as though she was actually present and Indy recalled past experiences and found that the therapy assisted her in processing her conflicts of the past. The physical activity of the art-making engaged memories with the associated affect and at times expressed what they did not want to say (Storr, 1983; Wallace, 1987). The metaphorical processes seem to have accessed trauma or procedural memories that the participant was either unaware of or not willing to share (Forman, 1994; Kozlowska & Hanney, 2001). This seems to have been the reason for Bower covering the face that reminded her of an incident with her brother.

The wash of paint in Creole’s artwork accessed loss and grief, and allowed it to be expressed. The watery element of the paint enabled her to unlock her grief in the contained environment of therapy (Case & Dalley, 1992; Keyes, 1992). The metaphorical processes of Aver – ripping and treading on her artwork – enabled a physical expression of anger. Her actions spoke louder than words and assisted in the removal of the attachment to a broken relationship from her psyche and the acting out of unconscious feelings of revenge. The art-making in this way contained her feelings and empowered a change (Kramer, 1987; Adamson, 1990). Her repeated layering of black paint had a soothing effect (Estep, 1995). The metaphorical processes of constructing a collage gave Elip a sense of control and knowing herself, and for Florn the highlighting of her image emphasised her individuality in the group (Case & Dalley, 1992). Guan’s application of crayons felt restrictive, while her use of watercolours gave her a feeling of spontaneity in anticipation of a shift in her psyche. Hoddy’s attaching of extra background material reflected a development in her therapy experience.

**Table 1: Summary of Results**
| Participant | Metaphorica
ty | Psychody-


tonic | Metaphor | Meaning | Image |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aver</td>
<td>Rips and treads on painted images</td>
<td>Projection and sublimation</td>
<td>Separation and primitive instinct of revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layering of paint</td>
<td>Self-soothing</td>
<td>Covering</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bower</td>
<td>Paints large circles and covers painted images</td>
<td>Projection and repression</td>
<td>A way out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>Watery paints</td>
<td>Psycho-physical connection and catharsis</td>
<td>A wash of colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorie</td>
<td>Tissue paper folding and layering</td>
<td>Potential space, psycho-physical causation</td>
<td>Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elip</td>
<td>Selecting, ordering and adhering</td>
<td>Inner control/ adaptation</td>
<td>Collage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florn</td>
<td>Distinction and haphazard</td>
<td>Transference with the group</td>
<td>Inner voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guan</td>
<td>Control and freedom of art materials</td>
<td>Potential space</td>
<td>Metamorphosis and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoddy</td>
<td>Extra paper to the background</td>
<td>Potential space, transference &amp; resistance</td>
<td>Stuckness followed by explosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indy</td>
<td>Layering</td>
<td>Causation of memories</td>
<td>A journey of survival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the alignment of the artwork, a metaphoric process in the art-making, psychodynamics of the therapy as described by the participant, the metaphor contained in the artwork and the meaning that the participant formed from the group art therapy. The chart also shows the direction of the development of therapy, from process to the art product and the meaning the participants formed.
11.2. ACTIONS OF THE PSYCHE

These metaphoric processes stimulated psychodynamics which became operant in the group art therapy.

- For Aver she was able to project unwanted material into the artwork and to sublimate her anger (Kramer, 1987). Her covering of black paint may be seen as repression, but in this situation it was a form of self-soothing of wounds (Estep, 1995).

- Bower was able to express and project inner conflicts that, once recognised, were covered. Again this may be repression or it may be the covering of a known conflict and the strengthening of the ego (Forman, 1994; Naumburg, 1958).

- Creole’s watery paint triggered a cathartic release of grief (Keyes, 1992).

- Dorie described the formation of a potential space involving an interaction with the art media and the formation of a transitional object (Schaverien, 1989; Winnicott, 1971). The psychophysical nature of her art-making brought causative memories, transferences and affect into therapy.

- Elip’s collage formed a potential space of therapy in which she was able to move, alter and control the components of the artwork, and possibly her psyche (Adamson, 1990).

- Florn’s need to be distinguished from the group may have reflected her transference with the group.

- Guan’s decision, however, to relinquish her need for control in exchange for an expression of freedom created a potential space for therapy.

- Hoddy’s extra background created a potential space that enabled transference with the therapist but was also accompanied with expressions of resistance (Schaverien, 1989).

- Indy’s application of layers of art media raised causative memories, sensations and emotions that were brought into therapy.

11.3. SPECIFIC MEANINGS

The participants expressed the meaning to their artworks in a metaphor that related to the artwork and the metaphorical process of making it.
• Aver’s artwork that was torn was seen in relation to separation. Her image on which she trod was an image of revenge towards the one from whom she was separating. The artwork of layers of black paint soothed her, enabling her to feel covered and comforted in therapy.

• Bower was able to find a way through her difficult environment and the artwork empowered her to move on in her life.

• Creole knew that she was experiencing loss and that the group art therapy had helped her express her grief (Case & Dalley, 1992; Keyes, 1992).

• Dorie felt that the art media of tissue was like skin as she handled it and formed her artwork and this helped her connect with her mother (Milia, 1996).

• Elip’s collage reflected the way she was assembling and organising her life through the process of art therapy.

• Florn, however, distinguished herself from the group and reconnected with her inner voice.

• The metaphor of metamorphosis was evident in Guan’s artwork and the metaphoric processes of her art-making.

• Hoddy’s metaphor was ‘stuckness’, leading to an explosion, and this was her experience in the art therapy group.

• Indy’s journey was seen in the metaphor of the powerful ocean, the vulnerable boat and a curious cat.

The metaphors expressed the meaning that they gained and contributed to the change that occurred through group art therapy.

11.4. THE SHIFT

The group art therapy experience brought change for the participants that they described in the interviews.

• Aver felt that she experienced a shift from anger to sadness and that this brought a clarity to her life with a decrease in confusing feelings. She also felt validated by the group art therapy experience.

• Bower realised that she was not trapped in her circumstances and that she had hope for the future.
• Creole had felt numb but she no longer felt this, and so could be more practical in her daily life.

• Dorie felt that her feelings were more contained and that she could cope better.

• Ellip had a greater sense of personal control and understanding.

• Florn felt connected to her inner voice and in her relationship with others.

• Guan explained that art therapy had helped her recreate herself.

• Hoddy had a breakthrough in personal relationships.

• Indy felt more integrated and able to cope with life.

These responses indicated significant shifts, and the containment and management of conflicts within their psyches. Individual conflicts were expressed in the artwork and each member came to a new level of integration. Group art therapy was effective for members of Group 1 and Group 2, and through the containment and reflection in therapy they each experienced a personal and significant change in their psyche (Adamson, 1990).

**GROUP DYNAMICS**

The artwork influenced the group dynamics in both Group 1 and Group 2. In Group 1 the participants mentioned that the group enabled them to feel connected with each other and less isolated in their personal dilemmas (Case & Dalley, 1992; Wadeson, 1987). They experienced hope and support from being in the group. Emotions that had been overwhelming became contained in the group: where an aspect of an artwork was problematic, the group offered a positive light on the situation (Bion, 1961). This may show the metaphoric capacity of the artwork to hold opposing aspects of a conflict and in this way bring the tension to some resolution (McNeilly, 1990; Sarra, 1998; Skaife, 1990). The artworks also acted as a visual communication to the group concerning personal material that stimulated the group dynamics (Case & Dalley, 1992; Deco, 1998; Nowell Hall, 1987; Strand, 1990; Ulman, 1987; Waller, 1993). These participants also were able to receive affirming comments made by other group members concerning their artworks (Nowell Hall, 1987; Springham, 1998). The group also assisted Creole to name her grief that was expressed in her artwork. Both Aver and Bower had made images that involved covering the page in black paint. It is not known if these images were made in the same therapy, but this
may be viewed as resonance in the group where similar unconscious material is expressed in the artwork (McNeilly, 1984). Group 1 was supportive and emotionally containing for its members as they dealt with personal issues.

Group 2 had a different context from Group 1 in that the women in the latter group were training to become professional art therapists at university (Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife (2000); Gilroy, 1995). The main area of tension for Group 2 members was how to maintain individuality and be an active part of the group, to be aware of personal material in the artwork but refrain from it becoming an overbearing influence or a resistance to the group process. Personal material was evident in the artwork but was not necessarily verbally expressed in the group. The images were seen as visual communications but there was also a sense that they may betray the confidence or be misconstrued by other group members. The students doing professional training experienced the group as both an educational and therapeutic experience. The divided nature of this experience produced anxiety in the students concerning self revelation, competition with other group members to perform successfully, an ambivalent relationship and transference between the group leader as a teacher and as a therapist and a need to maintain professional competency. These findings are very similar to those found by Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife (2000). The students also understood that latent material in the artwork may disclose material that they did not want to verbally express and there was some defensiveness and transference with the group (Foulkes, 1964; Freud, 1939; McNeilly, 1990). At times the students related to the group vicariously through their images to avoid exposing personal material or relating directly. The artworks in this way caused tension, because the group was feeling vulnerable with the personal content while at the same time training to be professionals.

**Limitations of the Research**

There were a number of limitations to the research:

- The research methodology was an adaptation of phenomenography and did not include certain aspects of that discipline (for example, a hierarchy of conceptions) since all the responses were seen as equally valid. Phenomenography does not address metaphorical content as unconscious material since it is a cognitive approach to educational research.
• The small samples, particularly of Group 1, did not allow for saturation and a full spectrum of varieties of meanings that could be found in personal group art therapy.

• The supervisor (and the interjudge of the transcripts) was also the therapist for Group 2 and, although she was excellent, this may have introduced a bias to the findings.

• The participants of Group 2 were students and would naturally want to perform and comply in the research due to their commitment to the therapy—they also possibly had the notion that it might assist them to pass their university course. The students knew that participation in the research was not part of the university examination process but it added a bias to the study.

• There was no demographic data collected concerning the participants. This lack of information may hide other factors that were operant in the therapy that may have brought further or alternative insight into the research. For example, information concerning age may give insight into the stage of life cycle as described by Erikson (1950). These stages may have influenced the research.

• The researcher trained as an occupational therapist and not an art therapist, and this may have biased the research.

• Due to the nature of the interviews, it was possible that the participants may have colluded with the researcher and produced some fabrications or falsehoods in the data (Carr, 1999).

The findings of this research were of a specific sample of people who had experienced group art therapy and generalisation to a wider population needs to be approached with caution.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

Arising from this study, there are four areas of research that could be developed.

• The first area would be to inquire into a wider variety of meanings that participants experience from group art therapy. The sample of participants was limited, and a larger sample would result in a fuller spectrum of possible metaphoric and psychodynamic processes.
• Further research is needed to replicate and to establish the connection between metaphoric processes, psychodynamics, metaphoric images and meanings. These connections could be reinvestigated to gain more insight into the therapeutic properties of art-making in group art therapy and verify the developmental progression postulated by this research.

• More research comparing personal therapy and professional training of therapists may also generate greater insight into the effects of the purpose of therapy on the individual development of the participants. Such a comparison may highlight the need for different approaches to conducting groups with dissimilar expectations.

• A fourth area of research that may be investigated is to examine if group art therapy increases ego-strength in participants who have experienced trauma (such as Aver & Bower) in relation to the work of Forman (1994). This may be studied with a pretest and a post test and an instrument that measures ego-strength.

Further research may also include the development of research methodologies that suit group art therapy and instruments to test therapeutic results.

The inclusion of the artwork in this research retained its significance for the participants after therapy (Nowell Hall, 1987). It provided clear evidence of the psychodynamics operant in the therapy and the unconscious material that was contained in the artwork (Schaverien, 1992; Waller, 1993). The artwork also provided some insight into the transferences in the group (Foulkes, 1964; Freud, 1939; McNeilly, 1990).

This research indicated that participants of group art therapy experience significant personal shifts towards the integration of their psyche and that the art-making engaged psychophysical connections that raised memories, affects and stimulated psychodynamics that resulted in the formation of potential space in therapy. The artworks reflected the psychodynamics and latent content of the participants to the group and stimulated the group dynamics. The application of group art therapy to personal issues in Group 1 provided support for the participants' individual development and integration. The application of group art therapy for those studying for the therapy profession, however, indicated that the participants were more guarded in relation to the personal content of their artwork and art-making, and more involved with the group dynamics.
APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

12.1. AVER

Aver arrived at the Women’s Centre and began to pull all her artworks out and place them on the table and floor around us. The feeling was rather overwhelming and chaotic, and at the same time I felt there was an openness, for which I was thankful.

**Aver:** I didn’t know what to bring and so I brought the whole lot, and I didn’t have the time to do anything else – I just threw it all in here. So I’m not sure that they are in any order either. I think that was my last one, so I’ll leave that. I like this one, it was my first one. That was me feeling that I had a lot inside of me.

**M:** Right.

**Aver:** I felt like a bubble about to burst and that is the blue, but there is a very firm boundary so I couldn’t let it out, because I didn’t know how.

**M:** So how did you do that one? Is that crayon?

**Aver:** Yeah, I just did it in five minutes. It had just been inside me for weeks and weeks, so I just got it out.

**M:** So you knew what you were going to do.

**Aver:** Not when I got here but when I sat down I thought, “I want to do that image.” Yeah.

**M:** Oh right.

**Aver:** And then basically most of my pictures have to do with anger, ha, so I painted a lot of anger, and a lot of anger, they are quite big pictures, and there is one there and there and another sort of angry one. Then I did a few collages ... this bit is falling off. It is probably hardening, isn’t it? That is a collage and another one and has the painting the business of my life, the yuck sort of stuff, and then I moved into ... The course was helpful to me because I never thought I would get past expressing anger. I did, I started going into sort of sadness.

**M:** OK.

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Aver: And then I did another painting, sort of wanting to tie it all together at the end of the course.

M: Right.

Aver: This is like me in the middle expressing anger and the sadness, expressing, mm ... so that was that one.

M: It is amazing...

Aver: And then the last ones I did was at the end of the group where I’m closing up again. I had been expressing myself but now I am closing up with confusion all around. And basically that is what happened, that was my fear.

M: Was that your fear that you would close back up again?

Aver: Well, I got a lot of clarity from doing these pictures, an expression leading to clarity and without the avenue for expression in this forum I felt like I was just going to curl back up into myself, and that’s what happened. And there is a lot of greys in my picture and fog sort of ...

M: So the greyness, what is that to you?

Aver: Just the yuck out there and all the stuff I don’t understand.

M: So how did you find doing this work in a group?

Aver: The first thing that comes to my mind is that it brought clarity to my own mind because the others would talk about their stuff and I would think, “Oh yeah, that’s happening to me.” It would start sparking things off in me and finding similarities and things like that.

Oh, yeah. Another thing about the group, sometimes I felt a bit ... you had to share the times and at times it was a bit stifling. Everyone got a chance to say something if you wanted to, but that happens in individual counselling. I sort of felt, “Oh, an hour’s up.” I could go a lot longer, but I found it good.

M: I love the colour in this one, it has a feeling of depth.

Aver: That is probably my favourite one, it is the summing up one and purple throughout represents me – I really love that colour. It is not a true purple, it is sort of a burgundy plum.

M: May I look at the others? This one?

Aver: That is torn off, this one. ... Almost at every session I did two pieces and that was really helpful to me because – for several reasons, I suppose – because it is not
all packed into one picture, as one is how it is and the other is how I want it to be.
Like, with this one, this is my dilemma, me in darkness trying to get to the light – the same one I drew on the day. I wanted validity and beauty in my own darkness, which I didn’t think I could paint. This separate is just plain black but it has texture to it, there was a lot more texture to it.

M: Before it dried.

Aver: Yeah, I just find a lot of people, in order to get to there [bright colours] want to erase this [black] but that would not validate this. That is why it was good to do two paintings.

M: So how did you do that black one?

Aver: I just layered black on black, and layered and layered, and had fun with it and tried to do different things.

M: So how did you feel as you did this?

Aver: Good.

M: The blackness wasn’t so bad?

Aver: No, there is depth and beauty in blackness, to some extent, but it is black and is horrible. There is something there, it is not just rubbish, there is something valuable.

M: You did this one first and then the black one.

Aver: Yes.

M: Do you think you could have done the black one first?

Aver: No, probably not. And I couldn’t do that one first before this one. Sometimes we had an assignment or a suggestion that we paint some of our hopes and I didn’t feel that I had very many. I had to get that down first before I could do the next one. And then there are two things that happened where there were pieces where I had to go back and alter them when I got back in the group. This represents my ex-partner and I wanted to go on with our lives and put that there. And someone suggested, in the group, is this still my ideal to even have him in the picture? And I said, “No, it’s not my ideal,” and ripped it off, and so really that is now my ideal. So it wasn’t until I brought it to the group did I do that. Also in this one, the black figure here, it was a round sort of doll figure and when I brought it to the group I felt it was dominating. I had made it that way, and they suggested that maybe there may be some therapeutic value in making him not so dominating, and I just took my boot and stepped on it.

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M: Oh, right.

Aver: So that felt really good yeah and that happened after I brought it to the group too. That's the tread marks. [laughs]

M: So that's off your boot. [laughs]

M: So why do you think that happened in the group and not before?

Aver: I guess it's just a process. I actually put down on the paper what was reality for me and the process is, well, what can we do with reality to make it less, I don't know, and so the process is moving from present to future, I suppose. Do you know what I mean?

M: Aha.

Aver: And altering the picture, to follow my feelings I suppose. It felt like the right thing to do.

M: So it felt like the right thing to do in the group.

Aver: Yeah.

M: I find it interesting that when you brought it to the group that you saw it differently.

Aver: Yeah, but there is tremendous value in having your present experience validated by the group and moving on so that this is not so painful for you, for me. Actually doing it with the artwork became therapeutic.

M: Do you think you could have talked that through?

Aver: I did, I said I wanted to do it. I actually think I did it the next session because it was the end of the session and we talked about how it would be if I did that. But then the next session I still felt a burning desire to do it, so I did it.

M: Did your work change after that one, or did it continue in the same vein?

Aver: I had done paintings like this before, then I went into a couple of those, mass confusion, and then I went to these paintings again. I really liked the painting.

M: Yes, you are good with it.

Aver: Sometimes it is too awful to paint. Paint to me is ... there is beauty in it. This one is painted but it is a mess.

M: Did you rip something off that one?
Aver: No, I always start in the middle of my paper for some reason. I started with the middle and it just ended up that I wanted to put all my things here, and then block this figure off from my life, so I did that. But there is nothing behind it and I didn’t like all that white paper so I ripped it off, so it was a complete picture here and I was running out of time and I couldn’t think of anything to put over there.

M: These are painted with a lot of energy and it looks like you had a big brush. So you used a variety of material and a variety of paper. Why did you choose that rough paper there?

Aver: I chose that paper because I knew I wanted to put clay on it and I wanted it to be sturdier.

M: There is a similar image coming up here and here and here.

Aver: That is just an image of myself or people in general, that is a quick way to draw people if they are not moving anywhere.

M: OK. So what did you learn doing this course? What do you think art therapy is? What is art therapy for you?

Aver: [deep breath] It meant during that time it really facilitated me getting in touch with my feelings and being able to express them in a way that was a purging, sort of thing. I had a lot inside of me and I didn’t know anyway of appropriately expressing it. A huge amount of anger, I don’t know if there are many appropriate ways and I’m not a person who wants to punch pillows, you know.

M: Mm.

Aver: And I felt that once I expressed something then it actually gave me more clarity on what it was, instead of it being all confused and jumbled, pent-up feelings.

M: So you saw it as a legitimate form of expressing feelings.

Aver: Legitimate meaning acceptable.

M: And as you did that, it brought clarity.

Aver: But it was talking about it that brought more clarity too. It wasn’t just doing the art, it was also talking about it and the feedback from the group.

M: Right.

Aver: But it was a balance because, for the amount of anger that I had there has to be a physical expression of it as well, which I’ve been trying to do by going to the gym as well. This is my angriest one [painting]. I mean, there is a certain amount of

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physical involvement you can do with your hands. Art therapy for me is not the be-all and end-all in getting rid of this stuff, but it certainly helped.

M: So can you talk about that some more. It was physical but it couldn’t release the energy that going to the gym might do.

Aver: I just felt, in my experience I have felt for years, that I had anger inside of me and talking about it, going to counselling, doing my own drawings at home, thinking about it, meditating – doing all those sort of passive sort of things didn’t really touch it. But for some reason, at the same time in my life this opportunity came up to art therapy and at the same time I felt I needed to physically do something. And it wasn’t a planned thing, it just accidentally happened, and I felt that that was a good combination for me to not only talk about it but do something physical about it, to do something with a part of my brain that art, art ... I suppose I could have done it with music too, but there was no sort of forum to do that. Do you know what I am saying?

M: I can hear that it needed to be on ...

Aver: ... Different levels ...

M: ... Different levels, and I’m wondering if the art therapy helped you become aware of these different levels or if it was simultaneous with the physical.

Aver: No, I don’t think there was any awareness of the physical thing. Art therapy provided a lot of insight for me and that is what I wanted to gain. That was one of my goals was to gain some insight of what was going on ... a big mess.

M: So do you see it as a big mess now? Did you actually get understanding in it?

Aver: Well, towards the end of my ... this is the last one I did and it was on ‘What did the course mean to you?’ And this is mess foggiest, blackness darkness, sorrow, anger ... the red didn’t end up drying too well, blue over here representing the two of those. But there was some sort of light to it, some sort of understanding, a way through it, gaining a little bit of understanding. But this is gone, there is just a really, really tenuous link and my fear is that that would go and I’d go back. This is sort of therapeutic. I wouldn’t go back to this state but I’d go back to something not quite as clear.

M: So what can you do about that?

Aver: I’ve been thinking of buying some paints and doing this stuff at home, I don’t know.

M: It sounds like you travelled through quite a bit of stuff.
Aver: I did. That is what surprised me, that I actually got to this point. I thought I would paint this stuff for ten weeks, and that maybe I would get rid of half of it. And maybe I did only get rid of half of it but it feels a lot different, like a real shift. So I guess going back to the confused state I don’t have as much anger inside me but I certainly have an incredible amount of this, sadness. Now I don’t know what to do with that and it is overwhelming at the moment.

M: Aha.

Aver: And because it is overwhelming I go back to feeling confused and very vulnerable. And I don’t know what I can do with it. I just wish there was an ongoing art therapy group. What I feel like is this group brings you to this point and gets you going and I’m not sure that that tenuous link is strong enough for me to carry on.

M: Mm.

Aver: I would have liked a stronger link before I left the group.

M: Kate said that if you would like some more therapy that that is possible. But I can hear what you are saying that maybe you thought the group was too short.

Aver: Well, in hindsight that was my own process – for me it was.

M: You have worked through a great deal from your anger to your sorrow and further you have been very brave and courageous.

Aver: The thing is that group was a safe place that was also a set time you had set aside for my own growth, for two and a half hours. There is no way I could do that at home, and who could I talk to about it?

M: Is there anything else you want to tell me? When you did your artwork ... did you plan to make these works?

Aver: I think they were all pretty much evolving except that one, I had a clear picture in my mind, the first one. And sometimes I have a vague idea, all I know when I went into this collage one was an intention of trying to get a handle on the mess of my life, and I wanted it three-dimensional because it just seemed that that was bigger than life – that’s all I knew I could do. But that just came five minutes before I did it, while I was sitting around in the group. It just evolved you know, I’d just sit down at the paper and I’d think I want to paint anger and this and that as well.

M: So you would just let it happen and was that OK?
Aver: Yeah, I was trying to get away from planning it. I just tend in general to be a planner. I thought it would be more beneficial and get more in touch with my feelings if I didn’t plan it but if I just let it happen.

M: Do you think that worked?

Aver: Yeah.

M: I think it did.

Aver: And if I did to some extent plan something, the second one was unplanned.

M: So nearly every time you did two.

Aver: Usually, but maybe not.

M: Is that all you want to say?

Aver: No, I mean the second time I was here I made a magazine collage but I never did paste it down on paper – I didn’t have time – so that was something else beside the painting.

M: Yes it was a different medium again ... Well done, well done, thank you for helping me with the research.

12.2. BOWER

M: Bower, could you tell me how you made this painting?

Bower: About what I was thinking?

M: Yes, and how did you painted it.

Bower: I was just thinking of the times I was down in my life. Just trying to get a feeling for it and the darkness that is down at the Cross.

M: At Kings Cross?

Bower: Yes, a feeling of loneliness, hopelessness sort of ... up here there is water and it is nice and serene.

M: Was that a white piece of paper?

Bower: I painted the paper all black.

M: And then you let it dry?
Bower: No, I just painted over the top. I was really trying to express my depression, but I found it difficult. I found I’d start doing something depressing and then I’d have to go over it, do something nice to cover it up.

M: It looks like night time. Is that what you intended on painting?

Bower: Yeah ...

M: Did it have meaning for you?

Bower: I’m still working out how my art helps me with my feelings. I do art at home and that, and I’m trying to work out how it can help.

M: Well done.

M: [Bower unrolls the next painting] So how did you do this one? It is shiny.

Bower: I varnished it when I took it home. I felt good when I did this one, it felt good going round and round. To me it gives me a sense of hope.

M: It feels that way. So did you do it with a brush?

Bower: I did it with different brushes.

M: This is a big brush and this is a little brush.

Bower: Yeah.

M: How did you pick your colours?

Bower: I tried not to pick dark colours, not black. Nice light colours. That is how I want to feel all the time.

M: So is this what you intended to draw?

Bower: Yeah, I had that in my mind’s eye.

M: So you knew what you wanted to do and made it.

Bower: But usually in the group I did a structured one first in the group, I did one before and it was sort of structured and had lines and that. I felt somehow I had to do that before I had to do this more free one.

M: That’s interesting. How did you find the group responded to it?

Bower: They were pretty positive, they sensed a journey ...

M: Was that how you were feeling about it?

Bower: Yeah.

M: So how did you find that session influenced you?

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Bower: One night I went home, usually, well, most times before I go to sleep I have lots of stuff going on in my head. On this particular night all I could think of was colours and putting colours down and it was really good to be having those creative-type thoughts. It might sound bizarre but it reminds me of when I meditate, I think of this pattern.

M: It is great and has a lot to it, it is not simple and the colours are beautiful. And then you went home and lacquered it, did you?

Bower: I want to keep it and the lady I live with picks up frames and I may frame it.

M: It is special ... Is that all you want to say on that one?

Bower: Yeah. [Next painting] Again, this one I was trying to do something positive and one week someone in the group suggested I go to the beach, but I didn’t actually go to the beach, but it was a nice day and I came up with this. It is sort of free-flowing but with structure in it in places.

M: So this is part of the structure here?

Bower: I did the outside first and then I filled it in. These are birds, a bridge, water.

M: Where about in the sessions did you do this?

Bower: In the middle.

M: It looks like a beach on a warm day.

Bower: I found it really hard to put down negative images. At one time I tried to draw my brother’s face, a representation of my brother. I started doing it but for some reason I had to cover it and turned it into something else.

M: So you meant to draw your brother’s face but for some reason you couldn’t. Was that with this picture or another one?

Bower: It was with another one. I sort of come to the conclusion that after a few tries that I’ll just do positive stuff instead.

M: Is that because the other stuff wouldn’t come or because that is what you felt you should do?

Bower: Because the other stuff wouldn’t come. I feel I can express pain more with other materials like clay and modelling and that.

M: You are also very good with colour in the painting.

Bower: Another thing the group mentioned was that I always filled up the page and I never left any white bits of paper. I don’t know if that is significant.
M: Neither do I. It is interesting the group said it, isn’t it?

Bower: I also have a problem in the group cause if I had paint left over I’d get a sheet of paper and want to use it up and not wasting it. But I feel really guilty about using the paint – part of me enjoyed using the paint and the other part of me told me it was wrong using so much paint.

M: But if you didn’t use so much paint it wouldn’t look so good. So what did you feel like when you varnished it?

Bower: I felt it brought the colours out more.

M: Yes, it did. You didn’t varnish this one [the dark painting we talked about first], did you?

Bower: I only picked the ones I liked to get varnished.

[At this stage Bower’s three paintings are on the flour and we are looking at them collectively.]

M: After doing art therapy what do you think it means? What is art therapy?

Bower: I know it puts me in a head space where I feel free and takes me away from my problems while I’m doing it, so that is a good thing about it. As far as doing something and then looking at it afterward, and try and work it out, I find that hard to do. Like with the guitar I started writing songs which are melodramatic and I felt real sad when I wrote them and they came from somewhere, a sad place.

M: So does art help you get to that same place?

Bower: Yeah.

M: Do you think it was worthwhile doing the course?

Bower: Yeah.

M: Do you know why?

Bower: It was worthwhile because just the group itself, meeting other women who had similar issues and I did not feel so alone. As far as the art goes I’m still trying to figure it out. I haven’t come to any magic answers.

M: Sometimes there are inklings of answers and sometimes you just sit with it. And I think you have done well – sometimes you structured things and at other times just went with it.

Bower: Yeah, yeah ... I think I started to get a balance, like this one where part is structured and part just happened

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M: And it worked, didn’t it?

Bower: Yeah.

M: Is there anything else you want to say? Or I need to know?

Bower: I got some art materials at home and I’m going to work on it and explore it.

M: Sometimes words come hard and they don’t touch what you want to say ... The black picture is an amazing image because of the thick blackness. Did you feel down after you did that?

Bower: A little bit. Yeah, it brought up feelings of memories of being out there alone and that ... sort of dog-eat-dog ...

M: Is this a park?

Bower: That’s a park and that is water.

M: It looks like the harbour at night and phosphorus, glowing in the dark

Bower: I guess, sort of, there is a road that goes around but it goes of the page

M: So you can get out? That’s interesting ... what does that mean to you?

Bower: That there is always some sort of help available and I don’t have to live that way, I don’t have to mix with those people.

M: So it has a lot of hope, too?

Bower: Yeah ... I think the art therapy has given me hope. Yeah, that’s what it has given me, hope for the future.

M: Thanks, Bower, that’s very special.

12.3. CREOLE

M: Right, oh wow ... [Silence as we focus on the artwork Creole has brought] So how did you do that?

Creole: How did I do it?

M: Yes.

Creole: It’s just paint.

M: Which bit did you start with?
Creole: Probably, the flows of colour – that was a recurring theme of my artwork. This sort of arch, I liked that free-flowing brushstroke. I found that very ... it just felt, like, liberating. That expression of flow that kind of represented a rainbow – like a kind of a hope, getting to a place of happiness and peace which I haven’t been for a long time – and Kate always mentioned this came up in my work often [the pointed shapes at the bottom of the page], that this could represent the number of people in the group because it kept changing.

M: Do you think that is what it was?

Creole: Well, it was to me a kind of a grounding – like it is meant to be roots of a tree very down on the ground and the other arch is up in the air. It could be a kind of a representation of the group, I was not sure. It did keep occurring and in the end when there was only three of us in the group there were only three of these in the image. So it could have been a very subconscious thing.

M: You have blue down here, it is very rich.

Creole: Oh I don’t know, that could have been an accident.

M: So how did you put this on, is this by brush?

Creole: It is all, all paint.

M: Yeah but did you use your hand? How did you get that on? Is it just a brush? And this area looks quite runny.

Creole: Yeah well, some of it was quite watery. That actually represents a state of mind around me [the watery yellow around the figure]. That is meant to be watery and unclear.

M: Yeah, this doesn’t look runny and this is a bit runny and this is really wet.

Creole: I think I tried to make it murky.

M: Yeah, and so you did the rainbow first, and then you did the rainbow or the figure?

Creole: I can’t really remember.

M: That’s OK. And the figure?

Creole: It’s not on the ground, it’s not walking firmly, it’s kind of up, airy and ... um, you know, I had a lot of issues I was working on when I entered the group. I found doing the art therapy subtle in the sense that it brought up a lot of emotion without actually thinking too deeply. Does that make sense? Like I found that once a week

Trusting the Artwork
and say sometimes the morning I would be coming to art therapy, I'd be crying all the way here. I'd actually be preparing for things to come up.

**M:** Amazing.

**Creole:** Yeah, it was worked on that level that I wasn't really consciously thinking about a lot of stuff, but it was coming up.

**M:** Wow.

**Creole:** I found it very potent.

**M:** Yes, very potent. So did you know the issues that were coming up?

**Creole:** Yes, it was things that I hadn't exactly worked out the causes of what I was feeling, but I had a lot of feelings I was dealing with and lots of different issues around relationship, and I was feeling very confused and numb and it took a while for what I was actually feeling to come up in the artwork. Like in the beginning it was a lot of stuff like confusion and a hope of a feeling of more peace and more grounding. And then there was one point during the course when I was actually honest with myself and named a couple of the issues in a work — it was on a collage — and it was a lot easier because I'm not a painter, you know. You can express it through colour and form, but if you are not an artist as such and into putting concepts into images, it is more difficult. It is easier to cut pictures out, stick them together.

**M:** It was when you did do this you became more aware of what it was?

**Creole:** No, I knew that I wanted to express a bit more through the collage because I could find images that would express what I was feeling, because I couldn't draw them. But the first time I saw someone do a collage I felt ... it was strange, I guess I didn't realise you could do that. Maybe I was confronted by it, it was a strong thing to do and made me say, “This is how I’m feeling.” Because it is clearer.

**M:** Yes.

**Creole:** Something like your own artwork ... a few people could interpret it differently but not a collage, it is more clear.

**M:** More common understanding?

**Creole:** Yes, and when I did the collages I was amazed at the responses of the group. They actually related to quite a bit of it and issues we had in common.

**M:** So when you went to make something did you have a clear image in your head?
Creole: No, I think the first time I had no idea. No, I’m not a painter and I haven’t used painting or drawing since I was a kid, because I always thought I was no good at it, but I wasn’t afraid of using the paint or expressing things in a childlike form. I wasn’t highly critical or intimidated by it. It felt good to pick up the paint. I was really drawn to certain colours that I could interpret as things.

M: Right. So when you came to do it you had nothing in mind?

Creole: No, I just got into it. There were some weeks when I had no idea of what I wanted to do and there were other weeks where I had been thinking about it, before I came and I knew exactly what to express. And then there were some weeks there were themes that we would work on and try to explore. But if I had something else that I wanted to express I did both.

M: OK.

Creole: So it was different every week. Some weeks I knew what I wanted to express and other times it just came out, even if I didn’t know what I was going to do.

M: And so did it mean something to you then? Even if you hadn’t thought it through?

Creole: Yeah, as I was doing it, it was quite easy to realise what was happening.

M: So when did the meaning of it become real to you?

Creole: There was one work I did and I remembered that when we discussed it in the group one lady pointed something out – it was like she really picked something and I said, “Yeah, that’s right.” She knew what was happening to me emotionally and she had said what I wanted to express. So the group pointed it out to me.

M: Was that before you saw it?

Creole: Yeah, or almost interpreted it in a different way. There was this bubbling up and one lady said it wasn’t to destroy in the process, but I’d interpreted it as having to destroy everything in the process of change. But as someone else pointed out it was more positive, and that was really good as someone else had pointed it out to you – that there was a positive side to what you were going through, and so you can see it in that way too.

M: It almost had two ways to view it? A destructive and a created side to it.

Creole: Yeah.

M: OK.
Creole: I think it was really good to do it in a group. I found that everybody in the group was supportive of each other, and when they commented on artwork it was, like, supportive and positive. Like we were finding things in common that we could relate to, certain feelings. It gave you a feeling rather than being isolated and just on their own but rather you could relate, maybe with different experiences but similar feelings, and that was really good.

M: So how would you say you found the whole process of art therapy in a group?

Creole: By the end of it I was really glad it was over. I found it very intense – for me it was very intense and brought a lot of stuff up. By the end of eight weeks I thought, “Phew, I’ve had enough of this and now I can relax for a while.” It was very intense – it was like being in psychotherapy because it kept bringing stuff up.

M: So was it too intense?

Creole: Well, is there such a thing as too intense? I mean, I guess you have to go through stuff.

M: Well, you come to a group like this to go through stuff.

Creole: Yeah.

M: But each week something new was coming up?

Creole: Well, I knew the issue I was dealing with but it is a thing to theorise about it but it is another thing to face the emotional impact upon you.

M: So doing the art helped you face the emotion?

Creole: Yeah well, I found myself crying a lot during the course because I was starting a process of grieving for a lot of things.

M: Right.

Creole: So it started off a process ... a process of grieving.

M: So the art therapy in some way got you in touch with your feelings?

Creole: There were times after the course when I cried and cried and that was overwhelming, so at times the process was overwhelming. I was always willing to come to the sessions but it did overwhelm me at times.

M: I thought that you would be able to work through what was brought up at the time of the session, but I can hear that sometimes it triggered of a lot more than just what is happening in the group because when you went home there was a lot more going on. That is very real ... So is there anything else you want me to know? You
have told me a great deal, as I didn't realise that the potency of the therapy affected you outside of the group.

**Creole:** Oh yeah, yeah. Absolutely. I did the course to deal with things and to get in touch with my feelings that were inside of me, which it did in a big way.

**M:** So did you get understanding in the course, or was it mainly emotional expression?

**Creole:** Since doing the course, from the time it finished until now, I have been processing a lot of that stuff and I have a much clearer understanding and I am more willing to deal with things on a more practical level because I've dealt with the way it affects me emotionally, if that makes any sense to you.

**M:** Yeah.

**Creole:** I've still got all the same problems but I'm clearer and so I guess I've got more ability to go in and deal with them now, rather than just going into the emotional impact. Because when you're like that you can't think clearly, so it is important to have that expression as well when you are going through things. It started off a process of being able to be more clear about how things are affecting me, you know, so therefore I am more able to deal with things. I'm not getting so emotional about things.

**M:** Right.

**Creole:** I feel like I've gone through so much of it, that it is not affecting me that much. And before, I expressed that I was very aware of a numbness that I had and since getting in touch with my emotions, I am not numb any more.

**M:** That is very valuable.

**Creole:** Oh it was, it was great. I'd recommend it to anyone. When I thought, "It is only eight weeks," I thought, "What am I going to do after this?" But by the end of it it was definitely enough.

**M:** Thank you for sharing that.

**Creole:** I hope I've helped you.

**M:** You have indeed.
12.4. Dorie

Dorie: Usually, when I start a work I really have no idea of what I am going to do, or if I do have an idea, as soon as I start working with the media that will often take over.

M: Right.

Dorie: But I often have no visual image, um, and often with me it's more of an emotional, um, thing. Er, now this one in particular, I guess I could talk about this one. Um, when I was a little girl Mum used to make these tissue paper kind of flowers. And in this particular session, I think we had been discussing ways we had been feeling in the group. It was like we were in this kind of current and sometimes it was really turbulent, but it was like a current that you are kind of in and you sort of drift along with this current, and I kind of related it as an afterthought, I used to like the story of Thumbelina.

M: Mm.

Dorie: And that kind of came to me afterwards. I made this lily pad and this frog on the water and I was thinking, "Oh, it is just like Thumbelina." When she gets thrown into this current she sort of happens upon all these adventures and sometimes they're good and sometimes they are bad. A bit like how it was feeling for me in the group at the time and there was no control over it — you were just going along. And so I had little bits going over the side — it wasn't contained, it ... there was a gentle ripple and bits where you might get stuck. But I enjoyed making this — it really took ... I remember, as I was making this I was remembering the time with my mother and that kind of very, you know, that time you spend time with your child, that very one-on-one, that very, very special time. As I was making this I was thinking and feeling that actual space — it is hard to describe.

M: So it was bringing back memories?

Dorie: Well, I guess it was bringing back the memories of feelings — it was actually a feeling. I was just really enjoying making this, I guess it was the memory but it was very physical.

M: Mm.

Dorie: I felt that I was actually in that space again.

M: Oh really?
Dorie: Yeah, which is why I am sharing this one in particular as it really stood out for me. It was like I was back in that space and I was a little kid and I was just enchanted with the flower and then the frog.

M: So what was the frog?

Dorie: Well, she ends up marrying the frog.

M: She nearly does.

Dorie: Yes, she nearly does and then she escapes. And I think that is the crux of it, that she escapes and he is the kind of the thorn in the side. She only narrowly escapes marrying this ugly old toad. But it was also the fun of crushing up the paper and so enjoyed that one.

M: So how do you think you find meaning from that experience?

Dorie: Just by contemplating, reflecting upon it, you think, “Oh yeah, that’s Thumbelina.” I loved that story as a child. At the time you are not actually, well, I’m not really thinking, I’m just doing it. It is just happening and then I will think back and I’ll think, “Oh yeah, that’s it.”

M: Right.

Dorie: I usually think back and make the connections then after I have done the work. I think why did I use delicate colours, and why... yeah. with reflection. And it will often come a few weeks down the track. Sometimes you look at a work you have done a year ago and you sort of see other connections.

M: Right.

Dorie: It is like that in life.

M: Yes.

Dorie: Sometimes you look back ten years ago and things happened and you couldn’t make sense of it then and suddenly something triggers and you think, “Ah, that is what it was.”

M: Right, OK.

Dorie: So I think that happens with your artwork as well. This was near the beginning of the journey. This one was I think the very last one and I actually did a lily pad again and it is interesting because this is another kid thing I used to do. I’m a real kid. But I wonder if it is because I got enjoyment out of it then and am I trying to take that back, or am I just a big kid or am I always going to be like that? Do you
remember this? [a folded paper game with numbers and secret messages written in it in the shape of an envelope that opens up]

M: Yes.

Dorie: This is pink and it is very delicate and it is throughout the process and it became like a symbol of the unit of the group. It was like a skin thing, it was like a protective covering. So skin has that sensitivity to touch and I guess I was imbuing the feeling of that, I was using pink for sensitivity. I think that is why I chose this, but it was not a conscious choice. This kind of tissue I use in my own work and I crush it, then press it out flat and put it on my paintings and make little wooden sculptures and stuff.

M: Really?

Dorie: And it has become a symbol of harmony. And it is interesting that I chose this form as the last piece for our group together, bringing all together, the use of colour. I started really getting interested in the different colours people bring to the group. I was using the different colours to symbolise different people in the group. I didn’t really think of it at the time, but when I looked back through the work I noticed that I’d done this. I remember in this one I was very careful, I wanted the colours to work together but not actually blend in. I was aware of the different perceptions and colours people bring to the group, yet you could still have that group unity.

M: So how did you find doing art therapy in a group?

Dorie: For me it is not difficult to blurt stuff onto the paper and whatever turns up, turns up. I’m not worried about what appears on the paper. I think my work is very related to the group and I am very conscious of that most of my work is connected to the group – such as this end-piece again and the colour – and also the numbers of the members and revealing secret messages, as you do in a group. In group work things are revealed to you through working in the group process – that is what that artwork is about. But I thought, “Am I reading into this or is that really happening?”

M: So what was your conclusion?

Dorie: I don’t know, it is difficult to say. I’ve got the colour of the individual group members and often the numbers in other group members’ work related to the people in the group – like, there would be ten trees, so that was interesting. I also tend to work in three dimensions as you can see, not always but sometimes. I like building
things up from nothing. Like this piece is like another lily pad that sits inside the other ... I find too that my own work speaks to me.

M: Do you know how?

Dorie: I just make connections to do with the group process and that connection with my feelings. I remember going away feeling frustrated. And the non-directed group the conversation becomes sort of futile and you are going around in circles. And so I painted, “Oh God, this drives me crazy – I don’t think I am the only one – it drives me crazy”, and so the brush strokes go shooting off the page. “God, let’s get up and do some artwork,” and I remember moving and thinking, “Oops,” and I said, “I just want to do something, I don’t want to sit here and twiddle my thumbs.” And I remember feeling that I shot up and the marks on the painting shooting and coming right off the page and that is how I felt I had actually behaved. I’d reacted like that with intense colour and filling in the gaps. Of all the insane questions, what about this? And I have noticed that that is the kind of work I do when I am feeling like that. There is a similar mark-making when I feel like that, frustrated and impatient. I usually work on quite large cardboard but this time I chose a small grey card and I wasn’t feeling well. I think with these paintings it was like a release of anxiety and frustration, and it was better to put them onto paper than to put them onto someone else.

M: I think that is legitimate.

Dorie: I think these works just are. Some other works seem to open up more to you but these are more immediate.

M: So these reflect where you were at?

Dorie: At that very moment. It also depends how you feel physically on the day, too – it is all a big part of it. I was not feeling well on that day it comes out in the work, doesn’t it?

M: Yes.

Dorie: I think a lot of the work is related strongly to the group or it is about my feelings, my immediate feelings to the moment. Like these finger-paintings which are all very contained – I felt a real brooding thing.

M: Do you know why?

Dorie: I look at them and think they are miserable, brooding and contained. Finger-painting is very messy but these are very contained, but ...
M: So you don’t have a lot of understanding of them yet.

Dorie: That might come later on.

M: They are intense.

Dorie: I like dark, intense colours with mystery. I think it is the mood I am in and I like to experiment with different materials.

M: So from your experience what do you think art therapy is?

Dorie: It is like a, some very powerful form of expression that is so powerful that sometimes you can’t even put your finger on it. I think it is like a mystery sometimes. Sometimes it reveals itself and sometimes it is a mystery.

M: What’s it revealing?

Dorie: It’s revealing things about yourself that you haven’t had a chance to think about because that opportunity hasn’t been there, but the artwork triggers memories, feelings and sensations, thoughts that would not otherwise be triggered if you didn’t have the opportunity of creating the work, having the work just happen before you and think oh... I think it is a very immediate thing and brings things to surface and crystallises things as well. I am still grappling with it.

M: I think you explained it well.

Dorie: Yeah? This year I have had doubts about being an art therapist because I am a sensitive person and I talked to Jill and said I don’t think I am cut out for this because I cry over the silliest things and get teary. And then something happened in the group journey and one of the girls had a bad accident and her little boy died and we were all really upset, and it actually happened that Jill told us before class and the group followed. I didn’t want to go back as I was so upset and I did not want to be a part of this, but I went. Later I thought, “This is where I need to develop strength to handle this sort of thing” – to be a therapist, sensitivity and strength. Doing the work on the day was different as it was powerful and to do the art – it felt like a container and I was pleased I didn’t walk off. It was like a cradle and a gift to her. I wanted the painting to be delicate and fragile and I was offering a little tiny bit of this for her and that made me feel stronger.

M: That is precious.

Dorie: It also felt as though it contained me as well – somehow the artwork and doing it as well. From being shaky and vulnerable and fragile there was a shift in me as I made this artwork to a place of a bit of strength ...
M: Thank you, that is very valuable for the research.

12.5. Elip

Elip: I’ve actually brought a selection of things. So I’m just wondering how I can talk about them. So these six are from one group and these are from another group.

M: You mean a different group?

Elip: A different group, another art therapy group.

M: OK, well, stick with the one group, the one this year, and if there is something else that you want to say, well ...

Elip: Well, this was early on.

M: Mm.

Elip: And you want to know how did I make it?

M: Yes.

Elip: What I did was to collect a bunch of art materials – so that would be a range of crayons, tissues, the basic white paper – and find myself a spot to work. So I had more materials than I had to use because I wasn’t really sure what I was going to be using or how it would work. I also had glue and scissors, but I didn’t use the scissors. And I like tissue paper collages but I didn’t start with any idea in my head at all, like “I’m going to do this.” It was very much from the materials, tearing up the materials and noticing that this tissue has actually been in the sun and got faded and caused this colour line is to do with it being faded, and I like the way when you get the overlaps you get the increase in colour. So I’ve just torn up tissue, selected bits and glued it down. In this case I started with some of these long green bits that are underneath and these pinky bits which are over, with smaller green bits slightly on top of those under-pieces. And then very near the end of the time we had nominated for the work, I did the pink crayoning and then I got into what I see as these little beany shapes – they could be read as beans or little crescent moons or even little ovary shapes, but definitely the feeling of something growing.

M: Mm.

Elip: And then I did these leafy bits with crayon at the end, which aesthetically I don’t particularly like but they just seemed to come at the end. And then the wavy blue lines, two blues.

Tusting the Artwork
M: It is very interesting. How it is in layers?

Elip: Well, the whole thing of layers and overlaps and fragmentation, um.

M: Do you know what it means to you? And why you think that?

Elip: I think different things at different times because when I first did it, I could say, “These are bean-type things and these were shoots growing, and this has a watery look about it.” I mean, I could say that but when I consider that this was the first group I can see that it probably has got reference to a group in a new context. I think the beany bits, and the shoots too, are probably some thoughts about us as a group growing and emerging from the soil.

M: So the context of it was important?

Elip: I wouldn’t say that because the group encouraged us to look at that as significant. I think the talk in the group would be along the lines of and how might that relate to the group? But my feeling about the artwork is that it can be read in so many different ways. So you could read it as that, but it could also find many levels of meaning and different ways of understanding it.

M: Yes.

Elip: Because one of the things for me, for instance, I feel that little motif there in this artwork is also present here and that is what this tissue work is about. But I don’t know what that is, if you see what I mean. But I can see, given that part of our process is to look back at our work, that there is something there that reappears in a slightly different configuration.

M: Right.

Elip: But I also put it in my visual diary, but here it came up more like my heart centre and it goes with a drawing of Ayers Rock and another drawing and a simple collage as well.

M: Yes, it reminds me of Ayers Rock.

Elip: But the question is where is Ayers Rock in me? I am Ayers Rock. Anyway there is something about that and a wounded feeling in that context. So I wouldn’t have been able to say that at the beginning when I did it because these other things had not begun to emerge.

M: Right, OK.

Elip: So it is like a layered work and a layered understanding that isn’t immediately all there for you.
M: No.

Elip: But I also know that I drew more beans in my visual diary with much better root systems before the next group. I was scribbling and up came these beans with a decent root structure, where in a sense these are floating.

M: So could you tell me, how do you know what they meant or do you just watch them?

Elip: I don't know what they mean but those blacky beans have come up in a completely different work. When I went to do a visit in an observation in an art therapy placement and, um, and so I decided to do something and I found in my work a whole lot of beans came up. And that was last year in a different setting when I wasn't actually thinking about doing my work, – being internal I was just making a collage, which is really easy while I watch what is happening in the placement – and up comes all this stuff. I was not focusing on it. So I wonder if they will come up some more. I do tend to work visually, so they will show themselves to be what they are.

M: These ones are sprouting.

Elip: Well, these are but these aren’t really kind of connected and that is another way of looking at it, isn’t it? And why is it that those three dark ones and these other are sort of orange but have little yellowy moony bits on them, and further off they could be little fishes there, couldn’t they? They could be anything.

M: It is a very pleasant, intriguing picture. So when you find meaning in it does the meaning sort of come ... how do you get meaning from it?

Elip: When I did the beans the night before the next group with the decent root system I thought, “Aha, this is a message, this is,” I think I wrote in my journal, “a more knowing self.” Actually, drawing something for me like that means I can’t just shoot off like that, as I actually need the nutrients, the structure there or the flow – otherwise, you just grow up and the sun gets you and you collapse, sort of feeling. So even though it came up as – I wouldn’t say doodling but I had a few colours and I was having a mess about, um – when it came up and that is how I saw it, someone else might see it and would not see that. Obviously there is something in me that saw it. I had that sort of ‘aha’ sort of connection of these beans, the next group coming up and that was, “Thank you very much, I have that one,” sort of feeling.

M: Mm.

Elip: But it isn’t always like that at all.
M: No?

Elip: No, and many more things I think for me is the reflection and giving them space and, well, a respect, actually. A feeling that these are not artworks that you would show for art's sake. But they are really, there is something there that I don't know what it is but that they require that I give them some sort of respect and recognition. Like when you journal dreams, it is a sort of acknowledgement but you don't know what it is about but that there is some other part of yourself or some bigger thing working with you.

M: Mm, yes.

Elip: Sometimes I put them up at home but that is quite rare, but I usually put them somewhere and go and look at them. That is not true, some of those I had up for a while, so it does sort of vary.

M: OK, thank you.

Elip: So I'll put that one aside. Um, these two are a similar technique and I made them a week apart and I made those ones also – is it better to go in sequence?

M: No, does sequence mean anything to you?

Elip: Yes, yes.

M: What does it mean?

Elip: It means that that work has been done so that this work can be done and sequence is important.

M: Sequence is important.

Elip: For me.

M: That is fine. So it is important that you did those or else this would not come?

Elip: Well, I think it is a combination of that and context, and one thing and another, but I think there is some sort of progression like a conversation. Like if you had not had a conversation like I had last Sunday with my daughter then I wouldn't have had a conversation like I had this Sunday. That is what it feels like, but there might be other reasons why that actually turned up.

M: So there is some sense of sequence in the work, but when you go in there do you have any intention about your work or do you just make what comes?

Elip: When I am thinking of coming to uni to be part of the group I do not have any thought of what I will do at all – it is kind of completely irrelevant. By the time I
actually get to the group or get to the artwork bit of the group, because there is
discussion and a lecture in the morning and that material sometimes affects what I
do in the group in the afternoon. Not that I would think about it like that but would
get materials that somehow were appealing, and for me the phrase of ‘seeing what
comes up’ is how I work.

**M:** So when you say ‘appealing’, what is it?

**Elip:** Well, there was a whole lot of new tissue paper on that tissue paper day and I
had been to the paper and scissors, crayons and other things, but when I got to the
tissues I sort of thought, “Ooh.” So part of that is an aesthetic response and being
seduced by the material.

**M:** OK.

**Elip:** I think ... It is difficult to generalise actually because there was one group
where there was a lot of – I can’t remember what it was – but I really wanted to use
some ink because it woke up that feeling of wanting ink. When I go to the materials it
is similar to a sand-play situation, and something you would see would say, “Right,
thank you” – it would be like that. Today I need twelve white horses, tomorrow I
need a grandfather clock and something else. Somehow they stand out for me – it is
not conscious.

**M:** Thank you, that is interesting.

**Elip:** But having said that, with this I must have said, “I think I will do collage,” and
so I picked up the National Geographics rather than paint and tore out the bits that
appealed to me. I just flipped through them and took what I wanted, so there was a
lot that was not included in this.

**M:** So what meaning did you get from this, do you know? And do you know why?

**Elip:** I think there is a lot in this that I don’t know what it is but in terms of ... I think
it is about a lot of [laugh] lots of things about the creative process. It is partly about
excavating, but it is also part of my personal history with archaeology – it is partly
about mapping and partly about taking flight and things. And about being in a group
and exchange, a meeting place. In my own personal history I’ve been in marketplaces
like that and know that they are quite social.

**M:** So the photos symbolise or hold meaning to you?

**Elip:** I wouldn’t say that when I was doing it, but when I look at it afterwards. When
I am doing it and one thing about this was I was selecting bits and it’s a very sure-

*T慈ing the Artwork*
footed sense of, this needs to go there, this needs to tuck under that, this needs to go over here. It is like there is really no choice, like “Yep, that is it”, “No, no, it needs to move over a bit more.” Obviously there is choice, but it is a feeling of a more sense of “Yep, you got it right there”, “No, just a bit more”, “No, not that one, I’ll use this”. That kind of thing, um, incredibly sure-footed, which comes as a sort of surprise to me. So in terms of working with this, when I got home I wrote up the journal about this positioning.

M: I don’t understand exactly – was it almost determined as you sat down to do it?

Elip: No, this happened as I was going through the process, not determined from the beginning. It was not determined so that it would finish up looking like this but a sense of “No, that needs to be over the edge”, “This needs to be in the centre”. So when I go home I may write, “In the centre is an image of water and within that image is another image of river stones balanced.” And that is kind of telling me something. I can’t tell you what it is actually telling me, not because I am shy but I just don’t know.

M: That is fine, I’m just digging to see what understanding you have or if position has meaning, how you put it down.

Elip: Oh yes, I think so.

M: So it is significant that it does have a position?

Elip: I’m prepared to go with it.

M: And the pictures that you have chosen are significant and you have some understanding, they are archaeological or they are in a group, it is the art process but it is not altogether understood, but that you do value where it is at is ...?

Elip: Significant. Yeah, that’s right.

M: So you don’t have total understanding?

Elip: No, I think it would be a waste of time if you had total understanding. You might as well take a photo or go and have a cup of coffee. Because part of it is allowing things to be revealed to yourself. And not only then in positioning and choosing them and things but in the ongoing process, reflecting on them – and one of the things for me is it may well be in other artwork. This white bird thing, for instance, um, I realised has come up, even in the positioning it has come up in other things – it has shown only either its legs, or its footprints in the sand, or different things. I think the bird is Self in some way.
M: Yes.

Elip: In this one it is engaged in different things. Here it is dead and that is also to do with death and has to do with deaths in my family and the whole business of life having that thing death in it. It needed to be there as that is something happening for me. The stuff around, that is significant for me. But when I was doing this I did not say, “Aha, archaeology – aha, I’ll have this picture” but I said, “I’ll have that picture,” and ripped it out. The telephone numbers are interesting as they are the only non-colour thing and they are tucked in both top and bottom. And when I came to talk about it, which was the week after, I started to free-associate with it in a way and I said: it was also to do with connections, as having someone’s phone number is a form of connection and to communicate.

M: So it has to do with connections?

Elip: It has but I am reluctant to say that I have got it and summarised it. It feels much more like that ongoing exploration. At the moment I might see that, but early next year I might see something else after I have done some other work or in another frame of mind and think, “Aha,” and I might think those phone numbers are something else. But at the moment that is what it feels like.

M: It seems that the positions are very important.

Elip: Yes.

M: But the meanings are not that rigid.

Elip: No, that is right, because the meaning is very, very fluid as the meaning is growing.

M: The meaning is growing… So how does that happen?

Elip: I think that happens by allowing that to grow, even believing that it has got things that are growing. Otherwise, you would not look at it again or think about it again.

M: But you do go back to it again.

Elip: I do, yes. Not obsessively. [laugh] But it also might be that the beans, that when they came up again I went back to look at the other ones. So that would cause me to look again and think, “Oh, there is a pile of beans in this one and they are smaller and in a different position.” So they are there as a kind of reference that I can go back and kind of have a look at. And that is what is so different from talking therapy is that you have actually got tangible things. It is not a memory or a
conversation as you can say, “Oh, look those beans have little yellow bits around them.”

M: I am just interested that meaning can develop.

Elip: Yes, but I am expecting it to and hoping it will. I believe it is there and that is my experience that it is and I have grown in my understanding through working with images. So I will return to this image again and the collage is incredibly packed with images, whereas when I paint or other more abstract, things are not as dense with meaning or possible understanding. I have yet to contemplate this bit down here, that will be interesting.

M: Mm.

Elip: So I'll go to the last collage. Well, one of the things here had more intent as it was the last group and we'd reviewed our work individually, and also by then I had taken photographs of most of my work as I'd been working on my journal paper. So I had been looking through my work, um, in a series of different sorts of ways. And I was aware of this estuary bird being an image that had come up in different ways, sometimes more obvious than others. Some you could see and others were more like, almost impressions of, of a bird rather than actually being able to see it. And so this is unusual as I was actually just flipping through the National Geographic thinking, “This is the last group for us as a group and I can find out about this bird.” So at home I have actually drawn this white bird but this bird, which isn't really white (which is a little disappointing), is something that has re-occurred and I am trying to see more of it. For instance, I have just noticed that that bird has a reflection.

M: So you said the bird is something about the self?

Elip: I think it is about the self, which is more than the me that walks around and deals with my daily life – so that is my spiritual self, my unconscious self, much more than the everyday material ego bit.

M: Yeah, anything else you can say ...?

Elip: On the self?

M: Yeah.

Elip: Well, I think it is a really interesting idea, and I think soul and spirit are a bit difficult but Self seems like the more total me in some way.

M: And so at the end of the group you were able to get a full picture of the bird, of the self.
Elip: No, I would not say that. I’d say it is like another image and I actually think that drawing and painting it would be better, um yeah. So I think that is just another image, another hint, rather than it.

M: OK.

Elip: Because I would probably say that because it is not just by itself the whole thing is the self. And this central image, the feeling I have about that is that it is the centre. And this rainbow fish is important too.

M: So what is art therapy?

Elip: Well, it is very difficult for me to isolate but it is a process of growth. I’m very gestural and I’m not saying this very clearly, am I? Well, how I summed it up in the journal was to do with knowing more of myself. A feeling of both growing, like new, but it is also new understanding of what is. Some is to do with growing and some is to do with a shift in understanding or access to my subconscious, preconscious, spiritual, whatever – partly that.

M: OK.

Elip: So in that sense of mappings and connections, a more expanded more expansive sense of self. And I think that that has been happening for about a year and a half and is to do with changes in my life – doing the art therapy course is a consequence of my life and influences my life and stuff – is coming through the art therapy because I think it is a very suitable way that I can work with stuff. So the art therapy group has a component in a general change of development. But given that bigger change is happening and that art therapy is part of it, the art therapy group produces things that are very important to me. I feel that they are important and will continue to resonate.

M: So how did you find doing art therapy in a group?

Elip: Um, mixed, um, because it is very different from using art therapy just at home in your own way, which is what I was doing last year – which is what I have intended to do. So, um, part of that is ... the difference of doing it in a group is because it isn’t just doing the work as it is a two-hour group and there is some time to do the work. I mean, a lot about being in a group is about being somebody in a group, so that brings up lots of stuff. About what it is to be in a group, what it is to be an individual, how that balances. So it doesn’t have the luxury of following your own thing at home and it is in a time frame in a space within a group. But the other part of it is being part of what other people are doing and seeing what they do and what they say about their

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work is, wow. It is just amazing, just really amazing. Because I’ve gone away for half an hour and come up with my work but they too have their work and had an experience and want to talk about it. Just seeing other people’s work without even talking about it, or what other people say about other people’s work. Because I do like hearing what others say about their work, which is fascinating and utterly unpredictable and a source of, wow. The whole experience is huge – you could not possibly render it down to be solid. It feels sort of a massive thing – people doing their process and seeing what they do and what they say about that.

M: Thank you for that. When you say ‘resonate’, what do you think that means?

Elip: I think resonate means – um, well, it is not a head intellectual but rather a felt ongoing response … infinite sort of distance, sort of, um, I suppose that feeling with musical instruments or chanting or singing or whatever is that, it is not just what you hear with your ear. So it is like this it is not just what you can see with your eye, it is the effect it has on you, it connects in some way.

M: Yes. Do want to talk about these others?

Elip: I don’t think I have more to say.

M: OK, that’s fine. I think you have had an amazing process which is very visual which has influenced your life and is a result of all the other things in your life, and you have made it very evident here.

Elip: That is right, but I think in one sense I have allowed myself to be in the position where my life isn’t so crowded, and I think I’m having a catch up after all the busy times and all the big things too, like menopause and my mum dying. And I felt like, “Hang on, Elip, what are you going to do? What is important in your life?” And my kids growing up to a certain point. I wish I had given myself the permission to do art therapy over the years. Because I looked at all my old artworks when I went home at my parents’ home from childhood until I was 28, and it was fascinating and extraordinary.

M: That is a real treasure.

Elip: Yes, it was. I think the art actually keeps you up-to-date with yourself, like a diary, with your feelings. When my dad was dying I just did visual diary work again, whatever comes up, and I just think that processing helped me to be able to deal with what was coming up. I see it as a way, a whole way.

M: OK. Thank you.
12.6. Florn

Florn: This was done about four weeks into the art therapy group [painting of a tree on a hillock] and this one was done in the final group [small watery concentric circles]. Um, this one was done unintentionally, the other one I did specifically. Um, this is something I’ve seen in reality [the tree image], it was a tree that I admired and I guess I did it intentionally, but it took on a life of its own.

M: Right.

Florn: And it very obviously came to represent the group, and what I like about the tree when I saw it was how unified it was, it was so perfectly rounded. And when I did it I thought, “Oh, this is the group.” But later on I thought, “No, this is not the group,” as it certainly was not perfect at that point in time, but it was really what I wanted how I wanted the group to be.

M: Right.

Florn: And at first I thought it was kind of innocent and a bit too nice and skimming the surface of things that were going on, but, like, in looking at things again I think it is really full of much darker things. But it speaks to me of, with these wild circle things, a chaotic experience that you are in, which you could be engulfed by it all.

M: Aha.

Florn: So it has a double meaning. There is something in it, there is a sort of a solid group but it is also quite a scary experience, quite challenging.

M: So how did you make it?

Florn: How did I make it? I started off using watercolours and it was pale, and so I wanted it more distinguished. And so I used pastels and went over the watercolours with those. I also used pencil and crayon. It’s quite funny how the tree is in pencil and the rest is with pastel with broader strokes. So I guess that is saying something.

M: So for you it meant the whole group experience?

Florn: Yeah.

M: Do you know why?

Florn: Why it meant that?

M: It’s OK if you don’t.

Florn: You mean, how did I work that out?
M: Yeah.

Florn: I really have no idea. Um, I don't know. It is just the way it works – you just sort of get in touch with these sort of symbols.

M: Right.

Florn: Obviously, if you are more open to your work in a different way, you make these interpretations which maybe very different for someone who has no experience of art therapy.

M: Right.

Florn: I used to question that and think, “Well, am I just making these interpretations because I know about them and that works can be deeper and meaningful?” but I think it has just a resonance somewhere within you and you think and you sort of learn to trust that.

M: So when you say ‘resonance’ what do you mean?

Florn: It just has a deeper meaning. It is like the work has some sort of emotion in it, some sort of... I don't look at it and just see a picture of a tree, I see some sort of emotion in it, some sort of energy that relates to something that I felt.

M: Uh?

Florn: It is all sort of mysterious really. It is quite hard to explain.

M: Yes, it is hard to put words to it. So when you thought the group was nice and then you felt it had darker areas...

Florn: I didn’t think the group was nice at first. I had no feelings toward the group other than, from the first session, that it was going to be quite difficult. I think I had a naive idea about what it was going to be like. I didn't realise how difficult it could be. So I guess this picture is what I thought it would be – this nice unified group and then a recognition of all the dynamics that went on within it and how difficult they were, the tensions.

M: That is fine... It is a wonderful picture, it gets you in.

Florn: Yes, it pulls you into the centre. It was a starting point for me on a particular thing that I had to come to terms with – but it is not actually in the work, but somehow things come from it. Initially, I thought this picture was so childish, it is like a picture book, cute – and I was really uncomfortable with that. And because I am the youngest member of the group, that sort of started those things with me, being young and how I was in the eyes of the other members of the group and coming
to terms with getting mature. So that wasn't what was in the group in the beginning
but more things come out of it.

M: Yes. So does it take on other meanings?

Florn: I don't know if the work took on new meanings but I don't think that that is
in the symbolism of the tree, but just the style from that came other sort of things for
me, maybe in the act of sharing it with other people is where it came from.

M: Oh.

Florn: I think the meaning develops in the group. I think there are layers of
meaning. Initially, there is one meaning from that picture but from that meaning
sparks off all these other little concerns. There is just so much to it, to any one image
...

M: What about the other image?

Florn: That was the final week of the group.

M: And how did you do that?

Florn: That was just with ink and a lot of water, just wetting the paper and letting
the ink drop on, and I used two different colours. And that circle came out of another
image that I did, which was full of smaller circles. I sort of honed in on it and wanted
to make one tiny piece larger and it was the coming together of all these images in the
group which were circular and they were either, like, trees or flowers – and so it was
quite deliberate to do this at the ending of the group. I wanted to show to the group
that there was a real unity, which there was towards the end. In comparing the two, it
was like this is what I wanted and this is how it ended up. I think it would be wrong
to say that this is a cohesive group but that is how I felt at the end with this one and I
wanted to share that with everybody in the group. That [the second image] took on
lots of meanings in the group, like a cell or an egg, and even though it was a complete
circle it was not ended – that there was growth in there. I think it was more universal
than that too, a cyclic thing.

M: Do you know why you think that?

Florn: Yeah, I really saw a way of symbolising containment and the unity of the
group. I think I wanted to make that a statement on paper itself as a way of
completing, and I wanted to share that with everybody as a way of finishing.

M: So through it all was there anything else that influenced you from the group?
How did you find doing art therapy in the group?

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Florn: I had a whole range of experiences. I found it really difficult a lot of the time, really frustrating in the group experience. The art therapy part, it was pretty new for me so I was keen to see it working in reality and I was open as I approached it. I found that quite often I would get meaning out of my work later on. Things I approached haphazardly and might have been just fed up with the group – I just want to get out of this and just do a few blobs – and down the track a few weeks I look back and see there is a lot more in that than some kind of nothingness. I think with the art group, I found a lot of it was just the interaction of people and part of that was sharing our work, but when I think about the group it was really more about sharing experience because we all did our artwork separately, so I learnt a lot from the interaction.

M: So what is art therapy? What does it mean to you?

Florn: So what it means to me from the point that I have done it, rather than practising it? It is about making this connection through doing your own artwork with this kind of voice inside yourself, um, and it is a way in really of finding that part and just by having the artworks being able to sort of explore it. That is on a personal level on what it meant for me, as I connected with this creative force – which I guess I felt I lost touch with going out of art school and forgetting about it for a while – so I found it really stimulating on that level as well and getting back into that creative space.

M: Right.

Florn: But it is harder to apply my meaning to a broader sort of group, as my meaning may not apply to someone.

M: But that’s OK, what you got out of it is really valid.

Florn: Yes ... I think also a big part of it was learning to listen to it and knowing that it is valid as you said, it is so valid and so fuzzy and if you don’t listen to it, it would slip. It is this really fine connection that you have just got to get in there and sit with it, mull it over ... So learning to do that and not brush over those feelings was a big thing for me because it is so subtle in a way and sometimes it is profound and powerful. But for me it is subtle and slow, and also something that you let wash over you. I was rereading my journal of the art therapy experience and I found I just started to cry as there was a sense of something slow and subtle that takes time to slowly sink in ...

M: Thanks.
12.7. Guan

Guan brought three images to the research which we looked at and talked about. Other work was brought from another group but I asked that we stay with the images of this group for the sake of the research (I had wondered if there would be any evidence of resonance within the group and its artwork and I wished to stay with the one group, I also did not know how the other group was run). Guan’s three artworks were a painting of a square window connected to an arch, a wave of colour done in watercolour on coloured paper and the image of an angel which was also a shaman on black cardboard painted in acrylic paints.

**Guan:** I’ve actually been involved in two art therapy groups. The one this year at UWS and one the year before when I did an art therapy group. I might actually sort them out into the two separate groups, as the experiences have been quite different in both ...

**M:** Is that right? So these three you did this year?

**Guan:** Yeah, in the second semester. So what do you want me to tell you?

**M:** Well, how did you make them?

**Guan:** How did I make them? Well, this one came up, it was a symbol that started to recur in the art group that I was making. The first time this occurred it was a few weeks prior to this. [the image is of a square window shape divided into four]

**M:** Yes.

**Guan:** And I actually painted four very pale, flesh-coloured squares as a window, but it was very minimalist so it was ... And I’d used a lot of white paint on white paper so you could barely see the four squares and I really liked that image – by the fact that it was so minimal really appealed to me. So on this day when I made this one we’d been talking about transference, how the shadow or the reflection in the windowpane as you are looking through is like a person’s transference – or counter-transference, rather. As you look through the windowpane you see your reflection in the windowpane, your view is muddied by your own reflection just as it is in counter-transference, and that brought back the image that I made previously. The four squares as a window and so I made this one – I really love this pink colour and it appealed to me. I started off with black, drew the square, put a bit of black in it and some white to show it off more and did the background in pink because it appealed to me and I liked it. I like these colours together, the pink, the black and the white.

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M: Mm.

Guan: And then connected them to a doorway. And when we were processing it I, um, I came to the conclusion that it was to do with that particular point in my life when I was moving from contemplation to action, so I hadn't actually taken that step.

M: Mm.

Guan: But that was really where I was sitting, and someone in the group pointed out to me the perspective in the painting is a little strange, sort of coming forwards and going backwards at the same time – sort of hesitation like, “Do I take a move or not?” So that I thought was quite interesting and there is still that link – there is definitely that sense of being on the brink.

M: So did you intend to do that?

Guan: I intended to do the four squares but this side happened on its own.

M: OK.

Guan: And the feeling that contemplation moves to action was something I wasn’t thinking about at the time of doing that, but it was in the process of the group that it came out.

M: So did you draw this in the group or before?

Guan: The way the group worked was that it was non-directive and we would sit around and it would take us quite a while before we would get ourselves to the point where we would make artwork. Once we did that it was very funny, because we would all be facing inwards, talking, and then as soon as we made the decision to make art, then everyone would jump up and run away to their own corners and put their backs to the circle – and I found this really strange.

M: And you all did it?

Guan: We all did it. [laugh]

M: And no-one told you?

Guan: We just did it, we had a time limit and at the end of that time we brought our artwork back and faced each other again. The art group I was in last year we all worked together as we painted and processing.

M: So how did you find it, turning away and then returning?

Guan: Well, I actually thought, in the first week, that it would be rather nice to have tables in the centre of the room. The first week was very difficult because no-one
expected just silence and so people did not know what to do with the silence. I was pleased to experience that it changed the whole dynamic of the group but in that first week I actually suggested working together, saying, “If we work together we could feed off each other,” and then feeling slightly embarrassed after I said it. But I said it as a nurturing, giving thing but there was quite a strong response against that, people were reluctant and not confident enough or comfortable enough to do that.

M: Right.

Guan: And so it set the scene for turning away.

M: So with this one, what materials did you use? Did you do it with pastels?

Guan: Yeah, I enjoy using pastels. I feel comfortable with them.

M: What sort of feeling do they give you, or do you just like them?

Guan: Pastels are comfortable for me. I feel that I am able to control them and I have worked a lot with pastels.

M: And you also smudge them.

Guan: Yeah, I like being able to blend the colours and the feeling that they will do what I want them to. So unlike that where I used watercolours – and they weren’t very good watercolours, it was really hard to get any colour onto the paper – but I really enjoyed making that, because it is the ocean, I didn’t worry so much about control. It is not something structured – I could just splash it on as the sea splashes.

M: As you were splashing it, how did that affect what happened to it?

Guan: Well, it started off as splashes at the bottom and I really liked the colours that were happening and enjoyed those, and then got a bit more physical about it and more vigorous about it – and I think it was in response to the change of ideas at the beginning of the session. I was responding to other people’s work and what others had to say, like a symphony of ideas. So that splashing is to do with that like the mixing of the bubbles and the froth and all the energy.

M: Yeah.

Guan: I felt in the group was influenced by the discussion that proceeded it but also by the seminar presentation in the mornings.

M Oh, OK.

Guan: It seemed to influence the group in some shape or form.

M: That one over there ...

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Guan: Once again, I was influenced by a talk in the morning to do with shamanism and the presenter spoke about the American Indian, feathers and the eagle and the sense of flight, animal totems, birds and what have you. I was using paints there, acrylics, I was trying to extend my repertoire. I started by painting a wing and it somehow turned into an angel, um.

M: So your intention was to do an animal?

Guan: Yes, a wing of a bird and it sort of metamorphosed into an angel. And when we were processing that in the group, I remember saying that I was somehow in making that I was trying to tap into the feeling of the group or the group's unconscious and look at the energy in the group, and that was my response.

M: So you were trying to tap into that?

Guan: Yeah, and that is what the response was to the talk on shamanism, where shamans operate on a different level to the physical reality that you are in, so that it is some sort of ancient healing ritual, centuries old. And that it is there, but to access it you somehow need to change your level of consciousness in some way so that you have this feeling. I don't know, it just happens on a different level. It is not conscious, you just tap into your feelings, I suppose sort of combining thinking and feeling on paper.

M: It has lovely movement ... So what is art therapy?

Guan: Well, I suppose for me when I first heard about art therapy I immediately thought, "That is what I want to do, that is exactly what I want to do." I have always been interested in psychology and spiritual growth and art, so to me it just made a lot of sense combining therapy and art it seemed completely natural thing to do.

M: Yes.

Guan: For me on a personal level I don't see myself as someone who would make art to sell it. For making art is important as it is a way of gaining insight into myself, creating and recreating myself.

M: Oh, OK.

Guan: Yeah, so I do things like I keep a dream diary, I make drawings of my dreams and write down next to them what is happening at the time, the date and all that sort of thing. And then looking back over it you can actually see what is happening. It is something I have always enjoyed doing with my kids as well, so that has been a point of connection between us. I suppose just doing it for the pleasure of it.
M: The pleasure of it ...

Guan: Yeah.

M: You said it helped you create and recreate yourself. Could you tell me a bit more about that?

Guan: I suppose coming back to this one here [the window image], when I started the course at UWS I also started a psychotherapy course and at one stage I took my artwork and the therapist asked me whether I was inside the window looking out or outside the window looking in, and I said I didn’t think I was either.

M: Mm.

Guan: And so she said, “Is it a barrier?” and I said, “I suppose it is.” I could see it as a barrier. That idea of contemplation before you take any actions and I could see that there was something impeding my progress and I think that is what is happening in my life. So I suppose I use it to look where I am at.

M: Right.

Guan: Because what actually happens in my art-making is that stuff will appear in the artwork, and they say that it is in your preconscious and it just comes out in the artwork before you are consciously aware of it. This has happened to me on quite a few occasions, it happens almost unexpectedly. Um, I can remember about twenty years ago I hadn’t heard about art therapy but I was doing a still-life class. I drew a flask and fruit and things and the art teacher asked if I could see what I had drawn, and I thought he was asking a really stupid question because I had drawn exactly what was in front of me. But I had actually drawn a figure inside the flask bent over and it was then that I could see her, but I didn’t realise that she was there. When I look back on it it was clear what was happening but at the time I just didn’t realise. Also recently my father died – I was sitting watching television making a copy of a picture on my friend’s wall and it was sort of half done. And the next day I looked at it, it looked like a hand reaching up out of the earth, and I hadn’t been able to say goodbye to my dad as he died before I could get there and so when I looked at it it really triggered a lot of the grief to do with my father. So I suppose in that sense just creating and entering into a dialogue with yourself.

M: Mm.

Guan: And that is exactly what happens.

M: Yeah.
Guan: So you make the mark on the paper and it answers back.

M: So that situation with your dad, do you see that as talking with yourself?

Guan: I think what was happening there was, I suppose, one way or the other you have to give expression to your feelings. If you don’t do it consciously it is going to come up and, I suppose, doing that drawing I wasn’t thinking about my dad – it was all there and it just came up. So that’s why for me it is a way of expressing what I find hard to express in words. And that is something that came up in our art group at the end as one of the women involved was in a tragedy with her family. The artwork made in that final group session was really quite that kind, because we were experiencing the grief in some way with her because she has been part of the group and so in the art-making were able to give expression to that much more profoundly than to say what they were feeling in words. So there were a number of symbols, yeah, that said in one image far more than they could say ...

M: Thank you, is that enough?

Guan: Yes.

12.8. Hoddy

M: Do you remember how you did this artwork?

Hoddy: OK. So I needed to select papers specifically ...

M: Mm.

Hoddy: So I chose the black paper firstly and then chose the tissue to work with and had the white paper there as well. Um, so do you mean ...?

M: Yes, what materials you used and how you put it together.

Hoddy: So I used chalk, pastels and tissue paper, yeah, basically ...

M: And you glued it on?

Hoddy: Yes, I glued it on in spots ... Do you want me to tell you in a phenomenological way?

M: No, just how you did it. Just the process, that is what I am after.

Hoddy: So from memory, I started on the black piece of paper and then as I started drawing the figure, I felt the need to have to have a white piece of paper. It was a feeling of Yin and Yang and the need of balance and stuff like that, um, so then I
glued the white piece of paper to the black piece of paper, um, and then sort of glued on this red piece of tissue to the right-hand side and I started drawing the figure, yeah. ... I’m trying to think how to describe it, um, I just sort of started to make these curvy lines which turned into the figure, I suppose. And, um, started to put down lines which sort of helped me get in touch with how I was feeling at the time, which was about the third week of the group work. And, um, I felt like I needed to convey about this being an unusual experience about being observed by two people – one being the therapist, one being the co-therapist – and so that was an unusual situation for me, and also to reflect that in my drawing by putting eyes outside of the head. Yeah, this was my way of communicating, “This is an unusual, very different experience for me.”

M: Mm.

Hoddy: That sort of thing.

M: So did you intend to draw something like that?

Hoddy: Yeah, I think I did. And the other thing I was also playing with was that as I started to draw this figure, um, we also had a lecture in the morning about ‘outsider art’, and stuff like that, and the insane and that sort of stuff. And to some extent how at what point do you look at art and say, “That is the art of someone with schizophrenia or they have some sort of psychosis because as an artist I feel like you are” – it is about stretching the boundary. So to me it is OK to do anything that you can do. In a way this one is a reaction to that and it was also allowing me to expose myself in a fairly vulnerable way. I felt people looking at this could say, “Gee, there is something going on for this person.”

M: Mm.

Hoddy: And I guess in a way I was kind of rebelling and saying, “I don’t care if people think that I’m going to do this, I’m going to make this as unusual as possible.” So it was sort of a bit of fun as well. And it is kind of like working with people with schizophrenia – they do a bit of art like this, so that’s OK, I can do this too.

M: Mm. It is very interesting and it is connected too, isn’t it? There is a lot going on.

Hoddy: It feels like there is a lot of energy in the drawing, movement.

M: So the therapist and the co-therapist are seen in the eyes – that is what they represent.
Hoddy: Mm, yeah ... And to some extent, I guess, the colours are there to show that I can do anything – so there’s all different colours. So it is not designed to be something to look pretty, it is about experimentation.

M: So how did you find doing this in a group? Doing art therapy in a group?

Hoddy: I found it OK ... In some ways it didn’t feel so much like group as such because the way everyone would work. We seemed to have this discussion first in the art therapy group time and then we would all go off to various sites and we would get down and do it without really relating to each other while we were doing it, sort of thing.

M: Right.

Hoddy: So in some ways it didn’t feel so connected, from that aspect of actually doing the art. I guess one thing I noticed was that, um, at times being near another person some of their ideas would flow into your art or perhaps even the sounds like [tissue paper crackling] sparked me off to want tissue paper. So from that point of view it was interesting that things flow on from others, other’s ideas. Yeah, it does influence you and your own art. But to some extent it felt like an isolated experience because I guess, where I sat, the tables were all facing the walls and so you weren’t looking at anyone else. And I felt like I was immersed in what I was doing and I got the impression that others were also at that time. So around the people I was near, there wasn’t really much talking until after the art was finished and then we would sit down and process it.

M: So how did you process it? How did you find that?

Hoddy: I found that interesting, yeah, and I think ... I guess I’d done a group art therapy before and so I was aware of having a boundary of sharing or not sharing. But I found that sometimes after the trust had been built up in the group, which if there was a large disclosure, a personal disclosure, then other personal disclosures seemed to follow for other people. So that was interesting.

M: Mm.

Hoddy: And also getting feedback from other people on what they saw in your art.

M: Right. What was that like?

Hoddy: Well, you had to work out if you were going to take that in or if it was not sort of really relevant. I found that interesting, that sometimes that would enhance the picture for me, I think.
M: Did it ever do the opposite, or not?

Hoddy: Um yeah, sometimes it was more a projection of somebody else that they could extract from your work and other times it did bring it onto another level so it was relevant – it would enhance the meaning I suppose of the painting or the drawing, expand it in a way.

M: OK. So do you want to show me another picture?

Hoddy: Sure.

M: Thanks for showing me that, it was wonderful.

Hoddy: These two were done at the same time. This was a representation of stuckness, and this was at a time when the group felt like it was stuck – and it was really ... what can I say? We would go through this process of talking about what it was that we wanted to paint or whatever, each person really searching for what it was they wanted to express. It was a particularly low-energy day and everyone was a bit tired, a bit irritable and it was like running out of things to do and finding it really hard. And then I think I said, “I know what I want to do – I think I want to represent this (that state that the group was at).” It was certainly how I felt and that is 'stuck', and to work with that feeling. So that was quite interesting and others said, “Yeah, yeah, we want to do that too,” sort of thing, so ... And it was kind of interesting because there seemed to be a difficulty about how we did the whole art therapy group, and should we make changes? do we always have to do this thing at the beginning where we always have to wait for something to emerge? And some wanted as soon as the group started to go off and do artwork. I was maintaining that I actually could not work that way, that I needed to separate the morning theory and stuff and stop and almost get into a meditative state to think of the space as a new space before I could work. And other members in the group found that difficult to cope with and annoyed that I was holding them up. And I had to maintain that this was my need and it was relevant as anyone else’s. It was interesting, so when finally I knew what I want to do and it is being stuck, I think they were excited that, you know, perhaps they were feeling a bit stuck too. I seemed to be holding up this process for them as well. I was so excited that I wanted to work with my stuckness. [laugh]

M: That must have been difficult though.

Hoddy: Yeah, it was difficult, yeah.

M: Rather than just going along.
Hoddy: Yeah, I think it was one of the issues I was working with in having my needs validated and standing up for what I want. And we also have different ways of being and I am the sort of person who needs time to process things and that pressed a button for me, because I felt I was dumb because I was taking longer. That sort of pressed the 'dumb' button, so it was sort of doubly difficult. For me to allow myself to expose myself in that way saying, "No, I need more time." But it was good to get off and paint that feeling and see it on the page.

M: Mm.

Hoddy: That was kind of one translation of it, and then this was the other, of how difficult it was being stuck. The bricks representing not being able to get through that, and then bricks turned different ways to what they usually are and representing my individuality, and that it is OK for me to be different to the others who wanted to start painting and I had to assert the fact that I was different and needed to do this and to consider my needs instead of thinking, "Oh gosh, what about their needs? I should consider their needs more than mine." So yeah, pulling that back.

M: Mm.

Hoddy: Yeah, this is a continuation of that and then being able to get rid of some of that stuff and the energy bursting out. To get out of that place, that stuckness.

M: So did you talk about this in the group after?

Hoddy: I did and as I was talking about it it sort of brought up some other issues for me and I realised that this was also about being a bit stuck in a relationship I was having. And these two spaces represent myself and this other person, and so I sort of processed that as I was talking. So there were a few levels I was stuck.

M: It wasn't until you went back to the group ...

Hoddy: Yeah, we started to talk about this painting and then getting on to this one. That it came to me that this is what this represented too. The meaning was expanded upon and it had another meaning, not just pure and simply being stuck. By putting down the symbolic 'stuckness' it came to me then that I had been worrying about this relationship that I had been in. And I was feeling like I couldn't do anything about it at the time.

M: Mm. It is interesting, isn't it? I think it is also interesting that you went off the page.
Hoddy: Yeah, it’s like getting to here and needing to get another sort of piece of paper for it so that I could get out of this and get relief. I remember using those sort of brushstrokes, those ones that go up, I remember at the time feeling, “That feels nice.” So I am often quite aware as I am using materials of how even physically that is feeling to me. So that it is helping the tension in my body or whatever. It is so ...

M: Mm.

Hoddy: Or perhaps it’s kind of, I think I have a kinaesthetic sort of sense, it might be the coolness of the water, I do think about those things. So all those aspects help that therapeutic sort of feeling.

M: Do you know why?

Hoddy: Why? I guess I just believe there is a connection between the inner world and the outlet in a physical way. That the relaxation of muscles and a release of nervous energy or nervous tension or something like that. And I have an awareness and affinity with water and that is something that always calms me and I seek it out to calm me. So if I think energy is sort of hot or something then the coolness of the water would be helpful to me. I’d seek that out as a remedy.

M: OK. So taking a big step, what have you experienced art therapy to be? What does art therapy mean to you?

Hoddy: Art therapy means to me, do you mean like in a sense ...?

M: Just in a broader sense.

Hoddy: Do you mean as a definition or as a person who has been in an art therapy group?

M: What would you say has happened in the art therapy group that is therapeutic?

Hoddy: OK. I think what happens in an art therapy group, it’s like group work taken to another level, um, when the art is introduced. So it is not only about talking about discussing issues or whatever. I guess the interesting thing for me is that once the issues come out there is no, what shall I say? It’s a very powerful experience inasmuch as in talking therapy you can choose not to say something, but with art whether you meant to or not it is out, yeah. So I think it can be quite powerful and quite confronting because of that. Um, by the same token if there is something that you can’t deal with then and there you can put the art away and come back to it later when you feel you can deal with it. Yeah, I guess just the chance to explore issues, your own issues and kind of possibly see how other people deal with their issues. So
there is a kind of sharing of knowledge in a way and that is something that you can’t get out of a textbook, you know. It is kind of a human element, a real element I suppose in a way, as they are actually people living in the world dealing with their problems in a way trying to work out how they can deal with them and share that experience with others. I also think that for me I’ve used it in that kind of microcosmic sort of way of actually experimenting with my patterns of behaviour.

**M:** Mm.

**Hoddy:** So I’ve intentionally ... sometimes would not talk to see how that felt, or not comply with other people and see how that felt. And I felt it was a bit of an arena to be able to do that and then went and tried those new behaviours on the real world. So I think that that is a very real part of it as well.

**M:** Mm.

**Hoddy:** And that whole thing about, for example, the group got to the level of a murkiness, people thought, “I don’t want to be here, this is too hard.” And what would come out in the art is that even if you did not want that to come out loud, it would come out in the art as these monsters or whatever. And to some extent I may have felt like that, or did feel like that but did not want to disclose that to the group, but when I saw it someone else’s drawing it was a relief. Do you know what I mean?

**M:** Yeah.

**Hoddy:** So that was a really interesting phenomenon that occurred and so you are getting that from other people through the art.

**M:** Mm.

**Hoddy:** Where as this girl in the group who didn’t want to disclose either but suddenly it came out in the art. Then she processed it in the group and said that she had been angry with us all, and I think it was a big relief for her to have said those things instead of not saying them. And in some ways it was a bit of a relief for me to hear those things, as I was feeling that way too. But for whatever reason I was not ready to talk about it.

**M:** Thank you for sharing about your art therapy experience and what you have learnt from the process. Is there anything else you want to say or tell me about?

**Hoddy:** I think I’ve said what I wanted to say.

**M:** Thank you.
12.9. Indy

Indy: They look so rough now that I look at them. I can see a sort of style in placing

M: So, can you tell me how you did it?

Indy: Well, they are all 2D pieces and they were all done in the art therapy group at the uni in a fairly short time. I suppose part of the 'how' is that after a group decision that we would do artwork, we then had a short time to choose materials and follow either an idea or impulse. I usually had something brewing, so 'how' is actually quite difficult. 'How' as in how physically or how did the process go?

M: Well, both.

Indy: OK. Well, none of these are sculptures which I feel is my true medium. I could have brought along a clay boat as I thought it was an important symbol, but it is unfired and so I thought, “This is going to be too difficult.” In fact I had the clay boat sitting on that swirling piece over there because somehow the two together were perhaps a symbol of the progression of this work.

M: Right.

Indy: Um, how did I do them? I think probably purely intuitive and feeling, choosing dark and sometimes light paper in one session so a number of those had a light sheet that went with a dark one. How did I do them? Rapidly, choosing the colours I wanted. They are all inspired by dreams or inner experiences and I’d really let an image come up, um, and I’d simply go with that and let it develop on the paper and the idea of collage drew me and the idea of layering. Having layers that I looked through or into and using different media, paint and crayon, and usually I’ve used three, crayon, wax or textas. Simple 2D pieces, really, very loose.

M: These have layers and are a bit 3D.

Indy: Well, yes and if I continued with them I would’ve built up on them. I probably move in that way because in a few sessions I would use clay but these would often fall apart. So maybe sketching is 2D but I would like to pursue painting. Paint on paper is very, very rich and I like to work into it to build up the subtlety. Well, you can see the four of them – well, actually the five of them are night pieces.

M: So what does that mean to you? ... Do you know what these works mean to you?

Indy: Oh yes. Do you want me to talk about each one? Or overall?

M: I’d like you to tell me what meaning these have given you and why.
Indy: The overall, well, I suppose each piece has a history and I could talk about them individually. It is all inner work at some level and these two pieces close, one done on white paper, the other dark, show me the dreamer. I’m lying or sleeping and actually there a near death experience. That is probably the most powerful thing that came up for me partway through the course – the feelings I had around that and some how the need to express it and just being quite light about it. I thought, “Oh, why don’t I try and sketch what I experienced?” The feeling returned about how profound, how I’d never really processed it, as it had just sort of happened and I think I was very sick at that moment. I’d actually left the body as I had collapsed on the floor in a house in Canada and one of the feelings that came up was that no-one came to help, no-one was there for me. So that was really powerful and just the experience of going down the tunnel, and I realised how hard it was to even try and put this one paper not just the feelings but to exact that onto paper and twenty minutes was almost hopeless. I very much got into that with those two. So the lighter ones were trying to capture the velvety night and how dark it was for this lying twisted woman, which was probably me the dreamer.

M: OK.

Indy: And I had actually collapsed on the floor with incredible pain and the only way to deal with it was to breathe into it like a birth, as it was so long and so hard. And I held my breath and I instantly zotted out of my body and at that point I was travelling down a tunnel and like I knew that it was me at the end of the tunnel. I knew I was going down the tunnel. I had always imagined that it would be different and I had read about this and so I did not know if it was in my mind and intellect. But it was not frightening but I was travelling so, so far and I had total awareness that I mustn’t go through the tunnel. At the moment I thought, “This is the tunnel of light and I am heading down.” And the pain had gone and this was a very powerful experience and I had no sensation of the body, nothing hurt. And I realised that this was the tunnel of light. I thought, “Oh God, I mustn’t pass through this. I’ll be dead and I won’t be able to come back.” And I saw the faces of my sons and then I was instantly back with the knowledge that I shouldn’t go through, I couldn’t go through. And I’ll never know whether that was like a warning, there are so many layers to that experience in itself. And so I jumped into this massive life experience that others don’t have.

M: So do you know why you went into that experience?
**Indy:** This is very Jungian. I've thought a lot about death, I'm interested in death, I've been a grief counsellor and I've had a lot of loss in my life and the art therapy helps me process a lot of what has gone on. But this particular experience was returning to me as something I could process rather than just talking about it. I think it was welling up in me and I think that being in the group gave me the opportunity, it was just there.

**M:** So doing the artwork, did it help?

**Indy:** I don't know if that is a relevant question. I just processed it more.

**M:** And that means ...?

**Indy:** It's almost that this whole life is a process where we move from life to death, you know.

**M:** Yer.

**Indy:** And death can be there at any moment and I suppose I see us more like in process. You have something happen, then you process it and then you leave it behind.

**M:** Right.

**Indy:** So I don't think that this had been troubling me but more what Jung talks about when something presses up out of the shadow. There was fear of the process or just another level to look at. Really what I had was another level to do it, in a busy life I wouldn't. The feeling might be there but I would then go to work and press it down and so I wouldn't have this wonderful opportunity to express my out-of-body experience. I don't feel it is complete but I have externalised it to some extent. It would nice to see how I could get to so that it looks more like what I experienced. Its like a separate objective art process that goes on as well, apart from what went on in me. I feel quite detached about it right now.

**M:** Mm.

**Indy:** Like it happened, I guess in medical terms I did die and I don't know how long for it is curious and raises so many questions whether it was minutes or a half an hour.

**M:** Right.

**Indy:** It's like something that you could not measure either.

**M:** No.

*T锦ing the Artwork*
**Indy:** That’s the big one, but my cat was there, so that was significant the emotional component was probably the cat.

**M:** The cat was there at the time?

**Indy:** Yeah. The cat’s in the picture because I would have spent the whole night on the floor in the actual physical experience. It was about ten years ago now. The house was warmed and I was on carpet and so I wasn’t freezing but I was getting cold and I had nothing on, or very little, which was unusual for me, particularly in Canada as it was cold and the cat was curled into me and it was so comforting – he was sort of sitting near my stomach. So the cat is a theme that appeared throughout my artworks. It’s more like I can talk about themes and meaning and writings and the meaning of it as you can see, and that cat I have actually bought with me. It became a significant symbol, that cat actually made me late even today. He’s been with me in Canada, Hong Kong and now Australia. He is a significant partner and has stuck by me longer than anyone else. [laugh] It shows a whole new light on relationship. [laugh]

**M:** So how did you find doing art therapy in a group?

**Indy:** A whole mixture, sometimes awful, um, just going through the swings because I would be so full of my own feelings. Because I think I’d go to the group just to do the artwork and then we had to go through this process we’d have to talk and to decide what to do in the group and that would take forty minutes. I never think I am impatient until I do things like this when I could scream, “I just want to get on with it.” Sometimes someone would express that “Can we start now? Can we do it?” Oh, I’m not sure that that question has been completely resolved I’m wondering how you feel about it. And it would go on some more. It is a long time since I’ve done a group that at time feels so painful, so slow, but that may be because I had energy for the artwork. I think this is what was important for me, even though I’ve learnt a great deal in the group, a great deal about the concepts we were taught about transference and about my own emotions at levels of feeling angry, blaming or wishing things were done and all these levels and primal feelings. And relaxing to it and just enjoying not only the sharing, but the whole process. Yet when other people talk about their artwork theirs was just as meaningful as my own and there are layers in that. And another aspect, a third aspect is watching other people’s work progress and it is as though we all had work in progress. By about the tenth week that was incredibly rich and meaningful as you remembered their early works – it was like a visual book of others’ work, or I did. And you see the consistency of the symbols they
used and often the metaphors appearing again and again. Probably each week you got a little deeper, more understanding of the other ...  

M: Other person?  

Indy: Yes, other person.  

M: Is that important?  

Indy: Oh yes, I’d say as a therapist you need all those skills developing, patient and watchful, listening and reflecting, remembering what people had done, not commenting or criticising, aware of allowing the process to happen. Probably the best training, better than role-playing and counselling, you know, having the artwork as a mediator between you and the other person is a whole process in itself.  

M: Right. And what about this one?  

Indy: The sea, yes, they are a bit earlier. The sea, the sea was very strong with me to the extent that I wanted to go sailing and did.  

M: I really enjoy the movement in the sea. [in the painting]  

Indy: The sea has been one of the main symbols, the power of the sea, I am attracted to and the fear of the sea. It is like the unconscious and I have done a lot of travel. It is like the art therapy triggered my feelings about the sea and put them into life and made me think how I could go sailing. It was stepping into a new frontier and to start sailing which has been a whole adventure. I'm actually a bit burnt, which I shouldn't be – I went Monday. And I think this metaphor has been the captain of my boat.  

M: Right.  

Indy: Yeah, a boat on stormy waters. I've done that image before, somehow there are others like this and I have a cat in the boat. It is such a bizarre image because cats don't really like water.  

M: The owl and the pussycat. [laugh]  

Indy: It is owl and pussycatish – that is such an intriguing poem.  

M: Yes, it is intriguing.  

Indy: Yes, there is a single sailor in the boat, very much a Viking boat in turbulent waters with the moon, and the other one the cat is in the boat. This cat has come across three or four oceans with me. It is this cat but it is not this cat, it is also the cat in the boat. It has an eye, I suppose it is my eye and I am watching it, it is ominous. The feeling of being at sea or being swallowed up is very powerful stuff. I certainly
enjoyed doing them, especially the layering them using the tissue paper and mixing the colours. I could have gone on doing that, it started to get the feeling of water.

M So what does art therapy mean to you?

**Indy:** That is so huge, there are books about it, look 'em up. [laugh] Well, for a start it is an ongoing process. Before I did it I was incredibly keen to do it, it has been a real drive in me for probably for ten years. I wanted to do it in Canada and it seemed like everything prevented me, the wrong husband, there wasn't the money, the support, on and on. I went and earned money and there was this real almost soul sickness as nothing did I love except my kids and that was too intense and I applied here twice, I didn't get in and twice they didn't run it. But in the meantime I did my Master of Counselling, so I feel as if I have really worked towards it. Finally, I felt like I'd done all this preparation to get to this point.

**M:** Yes.

**Indy:** I had the artwork, they even wanted someone who is exhibiting and to show current artwork and I thought, "How much more?" Luckily I got into that Vietnam exhibition on my second year back, I started making artwork, took photos and got in. What does it mean to me?

**M:** Mm.

**Indy:** In terms of my life process it has been really important to even get to this point although I'm daunted in thinking three more years is so long.

**M:** Yeah.

**Indy:** I'd better not think about that but I think I love the idea. I'm quite, as you can see, passionate about artwork and looking at it in terms of meaning. It is not something trivial, it is a very powerful process. It touches on the deepest layers of people and I feel very respectful of that in others.

**M:** Right.

**Indy:** And I'm really looking forward to the opportunity of using it, even though I've used art with disabled people with craft and stuff like that, I think. It means actually using the gifts that I have, in art and in communication and healing, and this is a chance to bring them together and take them out into the community and offer them to people. Yeah, so at the moment it is everything, it is my direction if I can just stay there and not be distracted by the need to earn money, which is strong. It is very important - lots of stuff, it's a profound course, it's quite challenging really and as an
art therapist you're looking at major areas, trauma and crisis, and to have the skills to work with that and so I'll be in a career that is a lot more satisfying.

**M:** Is there anything that art therapy means to you?

**Indy:** Yeah, I've probably answered that in a way. More in touch with my creative gift, side. Yeah, to use my creativity in work.

**M:** Right.

**Indy:** That sounds like a contradiction. Yes, I think using the best levels of myself. It is not a kind of trivial training, it's not teaching and telling people how to do things. ... It's a richer way of me accessing my gifts and using that in a therapeutic context. I enjoyed teaching but I couldn't use my creativity because here the world is the inner world of yourself and the participant, and that is so much more satisfying, and emotionally satisfying too.

**M:** OK. Thank you, thank you.
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Trusting the Artwork


T rusting the Artwork

M. Bourne

Master of Arts (Honours) Art Therapy

University of Western Sydney
School of Applied Social and Human Sciences
2003
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Declaration

To my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this thesis is the original work of the author, except where acknowledgment in the text has been made to results supplied by previously published research. The material in this thesis has not been submitted, either in part or in whole, for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed

Date 26/7/03
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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to inquire into the subjective experience of participants of psychodynamic group art therapy. This investigation was designed to record participants' responses and understanding of their art-making and their artwork in therapy. The qualitative methodology of phenomenography was chosen to record the art-making process.

The sample included three women from a women's centre and six university students. A single interview was conducted with each of the nine participants and included their artwork from the group art therapy. Five semi-structured questions were asked in reference to their artwork and their experience.

This research indicated that participants of group art therapy experienced significant personal shifts towards integration of their psyche. The art-making engaged psychophysical connections that raised memories and affects that stimulated psychodynamics. The art-making also appeared to stimulate the formation of a potential space in therapy that enables change. The artworks reflected the participants' latent material to the group and in this way stimulated group dynamics.

Group art therapy committed to a participant's personal development was effective in contributing to a resolution of personal conflicts, whereas group art therapy committed to professional development was effective in stimulating group dynamics, but the participants were guarded when discussing the personal content of their artwork.
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