

NEGLECTED KNOWING:
SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF POSITIVE
AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN PAINTING

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the human aesthetic experience. It does so through phenomenological investigations of two artist-educators, one full time artist and one art theorist-educator. This investigation is motivated by a curiosity to identify and explain the characteristics of ‘positive’ aesthetic experiences engendered by and used in paintings as an artistic art form.

An eclectic blending of qualitative and phenomenological methods is used to address the guiding research question: *What are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?*

The findings suggest that understanding aesthetic experience requires reconciliation between intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist positions. Only by acknowledging both of these positions’ contributions and reconciling their paradigmatic differences can a comprehensive account of the aesthetic experience be advanced. Despite certain characteristic similarities, it is suggested that heightened pleasurable response to a painting remains fundamentally a subjective concern for the viewer and that the attainment of pleasurable response may incorporate any and all such relational or essentialist manifestations which the viewer believes or deems necessary. Here, divergent importations, analytically elusive and non-conforming natures inherent in personal experiencing, rather than theoretical cannon, drives heightened aesthetic response. By implication, it is suggested that the quality of the desired experience should also drive the nature of pedagogical and curriculum implementation.

Nine major characteristics and five sub-characteristics (subsumed within the first characteristic) of positive aesthetic experience in painting are identified through this investigation. These characteristics relate to: (i) immediacy and totality of experience, (ii) associative aspects being embedded in form, (iii) metaphorical response replacing measurement, (iv) awarenesses of technical virtuosity, novelty and the idea of identifying with the ‘artist’s eye’, (v) personal remembrances associated with the experience, (vi) the acknowledgement of a sense of mystery, (vii) presumed transformative characteristics are present and relate to the subject self image, the view that paintings transcend their physical objective status and the idea of an on-going power of experience, (viii) aesthetic experience stems from a perceptual sensitising of ordinary experience, and that (ix) both mind and body are one within the experience.

The five subsumed characteristics within the characteristic of immediacy and totality of experience concern notions of: (a) regard for pre-knowledge and a presumption of (b) effortless cognition. In addition, there is the (c) belief in a non-sequencing or ordering of the experience which can be (d) entered into from any number of divergent points of interest. Finally, an acknowledgement of the (e) concept of the sublime is suggested that conflates both modernist and postmodernist thought.

These characteristics, drawn from phenomenological reflections of the research participants, are set before informing concepts relating to aesthetics, the explicated characteristics of aesthetic experience as proposed by a selection of prominent scholars in the field and the influences of two generalised opposing epistemologies; those being intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist in nature.

The key theoretical contributions arising from this investigation are nine fold. These contributions concern: (i) a further explication of characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting, (ii) a conciliatory positioning of epistemologies, (iii) the contribution of immediacy, (iv) qualities and meanings, (iv) self-justifying experience with underlying contextual importations, (vi) the relevance of modernist paintings in a postmodernist climate, (vii) intensified experience, (viii) a conciliatory sublime, and (ix) dominance of the experiential.

The key pedagogical and curriculum implications concern aspects of experiential knowing, corresponding strategies for experiential knowing, the questioning of contemporary curriculum: a critique and drawbacks within the implications.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

John Tarlton

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Paintings used in the dissertation

Pablo Picasso. *Guernica* (1937). Tempera on canvas. Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Peter Booth. *1978* (1978). Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Jake and Dinos Chapman. *Zygotic Acceleration, Biogenetic, De-Sublimated Libidinal Model* (1995). Saatchi Collection, London.

Damien Hirst. *This Little Piggy Went to Market, This Little Piggy Stayed Home* (1996). Steel, GRP composites, glass, pig, formaldehyde, electronic motor. Saatchi Collection, London.

Eugene Delacroix. *Liberty Leading the People* (1830). Oil on canvas. Musee du Louvre.

World War Two American propaganda poster (Rosey) (1941-45).

History1900s.about.com/.../photos/blywwiip86.htm (15-5-05).

Julie Rrap. *Camouflage # 8 (Jeanne)* (2000). Photograph mounted on lexcen (edition of 9). From the 'A-R-MOUR' exhibition (2000). Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney.

Kathe Kollwitz. *Self-Portrait* (1934). Lithograph. Los Angeles County Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Paula Rego. *Recreation* (1996). Pastel on paper mounted on aluminum. Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. Kansas City, Missouri.

Cristo and Jeanne-Claude. *Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida* (1980-3). Installation. (Photograph by the artists).

Marcel Duchamp. *Fountain* (1917, Original Lost). Ready-made (urinal). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Jim Dine. *Five Paintbrushes* (1973). Etching. Art Museum, Princeton University, New Jersey. Reproduction of a photograph taken in 1911 of Georges Braque.

Image on title page of dissertation, *Pacific Light* (detail) (1996). John Tarlton. Watercolour, gouache and ink on paper. Collection of the artist.

Participants' selections of paintings for reflection

(John Tarlton)

Stieg Persson. *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* (1995). Oil on canvas. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

Georges Braque. *Marble Table* (1925). Oil on canvas. Musee National d' art Moderne, Paris.

(Chris Worfold)

Julian Schnabel. *The Conversion of St. Paolo Malfi* (1995). Gesso, oil, resin and print on canvas, Pace Wildenstein, New York.

Vincent Van Gogh. *Thatched cottages at Cordeville* (1890). Oil on Canvas. Musee d'Orsay, Paris.

(Caroline Penny)

Mary Cassatt. *Emmie and her Child* (1889). Oil on canvas. Wichita Art Museum, Wichita.

Claude Monet. *Argenteuil* (1872). Oil on canvas. Musee National d' art Moderne, Paris.

(Elizabeth Ruinard)

Jackson Pollock. *Lavender Mist: Number 1* (1950). Oil, enamel and aluminum on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Selected works (13) by Chris Worfold used in the creative synthesis (elaborated narrative) in

Chapter Nine

Night Light (2006). Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

A Fleeting Floating World (2005). Oil and mixed media on sheet metal.

Circus Roses 2 (2006). Enamel, oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

Night Chair (2001). Oil and mixed media on board

Sail into an Ocean Leave a Sea (2000). Oil and acrylic adhesive on board.

Forked Tree (2006). Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

Southern Cross (2001). Oil and mixed media on board.

Sunflowers on the Dining Room Table (2001). Oil and mixed media on board.

Man in Rain (2006). Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

The Willing Line (2003). Oil, acrylic, acrylic adhesive and fabric.

Mother-in-law's Tongue (2001). Oil and mixed media on board.

Songwriter (2006). Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

Where He Was, What He Was Doing (2004). Oil on sheet metal.

Selected works (12) by John Tarlton used in the creative synthesis (elaborated narrative) in

Chapter Nine

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The weight of all that beauty (1998). Oil on wood and plywood construction.

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Chapter Nine

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Spooky's Beach, Angourie, NSW (2002). Oil on canvas
Sunflowers and Gladioli (2002). Oil on canvas.
Across the flat (1999). Oil on canvas.
Pressing the Cotton (1998). Oil on canvas.
Among the Azaleas (2000). Oil on canvas.
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CHAPTER ONE

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation explores, discusses and elaborates what constitutes and counts as aesthetic experience. This is realised through exploring the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience as observed through encounters with paintings, as an artistic form. It does so through phenomenological investigations of two artist/educators, one full-time artist and one art theorist/educator in order identify and explain the characteristics of ‘positive’ aesthetic experiences engendered by and used in paintings.

However, there is no universal theoretical agreement on what defines the aesthetic experience. Indeed, it is an “extremely ambiguous notion” (Shusterman, 2004). Hence, an initial task is to discuss what constitutes that experience and to adopt or develop a way of understanding that experience. Rhetorical philosophical eloquence and epistemologies offer us some direction or another. Yet, philosophers have hotly argued about the identity and characteristics of aesthetic experience for at least the last two centuries, with seminal Western tradition discourse dating back to around the fourth century BC with the philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle (Fenner, 2003a). Alternatively, other aestheticians, like Dickie (1965), have questioned its very existence, claiming that the phenomenon of experience cannot be divided into distinct classifications. Furthermore, the phenomenon itself may be disguised within other definitional tags such as the ‘illuminated experience,’ a term coined by Taylor (1986) in reference to Hargreaves’ (1983a) trauma theory, or as being mirrored within heightened psychological states such as Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of ‘flow experience’ or Maslow’s (1968) earlier proposals of ‘peak experiences.’ In the end, an actual taxonomy or composition of the aesthetic experience may remain more as something perceived by individuals than a solid and identifiable, empirically resolved conceptual entity. That is, it can be considered as much a subjective experience as an objective fact.

One of the reasons for these philosophical/definitional dilemmas about the aesthetic experience can be partly traced to the notion that:

...different thinkers [have] different interests... [t]he difficulty facing all these attempts at definition and theorizing [aesthetic experience] is, of course, the diversity of our experience of things ... (Smith, 1989, p. 190).

Or, as Pearson (2001) more simply states:

There are multiple ways of understanding art because there are multiple ways of thinking about art (Pearson, 2001, p. 69).

In other words, the aesthetic experience resides within that subjective domain where we seek personal and societal relevance and gratification in our experiencing of the world beyond the skin. Because of this subjective perspective, one interpretation does not rule out the possibilities of other multiple and alternative interpretations (Efland, 2002). Indeed, its sources may be derived from anywhere along a disparate line ranging from personal experiences or group mysticisms to unwavering pragmatic adherences to particular genres of artistic form. It may incorporate essentialist belief that the experience is a result of non-agentic response to the universal, intrinsic (i.e. inherent) qualities which the artistic work displays or be appreciated for its contextual particularities involving social, political or moral meaning making.

However, for the purposes of this dissertation, a tentative definition of positive aesthetic experience can be considered as the affirming, heightened and intensified state and perception concentrated on or derived from experiencing an art object. Also proposed is that the experience be considered capable of encouraging sustained and renewable subject-directed inquiry and satisfaction. In other words, it works at a higher level than the mere informational or appreciative. That is, it rewards our actual/immediate or reflective re-visitation through reaffirmation or the discovery of new stimuli for the observer from engagement with the work. This is what makes understanding the positive aesthetic experience so salient, yet also so complex.

The experiences examined in this dissertation are not those of usual participant acquaintanceships. Indeed, the actualisation of the presumed states of aesthetic experiences should be considered rare (Bell, 1947 [1914]; Beardsley, 1981; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990), as will be later discussed within the dissertation. The goal here is to examine extraordinary experiential encounters which

have the power for personal invigoration and positive change. This is because such experiences are considered vehicles for personal and aesthetic transformations for those who engage with them. My focused interest is in the explication of such characteristics as they relate to individuals' aesthetic experiences with paintings.

Furthermore (as will be observed through the dissertation's findings), it is proposed that this definition can encompass aspects of both non-instrumental sensuous experience and the idea of pleasurable response derived from effortful cognitive inquiry and interrogation. Therefore, this dissertation advances the conception of aesthetic experience as characterised by any and all qualities *and* meanings which support the concept of a heightened appreciation. These may or may not be tracked to perceptual qualities of the object or event and may or may not be dependent on contextual implications.

It also embraces Shusterman's (2004) assertion that the aesthetic experience is immediate *primarily* in its ability to be enjoyed and valued through direct response -- for its own sake. That is, the enjoyment being offered by the art work, both conscious and unconscious, rather than having to rely on future reflection for gratification and pleasure (Shusterman, 2004). In other words, while later reflection may intensify an ongoing interest in the experience, deferred gratification is not the primary force motivating the immediate experiencing. The conception of the aesthetic experience as advanced in this dissertation's findings (incorporating both aesthetic and instrumental concerns) is far broader in scope than that envisioned by traditional aesthetic theories (e.g. modernist) or aggressive post-modern contextualisms (e.g. visual culture). It is conciliatory towards both of these positions. This dissertation contends that the initial, experienced primacy of immediate (i.e. sensuous) encounter revealed through the work may be influenced by subject intuition or mediated reflection upon the experience, both during and after the encounter.

As proposed by Shusterman (2004), there is always some influence of past experiences which shapes our experience of the now. In other words, as participants in cultures and societies, our personal responses in and to experience are shaped by our encounters with the cultural norms and practices we have encountered. That is, the immediacy of perceptual response is not purely instantaneous; it comes to the experience already exercised. For example, Dewey asserts that "[m]emories not necessarily conscious but retentions that have been organically incorporated in the

very structure of the self, feed present observation” (Dewey, 1980 [1934], p. 89). Correspondingly, this immediacy can incorporate cognitive processes of reasoning, interpretation and speculation *during* the actuating experience, as well as in later recollection and reflection (Shusterman, 2004).

In short, while the actualised emotive immediacy of aesthetic experience may be spontaneous, the spontaneity and involuntary-like natures of the reactions can be predicated on personal cognitions tacitly developed earlier. These are held by individuals and stand to be intensified during the encounter with the painting and through later interrogations and reflections.

The implications of conjoining both sensuous and mediated attributes can be seen as widening the conception of aesthetic experience as delineated in many existing accounts. However, by incorporating a wider position of the aesthetic experience, it is made more amenable to encompassing aesthetic, non-aesthetic and even anti-aesthetic modes of responses which are discussed later in the dissertation. Therefore, this position acknowledges that all (or some, or combinations of) frames of references can be used as descriptors of heightened experiential encounter. In this way, positive aesthetic experience results from the interaction of various importations derived from both negotiations between the personally subjective *and* the objective qualities of the artifact.

The breadth of this definitional scope is necessary to embrace the life-enhancing possibilities a heightened encounter with art can afford. While heightened pleasurable response as aesthetic experience is only one way of interacting with an art work (see Carroll, 1999; Fenner, 2003a), the combination of sensuous *and* meditative reaction regarding pleasurable response opens, rather than closes, the possibilities of constituent experiences.

In all, it does not matter whether we attend the heightened perception of the formal, design aspects of a composition (i.e. its essential qualities) for its own sake, actualise the meaningful visual messages of individual/societal emancipation or draw personal comfort from emotionally sympathetic content. This is because all the above experiential responses, among a vast array of other possible heightened experiences, can add to the vivification of life. That is, proactive contextual meaningfulness *and* aesthetic (sensuous) appreciation of art works helps to positively influence, elevate and articulate humankind’s position within its environment (Dewey, 1980 [1934]).

This conciliatory, definitional expansion of the term aesthetic experience is also aligned with contemporary attempts to broaden the definitional stances and concerns which preoccupy the discipline of aesthetics in general (e.g. Carroll, 1999; Fenner, 2003b; Parsons, 1993; Shusterman, 2000).

Through this eclectic stance, the definitional requirements of traditional aesthetic theories and certain aggressive postmodern negations of autonomous classification of art works and their appreciation are unconditional. It simply suggests that no one theoretical stance can adequately cover all contingencies inherent in heightened experiences of art works. As Garber (2001) suggests initially in relation to art education, but also with relevance to aesthetic experience:

[w]hy should we even want to point to a single theory? There is no one theory, because the social bases are ever-changing, with the possibility of contributions from anyone, any group (Garber, 2001, p. 161).

Art works, like people, are ever evolving whereas most theory is propositionally finite and reliant on defending the immobility of its tenets.

My defense of an open and eclectic stance rests on the observable *ends* (i.e. the attainment of pleasurable and mediated life enhancement) outweighing the *means* (i.e. strict adherence to the demarcations of theoretical stances which may limit or impede holistic understanding). A conciliatory widening of the concept of aesthetic experience to include both sensual and instrumental importations accomplishes this. The analysis of the collected data, in association with my research participants, concurs with this goal.

PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

My aim in this study is to attempt an understanding and sympathetic portrayal of the aesthetic experience as it pertains to painting and informed practitioners. The goal is to identify its possible characteristics in order to inform my own and hopefully others' pedagogy. That is, it is an undertaking to clarify and to index significant characteristics of the aesthetic experience to facilitate reference to, or guidance for, practical application and understanding.

By doing so, it is intended to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the identification and promotion of aspects of art appreciation in adult and vocational art education as well as illuminating notions of art appreciation generally.

The decision to limit the study to the discipline of painting was based on the researcher's thirty year knowledge of the discipline as a professional practitioner, length and focus restraints of the dissertation format and the medium's ability to cogently represent other disciplines within the visual arts field. It is also based on the notion that painting is currently considered a favoured art medium within contemporary art practices (Emery, 2006). For the purposes of this dissertation, as painting is arguably the most familiar and representative discipline within the visual arts, all references regarding the term 'art' are used synonymously with the term 'painting.'

Implications for education and justification of goals

Fundamental to this investigation of the positive characteristics of aesthetic experience are its ramifications for art education in general. Justification for this inquiry can be seen as an attempt to clarify characteristics of the aesthetic experience and to contribute to the body of knowledge relating to fostering general art appreciation. As such, justification for this educational research can be considered through its advocacy for art education in five distinct ways.

First, Hargreaves (1983a) sees one of the aims of fostering robust art appreciation as a means for assisting the general proactive education regarding students' abilities to perceive both cultural/societal and natural environments more fully (a point also forwarded by Eisner, 1972). That is, the identification of the characteristics of the aesthetic experience may sequentially lead to promoting student recognition, understanding and final proactive student solicitation of such experiences as a reward for, and in, themselves.

Second, according to Hargraves (1983a), a student's ability to experience a heightened awareness in terms of art appreciation can be beneficial to personal empowerment -- an idea also shared by Dewey (1980 [1934]) and as echoed by Maslow's (1999 [1968]) concept of peak experiences.

Third, in correspondence to the above, Efland (2002) considers the function of art education to be, in part, that of assisting in the building of personal 'reality

constructions.’ These reality constructions are representations of the world, both real and imagined. The reality constructions are sourced from the social/cultural milieu in conjunction with the possibilities inherent in representing that world through imaginative metaphoric elaboration. This, in turn, helps build within the individual an understanding of the social and cultural environment (Efland, 2002). In other words, art can help contribute to our understanding of the world through its representations of that world, both real and imagined.

Fourth, in addition to contributing to our understanding of the world, robust art appreciation and experience may also assist the advancement of perceptual skills, informed judgment and autonomy, informed life-long and leisure pursuits, and the appreciation of the wealth of imagery derived from our own (and other) cultures (Dewey, 1980 [1934]; Hargreaves, 1983a).

Fifth, additional general benefits are held to occur in terms of the classroom (while also addressing the need for promoting the relationship of art to life). Taylor (1986) contends that the heightened experience of a work of art can also establish a bridge that connects studying art with the practical aspects of creating it -- a point also advanced by Dewey (1980 [1934]) and Eisner (2006). From these speculations, both general and instrumental outcomes are achieved from art appreciation.

Yet, despite the potential benefits derivable from an aesthetic encounter with a work of art, the Australia Council reports that the average visitor to an art gallery devotes only two-to-three seconds of time viewing a work of art. Further to this, a considerable proportion of the population considers the arts to have no real value (Speck, 2002). This suggests that the importance and benefits of fostering aesthetic experience and art appreciation/meaning in general are not fully recognised or effectively deployed within the formative and subsequent educational domains -- or that the perceived benefits are illusory. Therefore, an additional intention of exploring phenomenological responses surrounding the characteristics of positive aesthetic experiences in painting is to illuminate such inconsistencies.

Motivation

The motivation for this research was initially fueled by my observations as a fine arts/design lecturer within the vocational education and training sector. It arises from a concern about a perceived general disinterest and passive student participation in

matters relating to experiencing art and its role in critically informing student well-being and creative production. In addition, while my colleagues were aware of the benefits inherent in fostering a heightened awareness and perception of art works for the student population, little had been done to establish a dialogue or index communal understanding of its positive characteristics in order to underpin and assist inquiry regarding aesthetic experience in painting.

On further personal reflection and building upon work undertaken in my Masters dissertation (Tarlton, 2004). I concluded that a satisfactory beginning would be to first establish a systematic sampling of observations regarding the possible characteristics of aesthetic experience with painting as expressed by representative artists/educators associated with fostering its acquisition. Similar projected future inquiry into various other stakeholder groups would add to the growing accumulation of data from which to draw. This dissertation is the beginning of that ongoing personal inquiry.

Theoretical underpinnings

To gain both qualitative and subjective information about the aesthetic experiences of informed participants, systematic samplings concern the collection and analysis of the participants' relevant lived-world essences. That is, it was deemed necessary to search for possible common and distinct bases of positive aesthetic experience characteristics encountered in painting by incorporating a Husserlian (1970) concept of the participants' lived, immediate experience (livedworld). This lived, immediate experience and way of knowing is proposed by Husserl (1970) as the natural pre-theoretical understanding upon which our later theoretical attitudes and ways of knowing are based. It is the experiencing of an object or other phenomena through a state of naïve-like wonder -- the object in itself prior to its conceptual labeling and categorising by others. The collection and analysis of the participants' livedworld *essences*, or the essential nature of the phenomena and that which is unique to it (Van Manen, 1990), encompasses both these pre-theoretical and theoretical ways of knowing. (Phenomenological issues are noted in this first chapter and later addressed in Chapter Seven).

It is proposed that the unraveling of these essences concerning the characteristics of heightened experiential encounter with painting establishes a

working conceptual framework. This framework comprises a well of articulated feelings and emotions from which to consolidate and draw on for future remedial learning and delivery concerning art appreciation strategies. So, to create an understanding of *how* future practices might assist the fostering of aesthetic experience, a clearer preliminary understanding of the phenomenological nature of its characteristics first needs systematic identification.

With these premises in mind, Hargreaves' (1983a) and Abbs' (1994) earlier work, along with aspects of Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) interpretative methodology, are used as beginning referents for compiling phenomenological bases of aesthetic experience. In this regard, an attempt is made to gather interpretative accounts of what it *was and felt like* for the participants to be involved in the personal, evocative, subjective and emotive states that might comprise the aesthetic experience in painting for *them*.

The aim here is not to impose rigid analytical benchmarks, but rather to contribute to what Eisner sees as the "... paradox of revealing what is universal by examining what is particular" (Eisner, 1998a, p. 152). It follows that a better understanding of the specific essences and characteristics produced through the participants' experiential reflections relating to their aesthetic experience should contribute to a general understanding of that phenomenon.

In addition, once identified, these characteristics could be incorporated with, or used to marginalise the importance of, characteristics of aesthetic experience as proposed from established theories. Furthermore, it is envisioned that the discovered, re-discovered or re-defined characteristics of the aesthetic experience in painting also assists in the selection of the most appropriate aspects from both essentialist and contextualist points of view (discussed later) for educational dissemination. A more informed pedagogy might then be established to assist the teaching for, and promotion of, positive student disposition about aesthetic education specifically, and student self-actualisation generally.

So, in all, this research is undertaken in order to better identify and find sympathies with that which is so valued in the arts and yet remains so teasingly ill-defined: the aesthetic experience.

Initial conceptual influences

In order to systematically orientate this research, an articulation of selected conceptual stances is required. The intention here is to establish a conceptual framework open enough to accommodate interpretative conceptions, yet be limited enough to demarcate and inform the research inquiry.

In acknowledging the initial conceptual influences within the dissertation, Weitz's (1956) contention that any attempt to formulate a definition of what constitutes art [and its experiences] through the establishment of prerequisite properties (e.g. form, emotion, cognitive, intuitive presences and so on) is inadequate to the challenge of addressing the openness inherent in contemporary art practices.

This research also takes into account Weitz's (1956) and Eisner's (2001) contentions that art must be seen as an ongoing, open concept where the introduction of new cases and conditions necessitate the continuous expansion or alteration of the concept of art itself (Weitz, 1956; Eisner, 2001).

That is, creative manipulation of new technologies, media and purposes or the alteration of traditional modes of representation must be recognised and encompassed within that which is deemed art. This follows Weitz's (1956) denunciation of attempts to categorise art as if it were an assumed specifiable class of object, identified by universalist classificatory properties, for a more open concept of exploring its overriding functioning and employment. Following Weitz's (1956) and Eisner's (2001) leads, the expansion of what then might constitute a 'painting' for the research participants (i.e. whether it be traditional oil on canvas, more unorthodox embellishments of collage, montage, low relief sculpture, imagery generated by computer or objects from visual culture not traditionally associated with fine art painting) was left to their own discretion.

As a result, the research participants' personal selections of paintings (predominately mainstream modernist painted by male artists) also shaped the trajectory of this research. That is, within the participants' selection, there was an unforeseen negation of non-traditional examples of visual culture objects to act as exemplars. These non-intentional omissions thus limited the input of active contemporary visual culture and postmodern examples/objects. However, propositional aspects inherent in both theoretical views are revealed within the findings. That is, contemporary concerns became an integral part of the analysis of the

characteristics of positive aesthetic experience, despite art object classification. Further limitations regarding this issue are addressed in the methodology chapter.

The dilemma of conflicting epistemologies

Two seemingly antithetical conceptual premises underlie this study. The first is whether the elusive, personal and heightened sense of awareness and experience with art works can be fostered through simple exposure to the artworks' qualities. This is the intrinsic/essentialist stance. Alternatively, the second position asks whether the experience is actually grounded in contextualist 'meaning'. This subjective/contextualist view asserts that meaning-made experience stems from personal interpretation based on ontogeny and socially sourced knowledge.

Or, as this dissertation proposes, can the aesthetic experience be fostered and achieved by acknowledging a type of reconciliation between both the above conceptual premises. In other words, can the nature and characteristics of aesthetic experience be found within the idea of possible co-dependence. In this way, the attainment of aesthetic experience derives from an end product and process occurrence where both intrinsic/essentialist qualities and subjective/contextualist meanings spark-off, initiate, magnify and/or intensify each other. This dissertation's examination of both general concepts and its phenomenological/heuristic investigations into the essences and personal significances of what characterises the aesthetic experience in painting illuminates the possibility of such a partnership. The epistemological concerns are elaborated and discussed throughout the dissertation.

THE NATURE OF THE INQUIRY

The research question and participants

The focus of the research topic is to elucidate the positive characteristics of the aesthetic experience in painting as seen through discursive and non-discursive presented reflections (essences) from two professional artists/educators, one full time professional artist and one art theorist/educator. The question which underpins this phenomenological/heuristic investigation into the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting and acts as the foci for the topic and the data collection and analysis is:

What are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?

In addressing this question, the participants were initially required to reflect upon a maximum of two paintings with which they had personally had encountered aesthetic experiences, complete written responses to predetermined sets of questions, keep a reflective journal (incorporating both discursive and non-discursive entries) and participate in tape recorded interviews.

Here, the participants were continually directed to respond without attempts to explain, but rather address their reflections toward personal lived-experience descriptions without relegating the experience to causal explanations or interpretative generalisations (Van Manen, 1990). The repeated emphasis on *what it was like* was in an attempt to “question something by going back again and again to the things themselves until that which is put to question begins to reveal something of its essential nature” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 43). This process established a kind of reflected familiarity with the question, a continual unraveling and exposure of non-essential associations, until the inner core of experience was exposed.

Artists/educators are selected as research participants to unlock this ‘inner core’ of the positive characteristics of aesthetic experience. This is because my methodological approaches require the explication of deep phenomenological description of sensory experience and the heuristic requirement for subject/researcher intense personal identification with the explored phenomena (Emery, 1996; Moustakas, 1990). So, my decision to solicit the input of artists/educators is based on their interest and absorption in the subject, training, intimate participation with the aesthetic experience and their role as facilitators for student acquisition. In addition, their selection is seen as advantageous in that their responses encompass both the non-discursive aspects of art experience (as respected creators/appreciators themselves) as well as being able to participate at the discursive level as discipline-trained and pedagogically informed participants within the art education field. Prerequisite here is for participants who can articulate their aesthetic experience.

By incorporating artists/educators as participants both intuitive knowing, which may be heightened or even indigenous to practitioners, and the discursive input derived from educated and informed praxis are best served. As noted by Langer

(1953), the philosophy of art requires the input from the practising artist working *'from the inside.'* This is required to “test the power of its [philosophy of art] concepts and prevent empty or naïve generalizations” (Langer, 1953, p. iv). In other words, what is needed is to underscore an understanding in the experiencing of art through a familiarity with concepts, problems and context-specific dispositional matters which are ripe within the field of practical application. It is these additions to understanding that need inclusion; ones attained through aspects of situated learning, additions fortified from the input of its metaphorical, as well as the discursive language and understanding of the domain (Langer, 1953).

As foreshadowed, by gathering particular artist/educators' phenomenological personal significations of the positive characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting, a composite list of predominant characteristics might be identified. These characteristics could, in turn, be compared and contrasted with philosophical, psychological and pedagogical interpretations (as addressed in Chapter Two, Three, Four, Five and Six). The proposed result of such an investigation would be a better understanding of what might constitute the characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting. These insights might then be used as the basic conceptual materials from which future sympathetic pedagogical approaches for the fostering and acquisition of aesthetic experience could be fashioned. This systematisation of characteristics, while asserting no claim of universal absolutes, could be viewed as a starting point for identification, classroom debate and stimulus for further student and artist/educator critical inquiry. It is with these thoughts in mind that the contributions from the dissertation's findings are now presented.

CONTRIBUTIONS ARISING FROM THE DISSERTATION'S FINDINGS AND AN OVERVIEW OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ART EDUCATION

The contributions arising from this research extend the claim that understanding aesthetic experience requires reconciliation between the intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist positions. Only by acknowledging both of these positions' contributions and reconciling their paradigmatic differences can a comprehensive account of the aesthetic experience be advanced.

The contributions established by this research are nine fold and include issues relating to (1) a taxonomy and expansion of explicated characteristic of aesthetic

experience, (2) conciliatory positioning of aesthetic experience with regards to intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist epistemologies, (3) the contributions of immediacy within aesthetic experience, (4) the amalgamation of aesthetic qualities with contextualist meaning-making, (5) issues relating to self-justifying experience empowered with contextual importations, (6) the continued relevance of modernist paintings for fostering aesthetic experience, (7) the debunking of aesthetic experience as an autonomous and distinct classification of experience, (8) a conciliatory concept of the sublime, and (9) the dominance of the experiential over theoretical prescription.

Key pedagogical and curriculum implications resulting from this research concern issues relating to: (1) experiential knowing, (2) corresponding pedagogical learning strategies, (3) a critique on the inadequacies of contemporary education policy to deal with aesthetic experiential learning, and (4) the drawbacks within the suggested implications.

The nine characteristics (and the associated dependent sub-characteristics) of positive aesthetic experience in painting explicated in this study are presented in the following table.

Table 1- Explicated characteristics and discriminating qualities of aesthetic experience

Characteristic	Discriminating qualities
1. Immediacy and totality of experience	Experience comes all at once; response to wholeness rather than reduced through parts; acknowledged in feelingful states and associations; no critical, conscious examination or discourse; experience more intuitive than mediated; design form blends with affective states; other sensuous modalities initiated by form; fFeelingful rather than analytical response.
(Dependent sub-characteristics)	The feelingfulness of experience did not require propositional knowledge.
(a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing	
(b) Effortless cognition	Understanding and awareness established through feeling rather than process of analysis; belief that cognition was somatic; cognition through sensuous immediacy.
(c) Non-sequencing of experience	No particular systematic ordering of experience.
(d) Divergent points of entry	No particular point of entry into experience; dependent on contextual predispositions of viewer.
(e) Aspects of the sublime	Inability to comprehend the magnitude and power of representation and the associations of deep subjective longings (conciliatory position).
2. Associative aspects innate in form	Elements and qualities of form trigger emotional and contextual associations; emotive, non-rational response to form.
3. Metaphorical response replacing measurement	Imaginative rather than objectified response; elements and principles of design acknowledged metaphorically; non-discursive.
4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the ‘artist’s eye’	Heightened awareness of technical aspects; awareness of innovative manipulation of materials, techniques and the artist’s perceived intention internalised into emotive personal and contextual response.
5. Personal associations	Experience manifests personal, positive psychological associations; experience triggers recall of positive personal history; reaffirmation through subject matter, artistic styles, formal design relationships; associations to philosophical stance and universal themes such as love, death, existence, etc.
6. Sense of mystery	Ineffable quality to experience; non-rational.
7. Transformative aspects	
(a) In subject self-image	Promotion of heightened states of consciousness; promotion of desire for self-actualisation.
(b) In promoting the view that paintings transcend their physical objective status	Paintings become vehicles for personal transcendence; paintings become representations of subjective realities and creative processes; paintings maintain an intangible form within future viewer reflections.
(c) On-going power of experience	The experience has a long term positive effect and becomes an internal personal referencing for artistic and pragmatic situations; may be correspondent to pragmatic and practical requirements of the viewer.
8. Aesthetic experience and ordinary experience	
(a) Aspects of heightened perception and focus	Antecedence in ordinary experience; a perceptual sensitising and amplification of ordinary experience.
(b) Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness	Both notions of a unifying and consummate wholeness of experience and a non-unified and sporadic fragmentation of experience identified
9. Mind and body	Cognitive strategies employed on unconscious level within immediate, corporeal knowing; inductive rather than deductive; emotive, feelingful aspects of perception are considered a form of cognition; mentation and the immediacy of sensuous response become one in a heightened aesthetic encounter; no dualism acknowledged.

STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

After this introductory chapter that overviews the case and contributions, Chapter Two attempts to delineate and synthesise certain concepts associated with aesthetic experience to elaborate the theoretical underpinnings of the case presented in this dissertation. These concepts underscore further observations and analysis and foreground and inform the phenomenological research. After the intentions and demarcations of these conceptual stances are established, the concept of aesthetics as a mode of knowing and further contextualist influences are discussed. The interrelated concept of the sublime, as oppositionally proposed by Burke (1987 [1757]) and Lyotard (1984) is then investigated. This is followed by the concept of aesthetics as a discipline. Within this section, essentialist beginnings, contextualist concerns, problematic aspects of aesthetics as a discipline and influences and pressures arising from such advocacies as feminist and political left critiques are observed. Confusional aspects of aesthetics as a discipline, its position in regards to practice and pedagogy and the implications of certain remedial attempts, such as Discipline Based Art Education, follow.

Chapter Three, Four and Five set out a brief exploration of some of the conflicting theoretical views regarding aesthetic experience and related concepts. These explorations concern intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextualist and conciliatory positions. The purpose here is to establish a discursive background for the reader about pertinent aspects surrounding and influencing the concept of aesthetic experience and the ways in which we experience art. It is also an attempt to inform the reader on theoretical points which may present themselves and find justification within the later phenomenological investigation into personal reflections concerning the aesthetic experience in painting. In doing so, it does not attempt to promote advocacy of one perspective over others. The main concern here is to be as well pronounced as possible and overlook the occasional 'nitpicking and hair splitting' nuances which have seen the concept of aesthetic experience occasionally reduced to philosophic word plays and riddles, void of applicable relevance (Eaton, 2002). Correspondingly, my research horizon does not seek philosophic obfuscation or academic puzzlement for its own sake. Rather, the goal within these chapters is to clarify concepts and characteristics which might contribute to the establishment of realistic and serviceable application of the aesthetic.

In making this case for the clarification of concepts, Chapter Three, Four and Five are structured in the following manner. The intrinsic/essentialist position, which aligns itself with modernist preoccupations, is first discussed in Chapter Three. Examined here are such concepts as aesthetic attitude, disinterestedness and the inevitable drawbacks for such concepts, psychical distancing, human agency, formalist qualities and elements of elitism and percipience. Chapter Four concerns positions related to subjective/contextual points of view and are aligned with postmodernist thought. Presented within the subjective/contextualist positions are the concept of autopoiesis, an acknowledgment of the influences of Dewey (1980 [1934]), aspects of art cognition, advocacies of postmodernism, visual culture, aspects of leftist and feminist critique and the socialisation of art. Chapter Five discusses theory bridging intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist positions. Various contributing positions are outlined through an examination of such concepts as bio-evolutionary theory, aesthetic experience as a hybrid conceptualisation, post-formal aesthetics, pragmatist aesthetics and the concept of aesthesia. Chapter Six presents some explicit characteristics of positive aesthetic experience as advanced by a sequenced selection of past scholars who have attempted taxonomies.

The purpose of this preview is in the hope of observing and explaining distinct characteristics which show influences from the opposing and conciliatory epistemologies observed earlier in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Its purpose then is complementary. It seeks to present, first hand, concretised attempts to formulate taxonomies of the characteristics of aesthetic experience -- the overriding aim of my own phenomenological research presented in Chapters Eight and Nine. A general summary of the characteristics and a concluding table setting out their shared characteristics follows. These observations are used later in Chapters Eight and Nine to establish complements or contrasts concerning this dissertation's findings regarding the positive characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting. The major contributions in this chapter are from: Monroe Beardsley, Harold Osborne, Mahaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Robinson, Gerald Knieter, David Hargreaves and Rod Taylor. A brief account of their qualifications appears in the Appendix section of this dissertation.

Chapter Seven justifies the design, methodology and application followed in this research. Generally, it pursues a qualitative, phenomenological epistemology-paradigm and is eclectically structured according to heuristic research methodologies as prescribed by Moustakas (1990; 1994) and Douglas and Moustakas (1985). It draws upon aspects of heuristic research from the human science phenomenology of Van Manen (1990) and aspects of general expressive research by Willis (2000; 2001; 2002), and Willis & Smith (2000). Finally, aspects of reflective practice by Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985a; 1985b) and concepts surrounding tacit knowing espoused by Polanyi (1983) are advanced and incorporated.

Chapter Seven also details methodological procedures. It begins with investigations surrounding the research topic and my personal participation within the research. This is followed by a section discussing the separation of the earlier theoretical stances from the phenomenological investigations of the aesthetic experience in painting. The de-privileging of an initial conceptual framework is argued for through the requirements of phenomenological and grounded research practices. From here, heuristic research is outlined together with its concepts and phases. Also addressed are justifications for researcher participation, participant selection, participants' selections of paintings on which they have based their aesthetic experience reflections, sites and ethical and protocol concerns. Next, the organisation, collection, collation and analysis of the data used in the dissertation are described. Finally, issues of triangulation, validity and the limitations of the study are presented.

Chapters Eight and Nine concern the findings and analysis of my phenomenological research. Chapter Eight introduces and previews the nine major aesthetic characteristics and five co-dependent characteristics specific to this research. Here, the significant characteristics are identified and briefly discussed. These significant characteristics are briefly introduced later in this chapter under the section addressing contributions arising from the dissertation's findings and an overview of its implications for contemporary art education. Concluding the previewed findings in Chapter Eight is a comparison of correspondences between the above characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting and those (generally shared) characteristics observed through the propositions of the theorists examined in Chapter Six.

Chapter Nine involves further examination and observation of the findings through the employment of an embellished narrative (creative synthesis). This is drawn from the participants' phenomenological responses. Here, the characteristics are examined through a framework of narrative which is elaborated with visual imagery, poetry, prose and participants' anecdotes. Within the narrative, subjects' accounts are extensively employed in order to 'exploit' the participants' personal subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988, cited in Eisner, 1998b). This embellished narrative is presented in an effort to forward both the deductive and inductive nature of the phenomena under investigation. To extend this point, paintings from the three participant-artists are also presented throughout the chapter in order to advance further an account of the feelingful states textually described. That is, the paintings are intended to articulate and to assist in transferring the participants' aesthetic experiences. These qualitative and phenomenological strategies are employed to make the understanding of the examined characteristics of aesthetic experience more potent and holistic (yet accessible) for the reader (Nielsen, 2000).

Chapter Ten constitutes the conclusion section of the dissertation. The chapter summarises the major explicated characteristics (and co-dependent characteristics) of aesthetic experience particular to this study. Theoretical and pedagogical contributions and implications of the findings are discussed and a conciliatory position incorporating both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist epistemologies is advanced. Theoretical and pedagogical contributions and implications are then proposed. This is followed by proposals for possible future related phenomenological areas of research.

With this introductory chapter completed, Chapter Two will now delineate and synthesise certain concepts associated with aesthetic experience which will elaborate later theoretical underpinnings.

CHAPTER TWO

ESTABLISHING THEORETICAL BASES

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter sets out the conceptual terrain through which the aesthetic experience might be traced and understood. The concepts discussed in this chapter also set the stage for further development of the aesthetic experience as seen through the expanded intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist points of view discussed in Chapter Three.

To elaborate the conceptual premises of these discussions, the chapter begins by examining the terms and origins of the aesthetic *as a modality of knowing* (distinct from rational, deductive logic). This is followed by an elaboration of theoretical premises which further aesthetic knowing through contextualist implications, as exemplified within feminist and Marxist critiques. A powerful mode of knowing, ‘the sublime’, a notion acknowledged by both epistemologies, is observed and its implications are drawn through essentialist and contextualist interpretations from Burke (1987 [1757]) and Lyotard (1984).

Next, a section devoted to aesthetics *as a discipline* examines the difficulties of understanding and implementing aesthetics for practising artists and arts educators. Here, some of the difficulties can be traced to uncertainties and suspicions that surround the role and relevance of theory to practice and experience. These include concerns about the over-intellectualisation, elitist codification and inadequate teacher/professional development training. Repositioning aesthetics as a relevant, distinct discipline within the visual arts as proposed by the introduction (and subsequent marginalisation) of Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) is then examined. Finally, the positions of aesthetics within contemporary visual culture, with its call for the autonomous position of art to be de-privileged and subsumed within the plethora of non-fine art historic, sociological and contemporary imagery, are overviewed.

In summary, the concepts discussed in this chapter set the stage for further understanding of the aesthetic experience as proposed by the forthcoming intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextualist and conciliatory points of view.

INTENTIONS

As foreshadowed, the intention here is to synthesise and delineate antecedent concepts that are central to understanding the aesthetic experience: its theoretical underpinnings. A familiarity with these propositions also provides a conceptual map to assist in choosing and demarcating a preferred pathway through such concepts as *the aesthetic* as a modality of knowing, *aesthetics* as a discipline and ideas and aspects which are salient to any notion of aesthetic experience. Finally, these definitions will foreground and inform through comparison and contrast the final phenomenological gatherings that comprise the findings in Chapters Eight and Nine.

However, these theoretical concepts, by their very nature, are not to be considered axioms either by definition or within historical and contemporary debate. That is, they do not represent objectifiable and conclusive positions. In the end, no exact meaning here can be truly fixed. This is because we are not dealing with the quantifiable (Eisner, 1998b), but rather with a multiplicity of answers and emotional responses. That is, no discursive definition can contain all the possible pluralities of meanings inherent within a heightened experiential encounter with a work of art. Indeed, theories and attempts at definitions concerning any aspect of art, the aesthetic modality, aesthetics and aesthetic experience can (and should) be contested. This is because these notions are indentured to human subjectivity and as such are subject to change. In addition, some feelings and states of mind during a heightened encounter with art may remain ineffable; beyond reportage (Abbs, 1994). Therefore, the theoretical concepts presented here should be seen to act more like critical routes from which further inquiry can travel. They represent initial epistemological platforms to foster inquiry and facilitate a discussion on the aesthetic experience.

As suggested, the intention is to present assumed or contested propositions which may later be contrasted (or used as aspects for triangulation) in relation to the experientially-based phenomenological data examined in Chapters Eight and Nine. In addition, the introductory propositions are presented (as far as possible) without personal agenda. Indeed, to argue for or against theoretical preferences (prior to analysing the later phenomenological data) would initiate an undesired suggestion of rule-governed research. That is, it would promote the feeling of closure and negate the attempted presuppositionless nature of my phenomenological intent (Van Manen, 1990; Husserl, 1970b).

Inevitably, my inclusions and omissions may be questioned. However, the goal is to establish a clear and robust base to further understand and investigate the aesthetic experience in painting. It is an attempt to introduce the landscape surrounding the aesthetic. In so doing, a broader awareness of the aesthetic may be fostered -- for it is in this enrichment of the human organism through experiential appreciation (and creation) of art which can be seen as humanity's most noble achievement (Dewey, 1980 [1934]). Hence, such a challenge presented by understanding the aesthetic experience is held to be worthwhile.

THE AESTHETIC AS A MODE OF KNOWING

The term *aesthetic* can be used as a particular way individuals knowingly perceive the world. It is distinct from deductive logic, as the aesthetic denotes our way of knowing phenomena and experience through the primordial modes of feelings and olfactory sensations, both simple and complex.

In this way, it is a response inherent to sensuous experiential knowing (Abbs, 1989), rather than verifiable deduction or rationality of thought or behaviour. For example, it is knowing the lavender bush, or the associated season of its flowering for that matter, by its distinct perfumed scent and the personal memories associated with that scent sparked within reflection. It is the response of sensuous experience that Dewey (1980 [1934]) saw as having its own heightened meaning, the vehicle through which the living organism directly interacts and participates with that organism's environment (Dewey, 1980).

Sensuous knowing is held to be founded on the primordial experience of essences -- "the inner essential nature of a thing" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177). That is, it is the intuitive understanding and interaction with the environment upon which other forms of knowledge take hold. It is the sensation of the heat, the dance and the mystery of fire prior to the harnessing of the phenomena for the practical purpose of cooking. Sensuous knowing is primordially *felt* within one's being, does not require deductive justification and can be elusive to discursive definition. It involves non-representational (i.e. does not act as a referent to something else) and intuitive, expressive 'presentational' symbolism (Langer, 1953; Langer cited in Eisner, 1998b). For example, it can be the *orangeness* of an orange which presents itself to us, the outstanding and perceivable quality of the piece of fruit. Its '*known-ness*' is experienced through the sharp tang to the taste buds when bitten, the minutely potted,

lunar surface skin which when peeled away explodes in spray, the pleasant sensation of pulp and juice sliding down the throat. These are distinct from its instrumental persona of a unit of weighed and rated commodity produce, noted quantitatively on a spreadsheet.

It is this initial sensual consciousness that triggers and stimulates awe, curiosity, investigation and interpretation (Dewey, 1980). Indeed, without primary olfactory awareness of our world there is nothing to discern, no need or purpose for further critical inquiry. From these initial stimuli of the senses, further, more controlled and mediated inquiry is initiated. We find meaning through decoding stimuli coming from the sensory modalities such as the symbolic, gustatory, visual and kinetic (to name a few) (Eisner, 1978). Hence, according to Eisner, “[m]eaning is constructed by forming patterns that eventually become codes which carry meaning within them. Creating meaning requires the ability to use the coding system in a way that will disclose what it is the expressive form contains or implies” (Eisner, 1978, p. 15).

As Eisner (1978) suggests, we know and experience the environment through *several* ways of knowing. For example, he uses the notion of knowing a classroom not only through the linguistic sense of ‘school room’ or through discursive, quantitative axioms associated with locality or address, but also through experiential memory and associations of olfactory modalities such as smells, visual features and recollections which are symbolic and emotional in quality (Eisner, 1978). That is, to recall or construct a person, thing, time, event or expression through imaginative interplays originating from, and dependent on, sensation in its emotive and expressive tones -- as is *essenced* in lines from McGough’s poem, *What You Are*:

you are the apple for teacher

left in a damp cloakroom

McGough, R. Excerpt from the poem *What You Are* (1967).

Here, McGough’s reflection of a classroom is charged with the quiet, emotive metaphor of an apple; the sweet scent of the forgotten, slowly over-ripening tribute. One is left to personally recall such events or resonances, to smile and speculate on the abandonment of its delivery for some more pressing school yard childhood game.

It is a mental picture of the classroom experienced and one we can all collectively envision. So, our personal associations can elicit mental pictures and sensations which go far beyond the scope of quantifiable school room inventories or locker checks. We remember, sense and reflect. What is brought into focus here is the unique insertion of human agency to the environment. It provides a more holistic account of knowing.

In other words and from this perspective, to *really* know something is to also understand it through several sensory systems. What is proposed is that we may heighten our perception of what is presented through an intrinsic awareness of sensation and feeling that we possess as knowers.

Correspondingly, it is from the aesthetic modality (i.e. the form of knowing that operates through the senses and feelings) that the various art disciplines are initially represented, created and appreciated. They exist as its distinct examples; its symbolic forms (Abbs, 1989). For example, the visual artist works through the manipulation of the sensuous modality of vision, while the musician directs attention through aural sensations. The audience may respond through their experiential feelings in combination with the sensual qualities and properties of the work.

The conception of seeing art and aesthetics as a particular way of knowing the world is also echoed by Langer (1977a; 1957b), who reiterates its non-discursive modality, separate from rationality and logical deduction (Langer, 1957a; 1957b). For example, though we may know a precious gem (e.g. quantitatively) by its chemical components or monetary value, we may also know it in other non-measurable ways. We can also know it intrinsically through the inductive and primordial sensations of how it sparkles and dances when looked at or its cool feel when placed on the cheek. In this way, the aesthetic can be said to deal with the sensuous aspects of the experiential encounter (Fenner, 2000). That is, while other relational objectives or stimuli may be part of the experience, the overall experience cannot be summarised solely through instrumental intention. There is a requirement to acknowledge the non-agentic function, the value of engaging in aesthetic behaviours (i.e. those directed toward experiencing the sensuous aspects of the phenomena at hand in a non-relational manner) simply for the rewards such experiencing induces (Fenner, 2000). This is the basis of aesthetic response.

However, it is not always easy to observe or experience free from pragmatic concerns. The majority of objects and events are primarily seen in the light of utilitarian experiences. For instance, the value of diamond or the aesthetic qualities of

gracefully waving tall grass in the front yard are seen by most as a visual chastisement in terms of unattainable luxury or delinquent mowing; the ‘beauty’ of crockery lies in its ability to withstand the wrath of the automatic dishwasher or microwave; environments are unceremoniously traversed while rushing somewhere else. Perhaps, most of the time, our tastes run responsibly towards the functional or are determined by the state of our finances.

Because of this, to perceive the full potential offered through an aesthetic encounter (by allowing the aesthetic modalities to operate) requires proactive subject-directedness. That is, we must willingly use our senses to engage with the object in order to heighten and totalise our experience. By doing so, we also decide how we will engage and negotiate with the environment. This type of dispositional prerequisite can be done by allowing (and preparing) our sensuous knowing to respond to formal qualities or expressive content (i.e. the essentialist qualities) or to stimulate inquiry and relish in personal interpretation and interrogation of meanings based on individuals’ ontogeny and socially sourced knowledge (i.e. the contextualist position). For this to occur, exercising the aesthetic mode of knowing or its contextualist equivalent requires active subject initiated participation (Parsons, 2002). That is, bringing together an informed perspective and an aesthetic object offers a basis to consider a more comprehensive account of the aesthetic experience. Because of this requirement, one may presume that the aesthetic lies within the individual and is achieved (in the essentialist state) through a tapping or re-tapping into our sensuous knowing. We may ready ourselves for the potential heightened encounter or simply be prepared to surrender to its invitation through the aesthetic qualities and wonderment that the environment may introduce.

While all things natural or constructed share, to varying degrees, the ability to be responded to in this aesthetic fashion (Stolnitz 1960; Fenner 2003), many believe that it is works of art, intentionally created for this purpose, that promote and sustain this heightened state of awareness more readily (Osborne cited in Smith, R. & Simpson, A, 1991; Beardsley, 1981; Smith, R., 1992).

In summary, what is proposed is that the aesthetic is a way of knowing, distinct from deductive logic. It is founded in the primordial experience of essences originating in olfactory sensations and feelings. The aesthetic modality is the direct and unmediated interaction with the environment. Further cognitive inquiries, such as emotive responses to the aesthetic experience, stem from this beginning. As such, in

its non-deductive state, aesthetic knowing is initially presumed to be non-relational. In other words, it is the experiencing of the essence of the thing itself, rather than associative personas. The arts, in part, can be perceived as representations of this aesthetic modality in symbolic form. While all phenomena can be considered capable of promoting aesthetic awareness and experience, it is presumed by many essentialists that artworks, intentionally created for this purpose, are the best stimulants for gaining and sustaining a heightened sense of this awareness (Osborne cited in Smith, R. & Simpson, A, 1991; Beardsley, 1981; Smith, R., 1992).

FORTIFICATION OF THE AESTHETIC

If agreement concerning the idea that aesthetic response is a fundamentally subject-initiated phenomenon (e.g. it is the tongue that tastes, not the beverage) and barring the propositions of extreme formalists whose positions will be discussed later, then the addition of the effects from contextual influences inherent in the subject when formulating a concept of the aesthetic should be acknowledged. That is, our sensuous response to phenomena can be influenced by the societal activities, patterns and dispositions of the culture in which we participate (Scribner, 1997). Here, the individual will additionally adjoin personal and socially-sourced knowing to the primordial sensations of the aesthetic modality. These historical/societal inspired types of knowing are steeped in the social practices of the subject's community/culture and may act as reinforcements for and within the aesthetic encounter (Knieter, 1971). Because of this contextualist addition, a broadening of the concept and definition of the aesthetic and its comprehension, apprehension and contemplation is achieved.

What is proposed now is a concept of mutuality. Firstly, it acknowledges an aesthetic which perceptually attends formal aspects, qualities and associated meanings and interrelations. That is, it addresses the formal, aesthetic, representational, expressive, semantic or symbolic properties of a work's character/content. Secondly, it is also attentive to perceptual features within the object which address themselves on a non-aesthetic plane (Levinson, 1996). Here, the non-aesthetic features suggested may be those which display sociocultural motivations and act as familiar societal reinforcements, which are themselves meaning-made through contextualist associations. So, we may heighten our sense of exaltation if the object examined bears reference to an individual identification within societal motivated activity. Some

examples of Roman Catholic icons and artifacts, for instance, while having formal properties (i.e. line, movement, rhythm etc.) are worthy of contemplation in their own right, yet may also carry additional heightened relevance for the viewer who identifies with that religious community. In this way, the inclusion of socially sourced ways of knowing -- a discriminate interaction of personal, social and political identifications -- may contribute to a more rigorous aesthetic and experience for the viewer (Budd, 1995).

In order to maintain the relevance and integrity of the aesthetic as a separate way of knowing removed from pragmatic interrogation, Levinson (1996) proposes that the apprehension of any relational associations deriving from the work must be achieved *through and in* the structure of the work's aesthetic individual qualities. That is, the visual reading of any contextual meanings, the articulation of possible psychological associations, must be made by the perceiver initially through the contemplation of the interplay of the autonomous artwork's formal qualities (e.g. line, colour, form etc.). In this way, what Levinson (1996) sees as the secondary meanings or detachable effects inherent in aesthetic appreciation (i.e. contextualist implications and meanings) can only be ascertained by the individual through the mediation of the formal qualities of the autonomous work (Levinson, 1996).

Levinson's (1996) proposed aesthetic establishes an initial conciliatory framework whereby instrumental associations may be introduced into the concept without deeming the experience non-aesthetic in nature (Levinson, (1996). This loosening of the boundaries in terms of what constitutes elements within the aesthetic response is actually conducive to a relationist position. That is, according to Fenner (2000), the aesthetic properties of a work of art are composed of a synergy which interweaves the relationship of the work's objective properties (e.g. line, colour, form, etc) *with* that of the viewer's subjective attendance. Hence, while it may be accepted that a work contains aesthetic properties, those properties can only be brought to light through the attention and initiation of human agency (Fenner, 2000) -- which, in itself, can be seen to be environmentally (e.g. socially) conditioned, as this arises through ontogeny.

Here, the objective properties of the artwork (e.g. line, colour, etc) and higher aesthetic properties (e.g. grace and harmony) are found in a conflation of both the objective properties *and* the active subjective state of the viewer (Fenner, 2000). Within this subjective state, a non-divisive combination of both formally aesthetic and

instrumental inputs blends to form the experiential whole. As Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) research observed, the sequence of such an experience may come initially from a perceptual 'hook' the observer feels when focusing attention toward the physicality of the presented art object. This attendance, in turn, leads to a more detached form of intellectualisation. (i.e. meaning making). Subsequently, this detached interplay of the intellect further informs the observer's appreciation of the artwork (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). From a Deweyian (1980 [1934]) perspective, these conciliatory theoretical propositions see the blending of aspects from each point of view as significant for the creation of a unified continuity of aesthetic experience in conjunction with the normal processes of living.

In summary, the above conciliatory propositions fortify the sensuous knowing of the aesthetic modality with the individual's inherent sociocultural understanding of the experience. That is, the sensuous response is made more focused and intense through the influences of what Scribner (1997) sees as the participatory activities, patterns and dispositions of an individual's identified culture. Here, the heightened state of perception associated with aesthetic experience is achieved through the integration of both intrinsic (i.e. aesthetic modality) and contextualist (i.e. meaningfulness) concerns. Within these propositions, each approach may animate the other.

However, there are proposed instances of acknowledged rare experience which defy our abilities to satisfactorily decode either intrinsically or contextually the perceptual stimuli which is presented. Here, our sensuous knowing and sociocultural meaning-making seem to desert us. This powerful, interrelated category of overwhelming phenomenon and the heightened experiential state which accompanies it is referred to as 'the sublime'.

THE SUBLIME

The idea of the sublime is important because it suggests the concept of a rare participant-induced psychological state which is embodied in the form of a particularly intense and transformative aesthetic experience. Here, sublime refers to feelings which are associated with what Stolnitz (1960) described as:

... those natural spectacles of tremendous magnitude and power which seem to overwhelm and dwarf us ... seem[ingly] to spill over any frame that we try to impose upon them (Stolnitz, 1960, p. 49).

In engaging with the sublime, our perceptual and imaginative capacities are tested against appearance of formidable natural phenomena (Crowthers, 1993). Correspondingly, the sublime is suggested in art when its scale, power, imagery or forms invoke such associations in the viewer (Crowther, 1993).

An example of such sublimity may be observed through the scale and ferocity of Picasso's *Guernica* (see below). Here, through unrelenting and savage interrogations of technique and content, a symbolic representation, a visual narrative of an atrocity of war is made manifest for many individuals. One's imagination can be overpowered by the visual assault of twisted limbs, contorted grimaces and stupefaction of the depicted real and mythological participants. While we may attempt to interrogate *Guernica* through allegorical reading, the majority of the experience remains ineffable. What can be felt (and not successfully described through discursive means) is its "imaging of unendurable pain" (Greene, 1988, p. 131), its overwhelming veil of primordial angst, its accusative metaphorical presence, its elicitation of meaning-less, chaotic terror and annihilation.

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Pablo Picasso. *Guernica* (1937). Tempera on canvas.

Another example of a painting where the concept of the sublime might be observed is in the larger than life gothic drama of swirls and torrents of fire and retribution which engulf our perceptions when viewing Booth's *Painting 1978*

(see below). Here, what can be seen and physiologically inferred falls short of that which is *feelingfully* represented. That is, its true experience (like in *Guernica*) is sensed, felt through an ineffable, primordial state of knowing. This again transcends the physicality of the painting or our abilities to rationally interpret the full extent of what is being presented.

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Peter Booth. *Painting 1978* (1978). Oil on canvas.

The case for a potential overpowering aesthetic experience encountered by a viewer standing before the above two paintings can perhaps be traced in two differing notions of the sublime. The first account (i.e. intrinsic/essentialist) is by Burke, (1987 [1757]), the latter subjective/contextualist proposal is by Lyotard (1984).

An intrinsic/essentialist account

Burke (1987 [1757]) proposes that the sublime is the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of experiencing. It concentrates on the physicality of the object and not on the existential (i.e. states of mind). Seen in this light, sublimity becomes an essentialist matter with a universalist demeanor in that it is the object, scene or event which carries the value, not the psychological makeup of the viewer.

The sublime stems, in this view, from any object or situation which has the capacity to elicit terror, pain or fear (Burke, 1987 [1757]). It is considered an aesthetic value whose aspect is related to that of awe, shock and other feelings which register as a kind of 'delightful horror' (using Burke's term) or the pleasures which come with

danger. It is a highly charged emotional state of transcendence. This state is entered into by voluntarily witnessing associated qualities of infinity, vastness, chaos or power (all being observed at some distance from the phenomena, thereby moderating our experience in that we are not actually in harm's way) which the observer cannot rationally categorise. In other words, Burke's (1987 [1757]) experience of the sublime is related to the viewer's response to the *object's* overwhelming presence and through the mediated emotional states of danger and pain (Crowther, 1993).

Characteristically, we find such notions as vastness (i.e. endless, incalculable horizons), massive proportions, such as the exaggerations of size and scale of mountains or precipices and atmospheres which are dark and gloomy. Here, the sublime evokes the emotive tones of darkness, silence, obscurity and solitude from the physicality of the object or scene. It was this representation of sublimity which became synonymous with the gothic melancholia and the aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness (discussed later) found in the writings of the Romantic poets, such as Keats. It is also to be found in the pictorial themes associated with the period of Romantic painting, most notable being the works of Turner (Boulton, 1987).

A subjective/contextualist account

In contrast to the essentialist notions of Burke, Lyotard (1984) proposes that the sublime is existential (i.e. involving states of mind) and can be seen in relation to the existence of longings at a deep subjective level that cannot be actively achieved through perception. Also, for Lyotard (1984), the sublime can relate to the exaltation of individual responses toward the infinite ways in which new and radical modes of representing this formlessness of sensation can be actualised. It becomes "... making an allusion to the unrepresentable by means of visual presentations" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 78). In this way, the strivings, the communion, the spiritual links with that which is in fact representationally unrepresentable are suggested through an almost cathartic association. Hence, sublimity is attained through the individual's internalisation of an assortment of contextualised visual associations rather than through attempts to totalise or make absolute the phenomena through representational or figurative depiction (as in Burke, 1987 [1757]). What is proposed here is that our response is teasingly incomplete and piecemeal, veiled, unresolved and in a constant state of development (unlike Burke's 1987 [1757] observed overwhelming environmental totality). According to Lyotard (1984), our appreciation is due, in part, to our own

efforts to conjure particular association, interpretation and to the acknowledgement of the art form's depiction of innovative and startling manipulation of plastic formal elements which stimulate our affective response.

Summary

The concepts of the sublime proposed above suggest an overpowering experience within the aesthetic mode of knowing which is linked to certain traumatic and conducive psychological states such as awe, agitation or instances of ineffability. The sublime can be activated through both pleasant and rapturous experiences, as well as experiences of emotional and intellectual confrontation.

The above views of the sublime may also help to explain and delineate the essences or characteristics of disorientation or effortful contemplation which generate powerful emotions within the individual. While having correspondences with these theoretically-inspired definitions, the term sublime is a general description of response relating to something which is considered awe-inspiring. This awe is established through its exhibition of a presumed ultimate degree of worth in terms of the moral, spiritual or intellectual value. It is a term placed on what one views as the highest or supreme example. It is commonly connoted as something which takes our breath away and fills us full of wonder.

The aesthetic as a distinct mode of knowing and being in the world is also explored through the forthcoming theories and observations expressed by the philosophers, academics and scholars and (phenomenologically) through the presented research participants' responses in Chapters Eight and Nine.

To this end, the next step in laying the theoretical foundation for aesthetic experience and to also inform the final phenomenological investigations is an exploration of the general intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextualist and conciliatory theories. This is undertaken because these theoretical stances have shaped the acknowledged conceptions of 'affect' or 'effect' in relation to encounters with art-related phenomena. That is, they concern the notions of whether the aesthetic experience can be advanced through non-practical sensuous response or through relational, meaningful interpretation and interrogation.

AESTHETICS AS A DISCIPLINE

Essentialist beginnings

The origin and discipline of aesthetics is traditionally associated with an intrinsic/essentialist point of view (this view and that of subjective/contextualist theories are taken up in more detail in Chapter Three and Four).

Briefly, essentialism originates from eighteenth and nineteenth century British and German philosophical theories. The essentialist argument proposes aesthetic notions such as absolute and universal definition of art, judgment and aesthetic experience (Crowther, 1993). The universalist sentiment also proposes a commonality of human experience and universal consciousness for patterns of thought (Lamarque, 1999). For instance, what is proposed is that a powerful, similar-like experience of an aesthetically commanding work of art can be experienced by all. Here, it is the intrinsic (inherent) qualities of the work which we respond to; qualities which are essential and belonging to its nature.

In turn, these theories gave rise to the concept of the supremacy of formalist values as a defining characteristic of art and the idea of a disinterested and sympathetic subjective attitude (i.e. free from moral, ethical or political implications) in which to appreciate those qualities. This means that art is understood to be autonomous, devoid of any requirement for prerequisite influences. This intrinsic/essentialist stance is perhaps taken to the extreme by the formalist proposals of Bell (1947 [1914]; 1953), who disavowed any need for communal/personal psychological conations or cultural/artistic theories. In this view, true art appreciation could be found simply by having a *sense* for line, colour and a *feel* for the third dimension. It is a concern:

... only with lines and colours, their relations and quantities and qualities ...
[which produce an experience] ... more sublime than any that can be given by
the description of facts and ideas (Bell, 1953, p.208-9).

So, for Bell (1947 [1914]; 1953), art needs stripping of anything that might impede the aesthetic journey -- the anticipation and guarantee of "... the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art" (Bell, 1953, p. 211).

What is being iterated here is that there are universal, identifiable qualities inherent in a great work of art which can be experienced by all who attend it. Hence, in this perspective, our individual responses to ‘good’ art will have a general commonality: we will all read these aesthetic qualities in a similar fashion and react with a similar emotive response.

To experience this emotive response, one need only be aware of these qualities as they present themselves through an holistic observation of the work. Within this essentialist/formalist tradition we intrinsically attend the experience without the prerequisites of informed proactivity, sociocultural or personal idiosyncratic backgrounding. In other words, we attend that which presents itself through the physicality of the objectified art work for its own sake. What is proposed here is that the experiencing of art has no pragmatic underpinnings and serves no functional or agentic purpose (this notion is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three). This experience is not educative in the discursive sense, nor is it influenced by social concerns. It is also not a cognitive puzzle reliant on interrogation and interpretation. Instead, its purpose is simply to be hedonistically appreciated through the individual’s aesthetic response to formal designal elements and principles which the object displays.

The essentialist perspective also proposes that these universal aspects observable in the object can be verified, understood and experienced by all (Kant, 1952 [1790]). In order to experience such ‘guarantees’ we again need only look at and attend the object without bringing the trappings of preconceived social/individual sourced meaning-making. To an essentialist, if we clutter our response with purposive worldly attention, the response ceases to be an aesthetic one. This is because interest in the experience will end when the purpose for viewing has been reached. In the essentialist proposition, while we may initiate the experience by assuming a receptive, anticipatory role, the overall experience is a non-mediated one. Yet, it implies some form of subject initiation. Hence, it involves willingness for simple, effortless responses. In other words, individuals are to assume a more passive, rather than effortful and active, role as participants in the experience. We must also regard it with a sympathetic attitude. That is, allow the artwork’s aesthetic qualities to guide our internalisation of the work.

Introducing contextualist concerns

At odds with essentialist notions of passivity are the various, more contemporary views that suggest essentialist closure as an elite practice lacking specificity and sociocultural contingencies. These perspectives (among others) reject the essentialist idea that there can be finite and unchanging universal similarity of response. This contextualist view is taken in light of what is seen within all the impinging contradictions inherent in differing social, cultural and individual consciousnesses which presumably embed themselves within formulating probable solutions. What is proposed here is that the plurality of meaning from various sectors necessitates the acknowledgement of divergent and impermanent points of view.

For example, what works harmoniously in Italian High Renaissance painting for a European observer will not necessarily be received with the same acceptance or enjoyment by Eastern or Polynesian cultural response. Here, the contextualist response advocates multiple, transitory definitions. That is, things will have different meanings and attain different appreciation levels which are dependent on one's social, cultural, political and economic status. What is proposed is that there is no single answer, no single unified response that remains as a constant. The emphasis is switched from essentialist preoccupations with aesthetic qualities to critical discourse on the conditions and investigations of the artifact. Appreciation becomes a matter concerned with relational historical and social constructs (Lamarque, 1999; Crowther, 1993). This being the case, the appreciation of art cannot be fully gained without first introducing aspects of the environment from which it sprang (i.e. economic, social, political, cultural etc factors).

It is the various general positions these two opposing epistemologies present, referred to here as intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextual, in respect to the aesthetic experience that will demarcate and inform the discussions that follow.

However, due to such divergent epistemological influences and in preparation for addressing these positions, the air of confusion which surrounds aesthetics as a discipline requires some clarification. This is done in order to quell troublesome aspects associated with the discipline of aesthetics that might otherwise impede a better understanding of its definitional aims and relevance.

The confusional air of aesthetics

The concept of aesthetics as a discipline needs clarification in order that it might separate itself from the historical view of philosophical and psychological writings on aesthetics that has tended to confuse and hide, rather than clarify (Hamblen, 1988). Aesthetics has fallen prey to intellectual sophistry and highbrow privilege, leading to uncertainty amongst most people as to what constitutes *doing* aesthetics in general (Hamblen, 1988). Here, aesthetics has become camouflaged within “vapid abstractions and metaphysical hyperbole involved in saying nothing in the most pretentious possible way” (Passmore cited in Battin, 1991, p. 50).

The apparent malaise of aesthetics as a discipline can be traced from its philosophically essentialist origins. Historically, according to Battin (1991), aesthetics can be seen as a long and elaborate historical discussion; a continuum of theoretical formulations purporting to establish principled accounts pertaining to art, beauty and associated artistic and aesthetic phenomena. As in any field of conceptual development, each new account attempts to supersede or alter the theoretical position of its predecessor. However, the concern here is that this conceptual development has not been based on empirical work associated with the practice of aesthetic pursuits. This suggests that aesthetics as a discipline is not driven by praxis (i.e. informed by the practice of artists and the like), but by theory in its need to defend or challenge prevailing assumptions. In doing so, it has become an academic exercise whereby the art form and its experience has been stripped of specialty and specificity and is reduced to playing a minor and evidential role. This role is to prove or disprove points relevant only to theory and not to the promotion and enjoyment of art itself. In other words, the cart is suddenly placed before the horse -- theory attempts to drive art (this is true for both essentialist and contextualist commentary).

By this scenario, aesthetics then assumes the illusory role of defending itself, rather than attending to its original ‘art reflector’ status. In this situation, the development of theory is prevented by mystification (Stevens, 1988). That is, entrenched theory takes the defensive through the use of self-serving and confusing linguistic manipulation. It no longer develops in response to art. By doing so, it denies the need for theory to be responsive to the ever-changing re-inventions inherent in both the practice and appreciation of aesthetic pursuits.

Codification, discursive intellectualisation, the requirement for theory over the impact of experiencing first hand the intrinsic qualities *and* contextualist inspired

meaning and interpretation inherent in art are impediments to a relevant and robust discipline of aesthetics. In terms of essentialist doctrine, the consequences of rigidly defending theoretical tenets that deny contingencies and disregard the input of alternative theoretical insight and praxis cannot keep a pace which is germane to its original intent. Theoretical aesthetic relevance requires the maintenance of ongoing rigour, not reactionary obedience to paradigms.

One is reminded, somewhat ironically if we recall his eminent position within modernism, of Hardy's sage-like warning in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Reflecting upon the execution of the young sheep dog after blindly and tragically following its instincts to muster sheep to the unchecked inevitable end-point of herding them off a cliff, we are presented with yet:

... another instance of the untoward fate which so often attends dogs and other philosophers who follow a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and attempt perfectly consistent conduct in a world made up so largely of compromise (Hardy, 1983, p. 87).

Sadly, the 'consistent conduct' of adherence to absolutes without contingencies, of defending epistemology over experiential impact, of intellectual obfuscation, of elitism and scholarly marginalisation in the past may have alienated prominent stakeholders in the game today. These affected stakeholders include both audience and artists alike. For many practitioners (and appreciators), it is unfortunate that the important discipline of aesthetics is being seen as mere 'academic nit-picking and hair-splitting' which bears little relevance within the practicing art worlds (Arrell, n.d.).

In addition to losing contemporary currency, audience immediacy and understanding of presented aesthetic inquiry are also hampered when discursive argument and deduction is so often written in ways that unnecessary inhibit meaning being established (Smith, 1991). Furthermore, in correspondence to this textual elaboration, is the frequent inclusion of arcane terminology which is seen as foreign and irrelevant to contemporary aesthetic concerns (Efland, 2002). In other words, the privileging of stylistic traditions and outmoded definitions still hold a formidable position in aesthetic texts. For example, the defining characteristic of the word aesthetics itself (coined by the philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in the mid 1700s to

describe the 'science of the beautiful') has seemingly passed its use-by date. Ironically, even the formalist Bell (1947 [1914]) predates current postmodernist contentions when he considered that the term beauty may not have any aesthetic connotations left in it; that it had become synonymous with desirability and the associated concept of sexuality (Bell, (1947 [1914])).

In addition, the dubious validity of the term is exemplified by Best's (1992) contention that the centrality of metaphysical questions concerning the nature of beauty has little relevance to the values and meanings within the contemporary art world (Best, 1992). In other words, what Best (1992) (and others) proposes is that much of the art being produced today concerns intentional confrontation and fragmentation, rather than representations of essentialist/modernist content. We must now contend with un-aesthetic and anti-aesthetic works whose presences lack or mock the ability for viewer sensuous response. Within these works, aesthetic qualities are non-existent. Contemporarily, the talk about art becomes "... fuzzy and messy" (Chalmers, 2001, p. 92). The works require other ways of understanding and appreciation. In addition, the importance of temporal and specific meaning these works profess outweighs the need for cumbersome rules. For example, Gude (2004) goes as far as to suggest that the traditional elements and principles of art and design have little currency within contemporary art consciousness (Gude, 2004).

Furthermore, universalist notions of beauty are superfluous to a pluralistic, contemporary art world which may ignore or explore issues antithetical to beauty. These issues may deal agentially with (or mirror) imagined states of the human condition which present aspects of ugliness, indifference or alienation, among others. For example, one need only consider the grotesque accumulation of the sculpted limbs, heads, genitalia and robotised faces of the naked, mutated mannequin/children presented by contemporary artists Jake and Dinos Chapman (below). To suggest a relevance to, or contemplation of, Baumgarten's 'science of the beautiful' makes no sense here. This is because, in viewing these sculptures, idealised form has been replaced or re-synthesised.

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Furthermore, beauty, or any traditional conception of what is justifiability considered traditionally proper objects of aesthetic contemplation, is also challenged by such works as an actual bisected pig suspended in formaldehyde and presented for 'inspection' by the artist Damien Hirst (below).

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Damien Hirst. *This Little Piggy Went to Market, This Little Piggy Stayed Home* (1996). Steel, GRP composites, glass, pig, formaldehyde, electronic motor.

The targets for the above artists are subversion of traditional aesthetic canon, of uneasy and terrifying black humour and parody of traditional values and status quo. There is no idealisation, no proclamation of beauty -- only form fashioned to feed an unsettling, disorientating nightmare. The viewer is titillated by shock as familiar perceptions are visually shouted at, abused, confronted and intimidated out of the security and familiarity of comfort zones. Here, the only characteristic to experience is that of macabre fascination likened to unnecessarily slowing down to observe the victims of a car crash.

Influences of feminist theory

The relevance of the traditional concept of beauty is further questioned by feminist theory which sees the entire idealised concept as misrepresentative --

" ... a cover for the male gaze, licensing a patriarchal vision" (Nunn, 2000. p. 65).

That is, the historically male-dominated view within art (and face of societal issues generally) has for centuries reduced the objective female form into an unrealistic and symbolic version of male subjective content (Nunn, 2000; Bovenschen, 1985). In other words, the female form is represented through the re-conceptualisation of the female identity and experience into male notions and preoccupations of what males construe to be definitive feminine beauty.

General feminist theory proposes that this 'male gaze' concerning beauty subordinates and objectifies the female body into fetishisation. This fetishisation becomes the evaluative norm for concepts and markers of beauty within art and cultural identity generally (Bovenschen, 1985). Feminist argument contends that these markers are false, that these notions have neglected the important phenomenological aspects of what it means to be a woman. In other words, their innate persona, their distinctiveness, is reduced and reformulated to male perceptions, to exist as signifiers for concepts within traditional modernist genres. Their depiction is that of supportive objectification for male interpretations which can range anywhere from seductress, mother, wife, saint or whore. Some exist as depersonalised and objectified renditions of abstract concepts. They become vague identity-less icons complete with the addition of male fetishism regarding body parts representing such ideals as freedom.

An example, taken at random from a vast array of possibilities, personifies the above concept through the image of a banner waving and emotionless heroine featured in Delacroix's painting *Liberty Leading the People* (below). Stoic and determined, heraldic in the classical sense and exquisitely proportioned like a Classical Greek sculpture, she is the male voyeuristic symbol of commitment--woman objectified, breasts defiantly bared for the revolution.



Eugene Delacroix. *Liberty Leading the People* (1830). Oil on canvas.

During other times of political expediency, womanhood becomes essentialism's blemish-less face of patriotism. For instance, we witness the universally depicted conformist exemplar of a lathe operating 'Rosey the Riveter' girl-next-door type (below). Here, an image archetypal of dutiful womanhood happily works, backing-up the boys on the front with the tools of the war trade. The depicted operation goes as flawlessly and easily as a recent application of just the right amount of lipstick (additionally informing the male fantasy/fetish of what constitutes the trappings of female beauty).



World War Two American propaganda poster (1942- 45).

A pointed and sarcastic contrast to the patriarchal-inspired negative archetypal objectification of womanhood, as embodied in 'Rosey', is a theme explored in much of the contemporary works of the feminist artist Rrap. In Rrap's work (below), the artist seems to be parodying such suggestions as 'I've found the job where I fit best.' Instead of the obedient Rosey character, Rrap now presents a depiction of womanhood in short dress, heels and wearing lip stick. She is on hands and knees, caught in the process of blending and fading into the patterns of a checkered

linoleum-like flooring. The usual accessory association of an accompanying scrubbing bucket is now replaced by a handgun. Here, things are changing. The woman's presumed environment of domestic duties suddenly becomes the camouflage for feminist sedition in relation to traditional patriarchal assumptions.

Julie Rrap. *Camouflage # 8* (2000). Photograph mounted on lexcen.

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Furthermore, the counteraction for the unrealistic male-perceived image of women towards one where women are more responsibly portrayed as subjects rather than as objectifications, can be found in the uncompromised social realism of Kollwitz (below). Here, the essence of beauty is realised through its synergies with moral and political determinations (Greer, 2001). Another more truthful and empowered representation, cleaned of superficiality and idolisation, is also illustrated by the anatomical particularities, idiosyncratic postures and sturdy Mediterranean-features of women (in determined folly or seriousness) depicted in the paintings and graphic works of Rego (also below).

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Kathe Kollwitz. *Self-Portrait* (1934).
Lithograph.

Paula Rego. *Recreation* (1996). Pastel on paper
mounted on aluminum.

So, what is being said within feminist discourse is that art is not, and never has been, a neutral, non-political concept. Feminists advance a freer conception of art's identity, purposes, materials and iconography. They find no relevance in traditional patriarchal governed essentialist aesthetics. Nor, are they submissive to its unrealistic objectification of women and its gate-keeping constructs of universal and privileged male dominated benchmarks concerning what constitutes art or sanctified ways of appreciation. For feminists, the concepts of traditional aesthetics impede emancipation. Its assumed outmoded restrictions are viewed with suspicion. This suspicion manifests itself within other marginalised schools of thought, as is evidenced by the political left, observed below.

Theoretical Pressures from the Left

Sharing feminist distrust for traditional essentialist concepts of aesthetics is also declared through accusatory critical theory propositions from the political left. The overriding contention here can be seen in the class-orientated distrust for the concept of aesthetics in favour of a more political emancipatory ideology, as exemplified through Marxism. For example, Eagleton (1990) observes that the rise of an autonomous aesthetic as a theoretical domain parallels the rising autonomy of bourgeois society and the resultant commodification of the art object (Eagleton, 1990). The self-referential, discrete aesthetic sits approvingly with the self-justifying autonomy and subjective mind-set required by those who propagate a

materialistic/commodity driven culture (Eagleton, 1990). In so doing, it creates a domain of appreciation and an art which is privileged as an idealised classification in which the dominant social order may take refuge from the otherwise dominant and actual values of materialism, competition and exploitation (Eagleton, 1990). In other words, the concept of an autonomous aesthetic domain establishes a self-deluding sanctuary, a cultural escapism, while at the same time surreptitiously justifying and empowering the materialist ruling elite. For example, an executive may profess an agenda-less connoisseurship towards a recent purchase of a van Gogh painting. However, his willing participation in the purchase and the exorbitant cost paid reinforces its exclusivity and position as an elitist pursuit.

In addition, Jameson (1991) suggests that any such refuge to be taken within traditional aesthetics is no longer relevant. That is, it is no longer possible, in the current milieu, to successfully assume an attitude of Kant-inspired (1952 [1790]) disinterestedness (see discussion in Chapter Three) in order to achieve transcendent experience, as proposed by Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) (also discussed in Chapter Three). This presumed transcendence within experience was the vehicle by which one could arrive at an alternative experiential state in order to relieve, escape or vent oppositional situations, such as between work and freedom within postindustrial society.

As suggested, for Jameson (1991), this transcendental ability no longer exists. This he ascribes to: (1) the intentional and general alienation and inaccessibility of postmodern art [through contingencies, pluralities and specificities] to be used as vehicles for imaginative experience (we can only remain as receptors to the stimuli, rather than as active cognitive participants; we simply can not 'get it') and; (2) the nullification of imaginative free play through prescriptive commodity indoctrinisation of intentionally organised and 'planified' holidays, mass diversions and entertainment 'packaging' (Jameson, 1991).

In other words, the inescapable enculturation within contemporary consumer society necessitates the intervention and supervision of capitalist accoutrements. We are hand-fed with the required commodities and accompanying stylistic conceptualisations at the expense of proactive self-invention (Jameson, 1991). Summarily, we no longer assume a subjective attitude; we are given a profit-inspired objectified one. For critical Marxist thought, individualisation, through personal meaning-making or contemplation of aesthetic qualities, has become redundant and

surplus to the requirement for participation within contemporary culture.

So, what the left is saying is that we can no longer find sanctity or escape within a traditional attitude of disinterestedness or within universal concepts. Individualisation has become objectified through the reinforcements of capitalist-inspired commodity necessities. Here, pastimes and pleasures are already prescribed within the enculturation process. With these prescribed objects and activities there is no requirement for subject-initiated imagination, meaning making or contemplation of aesthetic qualities. They are redundant. Contestation has been replaced by the status quo, itself being an illusory invention to support the endless materialist-driven accoutrements which describe the contemporary milieu. Yet, negation or confusion over matters of aesthetics is not simply restricted to an unaware general public. As the below observations will show, misinformation and confusion can be found, to a large degree, within the theoretical and practical fields of art production and education themselves.

Practice and pedagogy

It is suggested that both artists and art teachers have also suffered from the confusion surrounding aesthetics as a discipline, primarily through a lack of preparation in philosophic aesthetics, heuristics and critical inquiry (Hamblen, 1988; Eisner, 1972; Gardner, 1990). Because of this situation, art teachers may prefer to rely on intuition to convey pertinent points, rather than acquisition of cognitive procedures or appropriate attitudes. This strategy is initiated hoping that the issues of aesthetic inquiry will be naturally resolved within a more dominant emphasis of art production (Mandoki, 2000).

The consensus here is that while the discipline of aesthetic education can be considered a cognitive exercise and systematic in delivery strategies, the notions which it addresses are decidedly pluralistic, subject to change and cannot be quantifiably justified. In other words, they remain non-discursive, illusory and subject-centred. A testament to the complexity of notions studied within the discipline of aesthetics and the skeptical belief systems surrounding its need or applicability in the production of artworks or ability to reinforce intuitive appreciation is acknowledged by Mandoki (2000). To justify her position, Mandoki (2000) notes that she knows of no artists who can explicitly define art or its underlying issues of beauty. Nor, she claims, can these artists explain how art is produced through the harmonious

interplay of imagination and free play or present evidence to testify to art's real nature. While the artworld and the observer seem pressured to formulise artistic judgments, the formal tutoring, proof or guarantees for such requirements seem ill-defined and illusory (Mandoki, 2000; Abbs, 2003).

Furthermore, there is speculation that art students and artists beginning their careers view too much intellectualisation regarding their art with suspicion (Arrel, nd.). That is, there is a feeling that aesthetic analysis will somehow hinder the flow from what they see as their creative unconscious or hinder their investigations regarding necessarily narrower personal aims within their specific discipline (Arrel, nd.; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). In addition, there may be an innate fear that discursive investigation into the experience of art will somehow negate what Bruner (1979) refers to as the "pleasures of innocence" (Bruner, 1979, p. 59). That is, the implication that effortful inquiry into meaning may not be sufficient to unravel truer metaphysical knowing, meaning or intent.

To this, the characteristic transformative, shape-shifting nature of subjects examined within the discipline of aesthetics is, in many cases, regarded as too ethereal, non-relevant or impracticable to use in current prescriptive, product driven competency-based assessment curriculum. This is because there is no concretised result which can be used for accountability requirements or tangible justification for teacher professional development funding purposes.

In addition, earlier research by Hargreaves (1983b) uncovered a more politically agentic viewpoint from teachers themselves. He observed that many teachers within the expressive fields of visual arts and creative music justify a dismissive attitude toward fostering the appreciation of arts because of a perceived political agenda attached to promoting 'high art' or 'high culture'. According to Hargreaves (1983b), some teachers come to believe that this situation fuels further alienation among the working classes and minorities by privileging the cultural currency of the higher societal echelons.

Furthermore, a dichotomy is established not only between the classes, but also between creation and appreciation of art works. Hargreaves' (1983b) research indicates an apprehension among the trade and working classes to engage in discourse on the nature or creation of the art object itself. This can be seen as ironic in that the creation of art objects as an enterprise has always been traditionally associated with the trades and the marketplace, rather than with high culture and academia (Kahn

cited in Gardner, 1973). Indeed, the above noted skepticisms associated with ‘talking about art’ may be instrumental in fostering a type of covert acceptance of pedagogic principles based on practice, rather than theory.

DISCIPLINE BASED ART EDUCATION (DBAE)

In the United States (beginning in the 1980s and following through the 1990s) an attempt to address and combat the confusion and problematic aspects surrounding aesthetics was initiated through the introduction of Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE). An initiative of the then Getty Center for Education (later renamed the Getty Educational Institute for the Arts), DBAE consolidated past and present educational advocacies concerning making the study of art more substantial and demanding.

Within DBAE, aesthetics has been recognised as one of the four major disciplines that constitute education in the fine arts (the other disciplines being art making, art history and art criticism). With its inclusion as one of the four disciplines, a more applied approach to aesthetics has been developed. This approach is seen as one tempered and embedded with practical concerns and is considerably trimmed of the 'academic nit-picking and hair-splitting' irrelevance to which Arrell (nd) earlier referred.

In addition, the ‘applied approach’ of DBAE supplanted the oppositional curriculum incentives of the National Art Education Association’s *Excellence in Art Education: Ideas and Initiatives* (Smith, 1986). Within *Excellence in Art Education*, the study of art was approached as part of an overall liberal arts education. That is, the educational goal was to expand the horizons of human awareness and experience by the study of excellence in art as personified by exemplary works. By doing so, the development of dispositions required for the appreciation of excellence in art would be fostered, as well as the acquisition of those capacities to derive the peculiar qualities and meanings which the art imported (Smith, 1986).

However, some saw engrained within the analytically inspired *Excellence in Art Education* manifesto biased and professed preferences. These concerns stemmed from the perceived intentions inherent in the study of predominantly traditional Western essentialist/modernist exemplars and the adjoining notion of theoretical elitism. In addition, there was concern regarding its preference for developing dispositions for appreciation of a general class of art at the expense of practical involvement in art making (Efland, 1990). Furthermore, within the *Excellence in Art*

Education manifesto, there was a nullification of postmodern advocacy for plurality and postmodern negation of metanarratives -- the 'big picture' stories or accounts which attempt to order and present the idea of certitudes and logical historical progression. Visual culture, with its egalitarian proposals for an expansion on the notion of what objects and phenomenon constitute worthy study and appreciation, was also ill-served. Examples of such concern and discontent were rigorously asserted by the contemporary literature of feminist and Afro-American agency (Efland, 1990).

In counteracting the positions of Excellence in Art Education and the indeterminate educational position and nature of aesthetics in general, the thrust of DBAE (as regards aesthetics) has been to demystify the discipline and make it more like a natural activity embodied in art education practices (Parsons, 1993). Consistent with the aims of DBAE, the discipline of aesthetics has been summarised by Crawford (1991) as being:

... critical reflection on our experiences of art, whether from the standpoint of creators, appreciators, or critics. It aims at understanding the components of these experiences and the bases of the values we find there, as well as gaining insight into how these values integrate, or sometimes conflict, with other values (such as those of moral, economic, political, and religious realms) (Crawford, 1991, p. 22).

Seen here, this more practice-based and reflective orientated approach to aesthetics offers a perspective focusing on authentic experience rather than sophistry. That is, aesthetics becomes applied first-hand in direct relation to the production, criticism and history of art forms. Also, here, aesthetic argument is explicated through the observable creation of art, not through potentially aloof, vague and deceptive rhetoric conceptualised outside the studio environment.

Crawford (1987) contends that aesthetic inquiry addresses and confronts the nature of values. This proposal is achieved through reflections on experiences with art imaginatively reconstructed through participation as either appreciators of art or as creative practitioners. This critical reflection not only aims at the appreciation of our experience of the art works, but also engages us in reflections which consist in part of conceptual analysis involving the construction of principles of interpretation, critical reasoning and evaluation (Crawford, 1987; Eisner, 1988). These conceptual analyses

and formulations of principles are informed through not only the creative works, but also through the correspondent disciplines of art history and art criticism. The entire presupposition for aesthetics and for its justification as a vital form of serious inquiry is grounded on the widely held view of many art educators that basic human values are involved with experiencing art through appreciation, creation and criticism (Eisner, 1988; Crawford, 1987; *A Statement on the Arts for Australian Schools*, 1994).

In addition, the phenomenological, experiential aspects involved in aesthetics cannot be overlooked. For example:

[w]e ‘do’ aesthetics, once again, when we think about what it means to release ourselves into an art space, an alternative reality. We ‘do’ aesthetics when we consider the challenge of transmuting a given work ... into an aesthetic object, an object of our own aesthetic experiencing: something that offers a particular kind of pleasure, that illuminates in a distinctive way, that can be cherished in a distinctive way (Greene, 2001, p. 29).

DBAE in practice

Unfortunately, aesthetics and critical inquiry into values, perception and transmutation, like the production of art itself, are not comfortably placed into measured, product-dependent assessment packages for government/industry accountability purposes. Here, curriculum standards in art education can become restrictions (Emery, 2006). For example, Greene’s (2001) ‘alternative realities’ resist compartmentalisation and transcriptions into elements of competency or quantifiable skills (Greene, 2001; Abbs, 2003). This is because there is no tangible, physical evidence that can be deemed ‘competent’ in a measurable way. In other words, the pleasures of attending to the livedworld in an aesthetic or contemplative fashion are at odds with the prescribed accountability matrix required for competency-based training (Eisner, 2001).

For instance, the educational specification for such an exercise, if one assumes the requirement of a traditional aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness to, and autonomy of, the artwork and its experience (this concept is addressed in Chapter Three), would negate the motive-full action for being that of a distinctly aesthetic response. From this point of view, a *purpose*-full (instrumental) intention toward the artwork (our hypothetical assessment), or for any other activity outside percipient

contemplation for pleasure, would invalidate the exercise.

So, while theoretically, the inclusion of aesthetics within the four-disciplined DBAE format was heralded by much lip-service, the reality is that its concept and dissemination was never properly understood or instigated (Abbs, 2003). Indeed, the status of aesthetics as a discipline today seems all but subsumed by the dominant (product-orientated, easier assessed) disciplines of art object production (Abbs, 2003) and through the discursive orientations of criticism and art history. What has transpired from this is a movement towards a kind of pedagogical formalism, complete with emphasis on sequence and structure and anchored in discipline-based curriculum initiatives (Efland, 1990). The study of aesthetics is further disserved by the enactment of such curriculum. This is because of the difficulties inherent in conforming Socratic inquiry into accountability prescribed assessments based on observable outcomes.

In addition, contemporary concerns regarding a ubiquitous visual culture (discussed in Chapter Four) have also weakened the stance for considerations of traditional aesthetic inquiry (Freedman, 2003). This is argued through the predominant visual culture rejection of the fundamental essentialist idea of fine art autonomy, the requirement of critical analysis regarding implications surrounding the current saturation of visual imagery and human development (Freedman, 2003) and incorporation of aspects of postmodern ideology.

Correspondingly, the educational dilemma regarding inquiry into aesthetics is itself being subsumed within global economic rationalism and the materialistic, commodity-driven hierarchy which detractors see as championing a culture/society of shallow, immediate gratification and fickle consumerist attitudes (Abbs, 2003). These ideas sit uncomfortably with the non-regimentation and general disorderliness inherent in humanistic and metaphysical thought (Abbs, 2003).

As an end note, curriculum indebted to DBAE has been introduced in primary and secondary schools within Queensland. Currently, there is no such provision in the emerging visual arts and graphic design documents within the vocational training and educational sectors.

Summary

To summarise the discussions above, aesthetics can be seen as the various discourses concerning the interconnectedness of art and life. It is concerned with the ways in which we inform our perceptions. This includes the examination of the conceptual difficulties resulting from the manner in which we engage in discourse and behaviour when confronted with art related experiential phenomena (Parsons, 1993). Hence, aesthetics can be viewed as a kind of conceptual trinity, a circular heuristic interaction involving the formal object, individual conceptions and agency and the shifting relationships between the two.

The aim of this chapter is to delineate and stimulate inquiry on certain conceptual premises and realities which surround the notions of the aesthetic as a modality of knowing and aesthetics as a discipline. With this in mind, it is now necessary to focus upon a selection of various schools of thought (and their relationships to both the above concepts) that attempt to define the characteristics and elements associated with the phenomena of aesthetic experience -- the experiential interrogation of which is my dissertation's final goal.

CHAPTER THREE

INTRINSIC/ESSENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter explores major concerns associated with intrinsic/essentialist theories. For the most part, these theories attempt to validate the idea of a kind of universalism.

Observed here, universalism sees both universal ways of thinking and livedworld experiences to be objectified, sharable phenomena. That is, within this perspective, patterns of thoughts and universal human experiences can prevail over the specificity of cultural and artistic traditions (Lamarque, 1999). Correspondingly, Dutton (2001) describes universality in terms of art consciousness as the common nature inherent in art and appreciation which can be seen as universal and cross-cultural (Dutton, 2001). For example, while acknowledging that much of the preceding features are also applicable to non-art experiences, Dutton (2001) proposes that through an examination of the accumulation of cross-cultural investigations so far, a list of ‘signal characteristics’ illustrating the universal features of art can be observed. These features include:

- (1) *Expertise and virtuosity* -- That the production of art requires specialised skills which are either learned or are exercised through innate abilities.
- (2) *Non-utilitarian pleasure* -- That the art work is viewed as a source of enjoyment and pleasure for its own sake and not for a functionality of purpose.
- (3) *Style* -- That the art object is rule governed in terms of form and composition and has identifiable (to a larger or lesser degree) stylistic conformities.
- (4) *Criticism* -- That some form of critical discourse (rudimentary to elaborate) exists which concerns appreciation and judgment of the object.
- (5) *Imitation* -- That the representation inherent in the art is based on, and representative of (in varying guises of abstraction and imagery), real or imaginary accounts of livedworld experiences.
- (6) *‘Special’ focus* -- That the art is privileged, rarified to some degree, and made the focus of special experiential attention.

(7) *The experience of art is an imaginary experience for artists and audiences alike --* That the object is elevated, through imaginative experience, beyond that of mere daily routine, tool or pragmatic ritual (Dutton, 2001).

Endorsement for the above propositions of universal characteristics of art and its appreciation can be traced to Kant's (1952 [1790]) theoretical proposals which suggested that the ability to apprehend universal harmonic pleasures was grounded in subjective yet universally comprehensible experience (Kant, 1952 [1790]). That is, for Kant (1952 [1790]), the required aesthetic evaluative state rests upon two premises. These being that: (1) the same abilities to cognitively understand one's environment are shared by all people, and; (2) that the competent viewer who initiates motivation for pure, concept-less contemplation of the object, in a state of disinterestedness, would be judging that object the same as anyone else who might contemplate the object in that same manner (Kant, 1952 [1790]); Fenner, 1996). As Kant (1952 [1790]) observed;

... where anyone is conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest, it is inevitable that he should look on the object as one containing a ground of delight for all men (Kant, 1952 [1790], p. 50).

In other words, as anyone is capable of assuming the required attitude, the universality of aesthetic absolutes can be verified (Kant, 1952 [1790]; Fenner, 1996). The proposal here is that if we all saw and experienced the same, we would accordingly be prone to mutual judgments.

This elevation of concept-less contemplation, the elevating or separating of the art object or its experience from the above 'mere daily routine, tool or pragmatic ritual' -- or any instrumental concern whatsoever -- is a major underlying concept within intrinsic/essentialist theorising. Indeed, an intrinsic/essentialist approach to the subject reveals the idea of exclusivity and disinterestedness (discussed below) concerning the work of art and is seen as a prerequisite of traditional theory (Berleant, 1994). It corresponds to the general intrinsic/essentialist proposition that a work of art is gratuitous and serves no instrumental purpose.

In this view, art and aesthetic experiences are characterised as solely intrinsic in value and are ends in themselves (Shusterman, 2001). That is, the experience is not the end product of compartmentalised and sequential interrogations of reason. In fact, no other mental activity is required, as we are satisfied with that kind of knowledge which comes from direct apprehension (Langer, 1953). Essentialists propose that in order to attain such an experience, viewers must assume a specific attitude. This assumed attitude is called an *aesthetic attitude*, a voluntary and consciously entered into state-of-perceiving (Fenner, 2003a), which is disinterested in, or dismissive of, all extraneous or vested interests or concerns.

THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE AND DISINTERESTEDNESS

Historically, this distinctive separation of the aesthetic experience from self-interested motivations was in part a reaction to predominant Hobbesian theory of the seventeenth century (Osborne, 1970; Parsons 1993). Hobbes postulated that human interaction could be attributed to selfish motivations and that these selfish motivations guide human action. For example, if someone helps a friend, that assistance can be traced to underlying 'interested motives' such as avoidance of guilt, feelings of self-satisfaction, the thought of a reciprocal favour etc (Parsons, 1993). Viewed through Hobbes' perspective, a concept like aesthetic experience is seen vested and subsumed in personal and/or societal interests.

However, to counterpoint, eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophic dissenters from Hobbes believed that there could be experiences concerning matters of discriminating taste and judgment which could be motiveless and universally applied. To find such experiences their focus turned primarily towards the contemplation of the natural and the artistic through investigations concerning the notion of disinterestedness. This view found its seminal voice within the writings of the eighteenth century British 'Taste Theorists' such as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Addison and Alison (a contemporary of Kant). These dissenting voices proposed that the separation of the aesthetic mode of attention from the pragmatic, moral and emotional realms of knowing is essential. As argued by Kant (1952 [1790]),

[a]ll interest presupposes a want, or calls one forth; and, being a ground determining approval, deprives the judgement on the object of its freedom (Kant, 1952 [1790], p. 49).

In order to combat the waywardness of instrumentality, we find the requirement and advancement of the concept of *aesthetic attitude*. This attitude is described as:

... disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatsoever, for its own sake alone (Stolnitz, 1960, p. 35).

In turn, Stolnitz's (1960) ascribed meaning for the word 'sympathetic' as denoting the subject's preparedness for accepting the object's individual qualities on its own terms. That is, to be one with, respond and take the lead from the object, to give the object an opportunity and chance to exhibit its perceptual interest (Stolnitz, 1960).

The 'disinterestedness' opportunity for aesthetic contemplation can only be activated by the subject's bracketing out extraneous personal values, presuppositions and prejudices. If these requirements are not met, the assumed aesthetic attitude conducive to aesthetic experience cannot be achieved. This is because the Kantian (1952 [1790]) proposition of aesthetic response requiring the free-form, concept-less judgment between understanding and the imagination is short circuited with the introduction of pragmatic influences and concerns to the experience (Kant, 1952 [1790]). In other words, the experience becomes instrumental and cognitive, rather than one of sheer and intuitive pleasure.

The concept of disinterestedness proposed that a motiveless attitude toward the presented artwork allowed the viewer a purified vision of the perceptual qualities inherent in the artwork. In other words, it was the subjective state of disinterestedness which allowed the object to be viewed aesthetically, rather than instrumentally. This purified psychological state rendered the object's universal properties observable to anyone who presumed the aesthetic attitude. That is, as anyone was capable of assuming the attitude

of disinterestedness, the universality of aesthetic absolutes could be verified (Kant, 1952 [1790]; Fenner, 1996). The proposal here is that if we all saw and experienced the same, we would accordingly be prone to mutual judgments.

The aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness was furthered by Kant (1952 [1790]) and later Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) through the concept of identification of aesthetic judgment and aesthetic experience respectively through the contemplation of perceptual qualities and the requirement of an attitude of disinterest from agentic motivations during the contemplation of an object.

Briefly, Kant (1952 [1790]) separated the aesthetic mode of knowing from the practical or the moral. Cognition within the aesthetic mode, in terms of schematic, purposive problem solving activity, was also denied (Kant, 1952 [1790]). This prerequisite of unmediated attention can also be seen later in Stolnitz's (1960) foregrounding of the Kantian (1952 [1790]) non-practical contemplation and non-conceptualisation approach to the aesthetic. That is, Stolnitz's (1960) assertion that the thing in itself is pleasant to look at and requires no necessity to study, judge or be classified (Stolnitz, 1960; Kant, 1952 [1790]). In other words, we need no reason or reward to contemplate a work of art other than the purpose that aesthetic contemplation provides.

Kant's (1952 [1790]) concern centered on the possibilities of aesthetic judgment. These were to be realised through the subject-initiated attitude of disinterested, purposeless disengagement from personal, ego driven agendas of beauty. Hence, the pleasurable aesthetic value is derivable from the object by separating the aesthetic from the simply good or moral. Judgments, other than aesthetic ones, necessitated the subject to regard ulterior motive or pragmatic concern. Aesthetic judgment, however, did not. This was because, according to Kant (1952 [1790]), the aesthetic judgment of beauty (i.e. pleasurable, aesthetic value) is unique contemplation, being born of free play and imagination. It comprised a concept-less judgment between the understanding and the imagination (Kant, 1952 [1790]).

Later, Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) furthered the concept that aesthetic contemplation of an object resides in the subject's ability to attain an attitude of purposelessness to all concerns other than the presented phenomenal properties. In this

case, an attitude of disinterestedness is assumed in order to free the percipient from the negative influences of the *Will*, manifesting through conations such as desire, want and time/space awareness (Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819]). The temporary elimination of these willful notions is the precursor for attaining the true essence exhibited by the object. Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) proposes that pure experiential essence cannot be found by mere contemplation of the physical object itself, but rather by attending to its Ideal -- its pure expression, significance and innermost being -- through the objectification of the work (Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819]). This objectification comes about through the subject's ability to objectify individual consciousness. That is, to reach a *will-less* state in relation to personal agency or motivations. In other words, within experiencing the pure essences of the object's Ideal, the viewer loses personal individuality (is void of intentionality). This disinterestedness, Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) insists,

... can happen only in so far as our contemplation of the object is not given up to the principle of sufficient reason, does not follow the relation of the object to something outside it (which is ultimately always connected with relations to our own willing), but rests on the object itself (Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819], p. 209).

By assuming the attitude of disinterestedness, Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]), goes further than previous proponents mentioned earlier in that he proposes the viewer actually transforms the ordinary object into an aesthetic object. So, the proposal here is that the subject initiated attitude actually *changes* the objective status of the object (Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819]; Fenner, 2003a). The contemplation of this transformation regarding the object's phenomenological properties is held to give viewers a transcendent reward by momentarily freeing themselves from deductive logic, conceptions of actual time/space and the will-full and mundane experiences of the everyday (Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819]). Seen here, disinterested aesthetic contemplation is a requirement for achieving aesthetic experience -- and that experience can only be achieved through the synergy of both the objectified phenomenal properties of the object *and* a subject who is sufficiently (disinterestedly) disposed (Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819]).

So, what this means is that the 'chance' for aesthetic contemplation can only be activated by the subject's bracketing out extraneous personal values, presuppositions and prejudices. If these requirements are not met, the assumed aesthetic attitude conducive to aesthetic experience cannot be achieved. This is because the Kantian (1952 [1790]) proposition of aesthetic response requiring the free-form, concept-less judgment between understanding and the imagination is short-circuited with the introduction of pragmatic influences and concerns to the experience (Kant, 1952 [1790]). In other words, the experience becomes instrumental and cognitive, rather than one of sheer and intuitive pleasure. Here, the aesthetic attitude concerns the manner in which the viewer perceptually confronts the object in order to separate and target it for purely aesthetic, rather than instrumental, purposes of contemplation. As stated earlier, following Kant (1952 [1790]) and associated later theorists such as Stolnitz (1960) and aspects of Beardsley (1981), the specific foci of subject-orientated response would be directed to a non-agentic appreciation of formal aesthetic properties (i.e. line, form, colour, rhythm, etc.) of the object in question. It would not cater to any utilitarian or emotional associations.

Kant's (1952 [1790]) point here regarding aesthetic attitude is that *any* object has the potential to be enjoyed aesthetically, depending upon the subject's attitudinal stance. For instance, regarding an apple for its graceful symmetry and colour, rather than as a nutritional or economical snack, makes the experience of the apple an aesthetic one. In other words, the answer is in how we regard and approach our experiencing.

However, while any object such as an apple has the ability to be viewed aesthetically it is a work of art that is considered exemplar for aesthetic contemplation. In fulfilling this role, art objects have the capacity to be considered representatives of a distinct class of perceptual objects which have been specially adapted to sustain non-discursive aesthetic contemplation (Osborne, 1991). In other words, what is proposed by intrinsic/essentialist-inspired theory is that the autonomous art object, with its interplay of aesthetic properties and sensual directedness, is best suited to act as an agent for promoting the required aesthetic attitude. This is because an essentialist-endorsed work of art as a phenomenon has the highest concentration of these interplays (Beardsley, 1982b; Smith, 1992).

Following this line of thought, aesthetic experience induced by an aesthetic attitude composed through disinterestedness serves only its own end. That is, reward and inspiration from unique, motiveless and non-reducible contemplation of, and response to, values are derived from the sheer act of experiencing (Eaton, 2002). Here, the sensuous qualities of art inform our perception through displayed formal qualities. Grandly stated, exposure to the artwork and the experience it generates can create, according to Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]), the idea of aesthetic experience as liberation from moral, social, political, practical and scientific concerns (Carroll, 2002; Schopenhauer, 1966 [1819]). Aesthetic experience, in this instance, becomes the vehicle for transcending our mundane existence. As attested to through the observations so far, the presuppositionless intrinsic/essentialist positions of aesthetic attitude and disinterestedness deny the pragmatic contributions of our personal psychological and sociocultural inputs into the aesthetic experience. This denial has bred controversy and contentious debate, as initially suggested below.

Achieving a state of aesthetic attitude takes time and practice and is hindered by extraneous cognitive interventions. Indeed, one of the problems inherent within the concept and acknowledged by many of the contemporary proponents themselves is an awareness of the difficulties in transcending engrained personal values and predispositions. One need only imagine the odds of achieving such a state of grace for environmentalists confronting the ecological nightmare of an island and its surrounding tide pools suffocating under the draperies of a Christo installation (below). The ecologists' response to the event might be tainted by alarm for the endangered ecosystem of the tiny island. Their moral and ethical indignation from 'will-full' ways of knowing outside that of the proposed intrinsically aesthetic mode endorsed by aesthetic attitude would make such a leap into free, concept-less play between their imagination and understanding improbable.

Cristo and Jeanne-Claude. *Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida* (1980-3). Installation.

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Griffith University Library

The concept required adjustment. One example of such an attempt can be found in the notion of *psychical distancing*, as observed below.

Psychical distancing

It is the delicate line of balancing pragmatic, practical concerns with a type of attitudinal disinterested contemplation of an object aesthetically that Bullough (1977 [1957]) confronts with his proposal of psychical distancing. Explained here, *distance* refers to a demarcation and interplay between:

... our own self and its affections, using the latter term in its broadest sense as anything which affects our being, bodily or spiritually, e.g. as sensation, perception, emotional state or idea ... [it] ... lies between our own self and such objects as are the sources or vehicles of such affections (Bullough, 1977 [1957]), p. 94).

Psychical distance is what Bullough (1977 [1957]) sees as a specialised mental attitude and outlook in which the viewer filters the experience from practical needs or ends in concordance with the requirement for a concentration and balance upon the particular objective 'aesthetic consciousness' of experience. In so doing, there is a

requirement for mutual interaction of subjective elements and the objective properties inherent in the perception of the art object. The inclusion of this subjective element in Bullough's (1977 [1957]) notion of distancing separates itself from the requirement of traditional concepts of disinterestedness, in the latter's insistence for contemplating only those aspects inherent in the artwork (Dawson, 1961; Fenner, 2003a).

For example, psychical distancing proposes that our personal and particular interests and sentiments must initially kick-start our desire to pursue an extended contemplation of an object and the further disinterested interplay of the aesthetic properties. However, percipient over-balancing or under-balancing in either state (the pragmatic, personal associations and feelings or the aesthetic abstraction presented by the event or object) can result in the inability to initially engage with the object or to maintain a balanced and heightened extended contemplation of its effects. In other words, we may lose our capacity to adequately distance ourselves. This results in the disappearance of appreciation or in its transformation back into the realms of characteristically pragmatic interests. Here, our subjective influences to the objective abstraction of the artwork must be maintained, yet minimalised for maximum aesthetic response. Hence, such a response emphasises the role of human agency in constituting the aesthetic experience.

Regarding human agency

Within these propositions, the inclusions of *minimal* extraneous input within the aesthetic experience is now reservedly acknowledged and permitted. Indeed, even the later, more conservative attitudinal stance postulated by Stolnitz (1960) does not disavow the intrusion of personal experience. In fact, he cites Bullough's (1977 [1957]) contention that generally there are no set rules regarding the aesthetic value of association (Bullough cited in Stolnitz, 1960). Yet, for both aestheticians, the association is permissible and considered aesthetically relevant only if that association further enhances the attitude of disinterest. In other words, how it promotes our attention, our focus directly to the perceptual qualities of the object under contemplation. Here selectivity of association is the key because pragmatic and motive-influenced preoccupations will dilute the percipient's required disinterestedness and distract attention from the perceptual qualities displayed.

FORMALIST QUALITIES

What is aesthetically experienced in an intrinsic/essentialist aesthetic experience is aligned to the formal, or formalist, properties of the artwork in adherence to prescribed qualities. These qualities are seen as universal (i.e. essentialist) attributes based on valued empirical judgments where the object, not associations, purportedly contains the meaning, significant value or intrinsic projection. This is derived through the sheer quality of experienced perceptual enjoyment arising from the arrangements of line, spaces, pattern, colour etc (Dewey on formalism, 1980 [1934]; Bell, 1947 [1914]). It is the intuitive experience of the sense and imagination of expressive form in perception (Langer, 1957a).

This proposition suggests that the stimuli for aesthetic response may stand as a set of factors that exist exclusively for the need of observation. That is, they exist as institutional facts (Searle, 1995), at varying degrees of success or failure, outside the requirement for a viewer. They are there for the taking. Yet the possibilities for aesthetic experience come to life for the observer only when that observer is sufficiently motivated to assume an aesthetic attitude or aesthetic responsiveness to the qualities presented.

Indeed, Bell (1947 [1914]) took this concept of the elevation of the surface values to an extreme. Under his formalist banner, as foreshadowed earlier, it was solely the contemplation of the principles of a work's structural design, the expression of "significant form" (or as Langer interpreted Bell, its 'form-*ing*' (Langer, 1953)) within the composition, which heralded the aesthetic experience. All attention directed to ancillary qualities such as representation, imitation or emotion was valued not for their own sakes, but through the work's presentation of line, colour, design etc. It was here that essentialist truth with universal application rested.

However, Bell (1947 [1914]) distanced himself somewhat from other attitude theorists through his conviction that the viewer's response was triggered, or *aroused*, directly from the designal properties of the object (the immediate perceptual force of line, colour etc upon the percipient) and not through the subject's intentional/attitudinal stance (Fenner, 1996). In other words, the stimuli or focus for the attainment of aesthetic experience rested within the displayed object, independent of psychological/philosophical offerings that the viewer might bring to the encounter. The symbolic expression, the

intuitive expression of the *feeling* of the art object as an entirety, could not be ascertained, logically deduced or derived at through the symbolism of discursive language (Langer, 1957a). The message was intrinsic within the object itself. This suggests an aesthetic experience that is objectified, complete within itself and requires no viewer mediated effort regarding personal, external associations.

ELEMENTS OF ELITISM, PERCIPIENCE AND SENSIBILITY

Within the intrinsic/essentialist epistemological generalisation there is also the element of elitism. This elitism relates to an aspect of traditional connoisseurship. That is, true appreciation is reserved for those who understand the codification of the essentialist aesthetic. Here, sensitivity relating to propositional and dispositional knowledge is required.

The fostering of such values and knowledge is equivalent to what Osborne (1970) refers to as ‘percipience’ -- the cultivation of aesthetic appreciation and experiences in order to foster the ability to comprehend all the integrative experiences possible through proactive and rigorous interaction with a work of art (Osborne, 1970; Smith, 1991). It is this interpretive “grasp of meaningful qualities” (Parsons, 1992, p. 75) which prepares us and intensifies the aesthetic experience. Like Osborne (1970), Smith’s (1992) aesthetic also calls for percipience. For Smith (1992), successful engagement with a work of art is incumbent upon attaining a sensitivity, understanding and knowledge in art which facilitates a subject's abilities to ask and answer questions relating to: (a) the manner in which the work was created; (b) communicated; (c) placed within art history; and (d) matters concerning art criticism (Smith, 1992).

So, what is being implied here is the idea that contributing knowledge and understanding relating specifically to objectified art works benefit and enhance aesthetic experience. Personal and contextual inputs are seen as extraneous and do not assist. Knowledge bases are required but remain exclusive to the concept of an autonomous art object and its related experiencing.

A similar stance to Smith (1992) is displayed by Stolnitz (1960). He sees knowledge significant only so far as it cultivates discriminating interest and sensitivity. That is, discrimination must separate relevant from irrelevant knowledge. For Stolnitz

(1960), relevant knowledge is specifically that which:

... [1] does not weaken or destroy aesthetic attention to the object, [2] when it pertains to the meaning and expressiveness of the object, and [3] when it enhances the quality and significance of one's *immediate* [my italics] aesthetic response to the object (Stolnitz, 1960, p. 58).

So, what Stolnitz (1960) proposes is that the acquisition of extraneous information and its consequential associations may prove highly detrimental to fostering aesthetic attitude and aesthetic experience. This is because extraneous information and consequential associations forces attention away from the immediacy of response and remains external to the experience in perception (Stolnitz, 1960). For example, what is implied here is that having knowledge of Napoleon's warfare strategies can actually interfere with the viewer's attempted aesthetic encounter before David's portrait of the French emperor. This is because the niggling knowledge of French history details impedes the instrumental-less required attitude of disinterestedness. Here, benefits from 'knowing about' are permissible only if they can be successfully articulated within the immediate, *perceptual* experience of the artwork. It must accentuate that experiential grasp of perception, much the same way as an accentuating spotlight heightens perceptual response to the surface qualities of certain sculptures.

So, what is suggested by Stolnitz's (1960) and earlier cited propositions is that personal values, predispositions, extraneous, discursive and propositional knowledge are potential hindrances to attaining aesthetic experience. This is because extraneous knowledge burdens with concepts the acquisition of perceptual response required for the proposed immediacy of encounter. As the sensuous *Ilya* character in Dassin's 1960 movie, *Never on Sunday* observes, both birds can sing and bouzoukis can play (and we can listen) splendidly without the prerequisite ability to write or understand sheet music (*Never on Sunday*, 1960).

SUMMARY

The intrinsic/essentialist notions outlined in this chapter are based on the perceptual appreciation and feelingfulness of experience relating to the objectified qualities of the artwork. This experience excludes any outside associations of practical or scientific significance. Therefore, while the intrinsic/essentialist experience may be either subject or object-induced, all share a commonality through rejection of value-laden or instrumental input.

Generally, the central criterion for an artwork is its ability to further the aesthetic experience by acting as a prescribed object on which the properly trained and prepared (i.e. competent) percipient may aesthetically contemplate (Osborne, 1991). That is, the intrinsic/essentialist 'truth' is attained through distancing oneself from various presuppositions and allowing the work of art to act autonomously. The content of such an act is to hold away from nature and conventional concerns the immediately felt aspects of the object's qualities, entertained intuitively for the communal experience it uniquely affords the viewer (Weiss cited in Osborne, 1968). In doing so, we react to the universal patterns of thought established through the objectified qualities displayed by the art work. Here, universal human experiences prevail over the specificity of cultural and artistic traditions.

For the viewer, this sustained aesthetic contemplation arises from the divorce of sociocultural meanings from the artwork in favour of practiced and attentive reflection on the formal pleasure-giving surface qualities displayed by the work itself. Extraneous propositional knowledge is seen as a hindrance in attaining aesthetic experience.

So, what is proposed in the general intrinsic/essentialist proposition is that our invitation to view aesthetically costs us our will, our desire to actively ascribe cognitive meanings or interpretations to the work of art. In other words, the possibility of utilising working or reflective connotations potentially associated with the artwork in terms of sociocultural insights is rejected by the intrinsic/essentialist mandate of assuming a subjective attitudinal stance of disinterestedness. It is this stance of an assumed aesthetic attitude that is prerequisite in general intrinsic/essentialist theory.

The point being made here is that if we entertain the general position, we must intentionally assume an attitudinal stance before the art work which has no ulterior or

instrumental embeddedness. We do this to be made receptive to the possibility of achieving an aesthetic experience: i.e. any experience otherwise attained can be put down to a mere duration of entertainment brought about by pleasurable sentiment -- that is, likes or dislikes. We must be, at the out start, psychologically 'distanced' from the art object; this state being intentionally assumed prior to viewing or accommodated through the act of being caught unaware or un-preoccupied prior to an art object's sudden introduction. In other words, our aesthetic experience cannot be accommodated through relational associations or interests. For example, even though some may be avid fans of equestrian sports, that context should not play any significant role in their aesthetic experience as they stand before the race horses painted by George Stubbs or Eduard Degas. The viewers must, if they follow intrinsic/essentialist propositions, transcend context.

We may now solely respond and experience art for the intuitive rush of perceptual values, rather than as visual signifiers of psychological import. Furthering this point, what is proposed is that this non-conceptual association puts forward the idea that works of art are beneficial in the ongoing cultivation and appreciation for the sake of aesthetic experiences alone (Beardsley, 1982b; Osborne, 1991). In pursuing this end, the aesthetic experience has no redeeming social or personal consequences for the percipient. It is seen, like the art that stimulates it, worthy for its own sake (Carroll, 2002; Stolnitz, 1960).

This state of perceiving becomes a distanced 'art for art's sake alone' contemplation dependent on, and embedded in, the separation of concepts. For instance, one must experience an artwork in the present moment, where, say, the graceful lines and colouration that depict the fur cloaks or silk clothes worn by an eighteenth century family of nobility speak solely of sensuous virtuosity of form, balance and impeccable, seamless technique. One must 'attitudinally' remain distanced and unaware of opulence and waste or the needless slaughter of animals for body adornment.

To draw conclusions concerning the intrinsic/essentialist propositions discussed in this chapter, it is proposed that a viewer's aesthetic experience will be: (1) intuitive and primarily subject directed; (2) non-reducible and based on universal or essentialist qualities which are contained within the perception of the artwork; (3) a concept-less judgment described as a Kantian (1952 [1790]) state of free play between understanding

and imagination attained through its separation from deductive/discursive knowing and moral/ethical constraints; (4) correspondingly premised on an aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness regarding extraneous associations of social, political, moral or ethical evaluations; and (5) achieved through passive contemplation which can be simply experienced for its own sake, or potentially intensified through subject familiarity with essentialist codification and experience-specific content information.

Having outlined the essentialist position, it is now necessary to more fully elaborate and discuss the opposing subjective/contextualist premises relating to the aesthetic experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUBJECTIVE/CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Presented below is a systematic observation of the propositions advanced by pragmatic, cognitive, postmodern (including feminist), societal interpretation and visual culture proponents. The loose affiliation of writers associated with these schools of thought share certain commonalities with a general contextualist view -- primarily in their rejection of essentialist and universal tenets. For the most part, subjective/contextualist epistemologies have replaced or dominate those of the intrinsic/essentialist within the current theoretical and practical aspects of the aesthetic and artistic milieu.

The underlying assumption here is that the aesthetic experience (or equivalent) is by its nature *an* experience, not a passive reflection, and as a consequence contains influences of external phenomena which we might consider outside the realm of normally assumed intrinsic/essentialist aesthetic considerations (Fenner, 2004). That is, the demeanors of experiences are already blueprinted from our personal and socially-sourced knowledge bases.

This assumption corresponds to the currently popular theory of *autopoiesis*, as advanced by Maturana (1980). This theory suggests that living is a process of cognition whereby a closed living system is self-referential and structurally coupled with the environment. Here, cognition is recognised in terms of a basic ability to respond to environmental situations.

Within this theory of context-situated cognition, such phenomena as language [and art experiencing?] become an orientating function with the structural coupling of environment and nervous system activity. This orientating function also becomes an on-going adaptation within the organism's behaviour (due to continuous nervous system changes in response to perception) for referential orientation to the environment (Maturana, 1980); with observers making distinctions which are themselves tied to the environment. This process of making distinctions is a way of assisting the observer to make sense of perceived phenomena. Here, cognition is the living interaction within the organism, aligned to the demands of on-going environmental agitations (Maturana,

1980). That is, we react and adapt accordingly. So, what is being said here is that our ways of knowing are inextricably intertwined with our environment; cognition is contextual.

More specific to our topic, because of contextual sourcing, concepts surrounding art and aesthetic experience assume a more holistic, relational and constructivist point of view. This experiencing is also grounded through participatory, informed and agentic engagement between viewer and artwork. It is a reconceptualisation of art and experience where instrumental meaning based on pluralities replaces aesthetic values and the idea of concept-less contemplation of the reified, autonomous art object.

Correspondingly, it recognises art experiencing as effortful, requiring cognition and discursive knowing. In addition, it advocates sociocultural interpretation over intrinsic disinterestedness, as well as proposing the importance of pluralities inherent in subject/time/space specificity over universal claims or authority. Furthermore (in certain cases), it promotes a de-valuation of the hegemonic position of fine art as a discipline. What is proposed here is a subjugation of fine art and its appreciation/experiencing into the larger epistemological view related to social construction art theory or into populist concepts of a general visual culture. Many of the relational and critical theories concerning the promotion of art into the services of individual and social systems can be traced to the propositions expressed by Dewey (1980 [1934]), as examined below.

INFLUENCES FROM DEWEY

Much of subjective/contextualist theory is indebted, derived, distilled or deconstructed from the observations of Dewey (1980 [1934]) and his re-definition of art *as* experience. For Dewey (1980 [1934]), this experience was one whose qualities could be seen as being complete, coherent and consummatory. It was also derivable from proactive, participatory engagement between viewer and artwork. What Dewey proposed is the concept of an aesthetic experience which is pragmatically inspired and steeped in the psychological implications of purposive action (Shusterman, 2000a; Fenner, 2003a). Aesthetic experience was conceived as a transformation involving participation and communication.

So, unlike the intrinsic/essentialist perspectives which saw the *will-less* contemplation of art worthy in itself, art's value was now dependent upon its instrumental abilities. Dewey (1980 [1934]) proposed that the value and function of art (in its immediate experience) was not to serve any one particular end, but to delight and inform the participant in *any* number of ways.

Here, the aesthetic experience not only serves to focus and invigorate perception, but also to aid the pursuit of other life goals. In this way, it is quite distinct from intrinsic/essentialist thought, such as Schopenhauer's (1966 [1819]), which saw contemplation of art as a means of transcendence, of freeing the self from worldly concern. Now, the beneficial communication and participation possible through aesthetic experience was synonymous with being absorbed in and re-vitalised by worldly activities (Dewey, 1980; Shusterman, 2001).

For instance, a positive encounter with, say, an idyllic landscape painted during European exploration of the South Seas can stimulate a general interest in the era and a desire for personal explorations of the subject within associated aesthetic fields, such as literature or music. One may even be further compelled to travel and experience first hand the various exotic locations. Seen here, this progressively informed interest may become a source of personal inspiration, integrating with the concept of self. In so doing, the interest engrains itself into private and public interaction as well as remaining an important emotional channel for the release of simple and pleasurable daydreaming.

For these reasons, aesthetic experience serves many ends. It becomes a source for intrinsic reward and an agent for positive self-image. In addition, it acts as a positive influence and inspirational communicative device for community interaction. Through the emphasis on individual construction, rather than on aesthetic formulation, Dewey proposes that the instrumental value of experiencing art would vitalise the life of the viewer as well as strengthen and secure art's position as an important vehicle for such transactions (Shusterman, 2001). As observed earlier, Dewey (1980 [1934]) proposes the concept of aesthetic experience as a proactive and dynamic vehicle for self-actualisation. It emphasises the actual experience and the far-reaching beneficial effects it professes for the individual. By doing so, it negates the motive-less attitudinal stance required by essentialist disinterestedness.

In addition, Dewey's aesthetic experience is based on the development and dynamics of experiential activity concerning the creation and perception of the artwork, not in the reified artifact itself (Dewey, 1980 [1934]; Shusterman, 2001). This emphasis on experiential process over art product is of primary importance, as Dewey's (1980 [1934]) antithetical proposition to essentialist claims for autonomy of the artwork becomes a foundational catalyst for much of the following contextual/constructive points of view that follow.

ART COGNITION

At the core of these epistemological debates has been the introduction of the concept of cognitive 'knowing' to aesthetic experience. In part, this is due to the shifting and expanding notions of what visually constitutes art (previewed in Chapter One). Corresponding to this is the increased difficulty in assessing and gaining the full experience of some nineteenth and twentieth century and contemporary art by way of simple perception of formal qualities. In other words, some artworks, in both recent history and contemporarily, have been created deliberately to challenge our traditional ways of seeing and responding. Here, pleasurable experience is found through the ability to promote and fathom intellectual puzzles. That is, the pleasure comes from cognitive visual problem solving achieved through praxis, not disinterested attention. Contemporarily, the heightened awareness implied in aesthetic experience can have more to do with the work's ability to stimulate idea and interpretation, to question and interrogate, rather than to act as aesthetically contemplative forms of perceptual properties.

In short, we now must contend with works of art whose intentionality can be non-aesthetic or even anti-aesthetic (Carroll, 1999). Here, full experience depends more and more upon the textual reading, the understanding and interpretation of contextual association integral to the work. These new requirements challenge traditional content and context because much of what is now desired is hidden below the perceptual surface (Fenner, 2003b).

For example, one would be hard-pressed to account for the experiences of readymade or embellished 'art objects' such as Duchamp's urinal/fountain or Dine's

depictions of builder's tools (or countless examples of conceptual art for that matter) in terms of the sensuousness of presented formal qualities. Indeed, they challenge traditional meaning.

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Marcel Duchamp. *Fountain* (1917). Original lost.
Ready-made urinal.

Jim Dine. *Five Paintbrushes* (1973). Etching.

To extract the full experiential rewards of such encounters, viewers must make effortful and cognitively informed investigations. That is, they must actively seek the answers to the visual and intellectual riddles. To do this successfully, viewers must have the cognitive abilities to interpret the multitude of meanings which present themselves (Efland, 2002). This requires action. This is because there is more to be extracted from encounters with such pieces as those mentioned above than can be adequately contained or understood by an intrinsic/essentialist attitude of disinterestedness.

Looking is thinking

This new 'action' prerequisite is required because of the contextual and constructive nature of much art work for appreciating or 'reading' artworks necessitates alteration or abandonment of traditionally assumed notions. One of these notions concerns the way in which we 'know' through art.

Subjective/contextualist propositions suggest that it is no longer reasonable to accept the traditional eighteenth century inspired aesthetic which disallowed the idea of

rigorous conceptualisation. What is argued now is that the aesthetic is itself cognitive in that cognition *begins* with the images given in perception (Efland, 2002). Here, the meanings inherent in imagery are ways of knowing and experiencing (Davis & Gardner, 1992). That is, they are considered differentiated and non-discursive cognitive forms of aesthetic behaviours -- ways of distinct thinking and understanding individual and societal environments.

This opposition to traditional aesthetic knowing stems primarily from the observations, acceptance and refinements of cognitivist and gestalt psychological investigations over the last half century. It came through new propositions regarding information-processing or approaches to symbol systems (Davis & Gardner, 1992). Here, the once purposelessness inherent in essentialist artistic appreciation was jolted with a systematisation of thought toward establishing meaning (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Parsons, 1992; Davis & Gardner, 1992). This new meaning came from the advancement of such cognitive developments as the concept of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) or the seminal view that art disciplines are vehicles for communication based on their own unique symbol systems -- as a kind of symbolic language in itself (Langer, 1957a; Goodman, 1976).

Furthermore, the current thrust of cognitive developmental theory, once assumed only pertinent to propositional and procedural forms of knowledge acquisition, has expanded to include dispositions such as values, beliefs, and attitudes (Billett, 2001). That is, in bringing the individual to the forefront of the aesthetic experience, it is necessary to consider not only the purely analytical component of human cognition (in making sense of or coming to know the aesthetic experience), but also the individual's preferences, interests and idiosyncratic ways of knowing. Now, our heightened experience of art is fortified through the percipient's employment of proactive problem solving processes inherent in cognitive theory. As Billett (2001) explains:

[c]ognitive theory proposes that individuals' knowledge resides in their memories and in different forms described as *cognitive structures* [knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation]. This knowledge is what we use in our everyday activities. It is also deployed consciously in

demanding activities such as dealing with new tasks and problem-solving, including transfer of knowledge to new applications (Anderson 1993; Stevenson et al. 1994). In turn, through its use, this knowledge is developed further (Billett, 2001, p. 50).

What is suggested by cognitive theory then is that perception such as the aesthetic experience itself can be considered cognitive activities. In addition, the further development of knowledge through the cognitive structures which assist its acquisition promote the idea that proficiency in art cognition skills can be learned (Reimer, 1992; Perkins, 1994; Parsons, 1992).

By proposing the establishment of cognitive structures and their deployment in activities, the sufficiency of essentialist theories such as Bell's (1947 [1914]) to adequately define aesthetic experience is contested. This counter-action to Bell (1947 [1914]) is seen in aesthetic cognition's proposals that the perceptual qualities (derived from the work's structure and form) are, according to Reimer (1992), *intended* to manifest suggestions, connotations, possibilities and implications (Reimer, 1992). Furthermore, the connotative capacities inherent in content (subjective meanings, associations, etc.) are integrated into the holistic experience of the form itself.

From the above proposals, we can view the notion of aesthetic experience not as a simple subject response to presented formal relationships based on motiveless contemplation, but as effortful cognitive activity on the viewer's part. As we mediate the experience, some proposed processes concerning the attainment of such an aesthetic/cognitive experience now require investigation.

The intelligent eye

By looking discerningly at this holistic experience, a type of reasoning takes place between eye and mind involving such cognitive activities as extrapolation, interpretation and interpolation. Indeed, for Perkins (1994), the concept of the cognitive powers of the 'intelligent eye' is based upon the fine tuning of experiential knowledge with that of reflective intelligence in an effort to cultivate *thinking dispositions* -- "a felt tendency, commitment, and enthusiasm ... broad attitudes, tendencies, and habits of thinking"

(Perkins, 1994, pp. 4- 5). Coincidentally, it is Perkins' contention that the formulation of these dispositions, rather than strategies, is the major agent for organising the viewer's cognitive powers.

Seen here, experiential intelligence is the knowing involved with day-to-day existence and associated structuring of routine problem solving skills and mental coping processes. Experiential intelligence is the cognition of the familiar and is associated with initial intuitive engagement. In this way, it is characterised by quick and immediate interaction. Reflective intelligence, on the other hand, is associated with metacognitions, in that it is seen as:

... mindful self-management and strategic deployment of one's intellectual resources to intelligent behavior ... a control system for experiential intelligence ... [b]y cultivating awareness of our own thinking, asking ourselves good questions, guiding ourselves with strategies ... steer[ing] our experiential intelligence in fruitful directions ... to manage its powers for a fuller perception of art -- and more generally for better thinking about anything (Perkins, 1994, pp. 24- 26).

For this to occur, reflective intelligence requires time and patience, background information, associations, cognitive processing, hypothesis and so on. Here, the aesthetic experience must be proactive and informed. One must thoughtfully and judiciously hunt for the clues and cues residing within the perception of an artwork's form, content and feelings if one is to receive the long lasting intuitive, cognitive and instrumental rewards which are offered.

Cognition as interpretation

Yet these rewards require a commitment to inquiry. This is because of the growing complexities inherent in contemporary art. In addition to this, one can add the presumed corresponding inadequacies of simple perception to address these complexities within the postmodern/contextualist definition of artworks as 'text-analogues'). In order to confront these issues, a fundamental role is given to the concept of interpretation as an elaboration

within the cognitive process (Parsons, 1992).

For Parsons, interpretation is what we attempt to do in coming to terms with understanding or finding significance in something. It is the essentially cognitive mental activity in which we engage in order to understand; the activity manifesting itself only when understanding is not immediately grasped. This activity and process of interpretation can run anywhere from the laborious to the intuitive (Parsons, 1992). In other words, interpretation of the possible complexities of meanings which at times escapes intuitive knowing or the interrogation of 'reading' the symbolic language within the medium is prerequisite for a coherent perception of the artwork.

However, we cannot perceptually grasp the significance of objects if obstacles bar that perception. Intuitive and direct apprehension is not enough. We must be forearmed with substantive information and contingencies to assist, to 'interpret,' in order that our perceptions can crystallise. The dilemma is linked to the idea that while perception can be seen as a construct of the individual, understanding is embedded in sociocultural awareness (Parsons, 1992). This appropriation of sociocultural knowing relates to what Valsiner referred to as the co-construction of knowledge. That being:

... the reciprocal interaction between socially-sourced knowledge and individuals' knowledge, itself socially constructed through their life histories (ontogenies) (cited in Billett, 1998, p. 256).

Consequentially, art now requires background knowledge and the discursive assistance of language to convey that knowing. That being said, we can never finitely describe in discursive terms what we see. However, for Parsons (1992), words and dialogue assist in focusing our attention. They are a clarification system that helps us locate that which is presented by the object for contemplation. Discourse becomes as integral to the artwork as perception itself (Parsons, 1992). In other words, language can be considered a conductor which helps align and give clarity to historic, cultural and psychological insights, allowing our visual interpretation to inform our perception of difficult imagery. This, in turn, enhances and leads the way towards a unified and coherent aesthetic experience. Here, knowing 'in' requires knowing 'about.'

In addition, new perspectives, such as those found in postmodernism and visual culture, have emerged which seek to disavow the idea of experiencing art as a non-rational and independent way of knowing. They suggest that art has a political basis, is used agentically to control or liberate and that art's messages or experiencing cannot be applied in universal terms. These more contemporary perspectives are now examined.

AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN POSTMODERN AND VISUAL CULTURE

From the beginning of the 'aesthetic verses meaning' epistemological debates between advocates of aesthetic disinterestedness and instrumental/pragmatism there was little room for compromise. Indeed, the pluralistic, constructionist views adjectively denied a place for a rarified and privileged autonomous art object. New theories championed the displacement of romanticised mysticism and essentialist disinterestedness regarding aesthetic qualities for responses that served to produce and advocate *meanings*. These meanings were achieved through approaches empathetic to the pluralities inherent in the way people recognise and reconstruct their worlds. In this way, significant agency was granted to the observer, as Dewey (1980 [1934]) had earlier proposed. Within this new order, idiosyncrasy, in terms of individual and group interpretation and construction, becomes recognised as significant importation into the idea of aesthetic experience. This places aesthetic experience as a culture-bound concept where social change may herald changes regarding what is deemed worthy of aesthetic experience (Eaton, 2002). By proposing this input of various interpretational viewpoints, the aesthetic experience becomes capable of identifying and celebrating differences in values, customs and gender (Eisner, 2001).

Postmodernism

Crowther (1993) refers to postmodernism as skeptical critical discourse opposed to essentialist and modernist theoretical preoccupations (Crowther, 1993; Lankford, 1998) (see Table 2- General attributes of modernism and postmodernism). Similarly, postmodernism is not seen so much as a theoretical body in itself, but rather observed through the unifying impulse of antithetical argument regarding the fundamental tenets of analytical aesthetics and modernism which it seeks to replace (Jameson, 1983).

Correspondingly, postmodernism, in part, is defined by Lyotard (1984) as a refusal of belief in metanarratives (i.e. discourses on legitimisation of knowledge) (Lyotard, 1984). It is opposed to the modernist/essentialist negation of the need for contingent inquiry. Postmodernism contends that everything, including art, is in a state of flux. It believes that borders, if they exist at all, concerning all spheres of contemporary life are ill-defined and amenable to interpretation. What was once a quest for order and system has now been replaced by complexity and pluralism. This complexity and pluralism, according to Eagleton (1990), was brought on primarily by a shift in industrial production and radical information and communication technologies (Eagleton, 1990). Therefore, it is suggested that any past or present political and cultural restrictive iconocism cannot effectively deal with the experimental due to the expanding guises of contemporary ways of knowing and response.

In considering postmodernism, Gablik (1990) finds two distinct and generally opposing paradigms or 'impulses,' as Jameson (1983) observed earlier. These oppositional paradigms are referred to as deconstruction and reconstruction. While professing antithetical aims, both positions agree on the irrelevance and inability of the modernist perspective to faithfully represent contemporary cultural or worldview concerns. The two paradigms are examined below.

Deconstruction

The hegemonic position is held by deconstruction, with its rejection of perceived modernist attributes such as stylistic innovation, change, originality and uniqueness (Gablik, 1990). In the case of art, the deconstructionist position proposes that we can no longer deal with absolute, definitive meanings of the visual signifiers (e.g. the text of the painting and its visual symbolism). This is because of the ambiguities and pluralities inherent in establishing meaning. In other words, there can be no universal consensus, no one way of interpreting that which is presented because of the shape-shifting character of specificity embodied within individual, time, space, cultural, economical or political meanings (Gablik, 1990; Belsey, 2002). It is at the point where the constructions of essentialist/modernist tenets seem to fail that the deconstruction of meaning (and the freedom for temporal understandings, or denial of all meanings for that matter) begins.

For example, in art, we see the fruits of deconstruction in works that use antithetical, ambivalent, unorthodox and purposely misleading or definitively meaningless symbols in terms of content, materials and production. The intention is to make a sham of all that can be construed as modernist. This is done without the need for offering a cultural alternative (Gablik, 1990).

Its tools are those of parody and confrontation through anarchistic appropriation of traditional motifs. The points to be made are those of intentional shock or shame as in the earlier examples of the work of Hirst (1996) and the Chapmans (1995). Deconstruction asks us to interrogate that which we are used to; to re-examine the comfortability and security of our theoretical, individual and communal belief systems.

Reconstruction

Reconstructional postmodernism, on the other hand, presents options and challenges the materialistic/mechanistic through the ‘re-enchantment’ of art (Gablik, 1990). What is proposed here is that the re-enchantment of reconstruction postmodernism “... implicates art in this awakening sense of responsibility for the fate of the earth and of the high levels of psychic and physical toxicity in our environment” (Gablik, 1990, p. 179). In other words, it implies organic, holistic and nature/ecological orientations of instrumental resolve which aim toward bettering humanity.

The above is presumably achieved through a re-orientation towards an ideology based on interconnectedness. That is, it targets social responsibility, deep ecological attunement, psycho-spiritual empowerment, positive and nurturing human relations, and an awakening renewal of the spiritual and the sense of the sacred (Gablik, 1990). To accomplish the above, reconstruction embraces mysticism and alternative consciousness in order to create alternative, nurturing and productive realities. It reacts against what is considered the ‘ingrained mistake’ of cultural over-identification with deductive, rational processes (Bohm cited in Gablik, 1990).

Reconstructional postmodernism attempts a conflation of the ‘inner and outer realities’ and believes that knowing runs deeper than what is presented on the deductive or empirical surface (Gablik, 1990). It calls for the artist as shaman (i.e. healer), as the bringer of apparitions. It invites ancestral or communal ritual to heal the effects of

cultural and personal alienation (Gablik, 1990). It calls for ecstatic experience and visionary cultural transformation through the lessening of ego-preoccupation and a re-mythologising of consciousness and the re-establishment of the primacy of ecological naturalism (Gablik, 1990). Through reconstruction postmodernity we celebrate the idea of being an integral part rather than continuing the attempt at being the positivistic controller of the cosmos.

Summarising these abbreviated postmodern references, and remembering Weitz's (1956) earlier proposition of an open concept, art and its response becomes a philosophical journey to discover new contingencies. It concerns new ways of addressing what is before us. Furthermore, it does not act merely as examples or justifications for established rules or orthodoxies (Lyotard, 1984). By advocating this exploration into the unknown, postmodernist thought denies authentication through pre-established criteria or judgments.

So, what is being proposed here is that art is now free from being principle governed and that the quest for art and response now seeks those criteria which justify themselves (Lyotard, 1984). In this way, postmodernism denies autonomy and universality to the work of art. Consequently, aesthetic attitude in terms of disinterestedness is abandoned. This is because our heightened response can now come from any subjective source. One such contemporary source of response can be found in propositions advocated by visual culture, as presented below.

Visual culture

The abandonment of traditional theoretical concerns through a re-conceptualising and subsuming of the aesthetic concept, experience and art itself is also favoured by advocates of visual culture. What is proposed is that art and its experience is positioned under a larger conception which takes into account all forms of visual imagery. Consequently, the window is open to traditionally considered/assumed non-fine arts, such as sociological artifacts and pastimes, crafts, popular imagery and media. According to visual culture propositions, fine art would also share an egalitarian position with popular (and traditionally un-orthodox) stimuli and pastimes such as “ ... computer games, manga, feature films, toy design, advertising, television programming, dreamtime

paintings, fashion design, and so on” (Freedman, 2003, pp. 21-22).

The reasoning behind this is the recognition of a global shift from text associated communications to image saturation and the resultant requirement for investigating its complexities, embedded meanings, codes and impact (Freedman, 2003). Throughout our daily interactions, we are confronted with visual imagery and media associated phenomena, much of this is consumer-culture, profit-driven. Its omnipotent position can be seen to take precedent within our everyday perception and aesthetic response. In this eclectic amassing of genres, traditional aesthetic theories are found wanting. This is because they are unable to address all the contingencies associated with such diverse visual forms and experiences and the ever expanding image technologies and art media.

To address this issue, proponents and/or observers of visual culture such as Freedman (2003), Duncum (1999; 2006) and Efland, (2004) (among others) call for a redefinition and expansion of the aesthetic concept itself. That is, they propose pluralities of definitions that are expandable enough to promote critique and make relevant the continuous progression of increasingly sophisticated visual forms around us.

This foundational rejection and reaction against intrinsic/essentialist notions becomes apparent in Efland's (2004) summarisation of visual culture's attributes. He cites:

- (1) The use of critical investigation into the artwork's social system, rather than issues relating to formalist aesthetics;
- (2) a marginalisation of interpretation regarding judgments and aesthetic value;
- (3) the disenfranchisement of the concept of elitist, 'high' culture; and
- (4) the proposal that all things, including visual culture, are politically motivated, thus requiring their subsumation within interdisciplinary studies in order to examine social ramifications (Efland, 2004).

To accomplish this new definition of aesthetic requires new foundations in understanding. In other words, it requires the employment of multiple and associated meanings and interpretation because the existing conceptions are not able to account for this multiplicity of meanings, interpretations and connections (Freedman, 2003).

This phenomenon of multiplicity in postmodern assessment is associated with a cultural shift which now sees the once differentiated concerns of aesthetic experience and the drive for capital profit in conflation (Efland, 2004). To make this point, Efland (2004) cites Kellner's (1995) contention that the popular culture in industrialised nations is founded and maintained primarily upon the production of cultural phenomenon and objects (i.e. artifacts) explicitly intended for large scale distribution and profit. Its aesthetic appeal is based on the non-offensive and promotes the conception of independence within the consumer by manipulative suggestions of opposing traditional concepts (Efland, 2004). That is, the new is asserted and advocacy for continuous supply and demand is met by discrediting that which has gone before it. The premise is that one will not accumulate the new if the old is still seen to be relevant. In this way, experiential encounters are now channeled and periodically manipulated by prescribed dictates of market economics. We need no longer seek out objects or encounters for enduring aesthetic experience as these objects (deemed sufficient by others) are provided *for* us in increasingly rapid rotation.

The further marginalisation of high art

Because of its visual dominance and immediacy, it is proposed that the heightened experience afforded by interaction within the everyday popular consumer culture outweighs experience with high arts. Its ubiquitous nature, rather than an infrequent excursion into an art gallery, becomes the more dominant vehicle for signification regarding intrapersonal (i.e. individual) and interpersonal (i.e. group) identity (Duncum, 1999; Parsons, 2002).

As with postmodernism tenets, the relevance of traditional aesthetics itself is put into question. In other words, what is suggested is that the heightened experience attainable through viewer introduction to unique art objects seems no longer to hold a significant function for individual vivification within contemporary culture. The modernist thought that a work of art is ranked as a special class of perceptual object is refuted. In addition, there is no room for what Osborne (1970) and Smith (1991) referred to as percipience or of the sustainable intrinsic pleasures afforded by motiveless contemplation of the autonomous art object, as advanced by essentialist doctrine. These

notions have been replaced within popular visual culture for an emphasis on prescribed immediate and temporal visual gratification offered from a bombardment of profit driven commodities, as earlier proposed by Jameson (1991). Therefore, understanding the meanings, significances and consequences of the diverse array of ever-increasing and predominant consumer orientation of popular visual culture phenomena, in all its presentation guises, becomes the trajectory for critical philosophical and educational debate.

Yet, this everyday exposure to the social suggestion is not equally prosecuted or accepted by individuals. Parson (2002) contends that popular visual culture is hesitant to promote a Socratic response in terms of detachment, percipience or critical, contemplative rigour. For Parsons (2002), the commercial contexts and values of visual culture can be quite different. He contends that the visual messages in aspects of visual culture are ripe with undesirable motivations and bias. He also sees some of this bias in relation to aspects of merchandising and associated promotion of unrealistic imagery related to race, gender, age and the environment, among others.

So it seems that the over-riding tenets of visual culture stand in opposition to the concepts of traditional fine arts. In visual culture, 'high art' hierarchies are dissolved, as is the concept which presupposes fine art autonomy. Like postmodernism generally, there is a devaluing of the uniqueness of fine art objects into the service of sociocultural agendas. That is, the fine arts are no longer viewed as exempt; they may now serve reductionist functions, taking their place as simply one of many visual tools to critique cultural meanings.

Also displaced is the idea of quiet contemplation in such modernist institutions as art galleries and museums. Offered in their places are the new arenas of everyday visual culture. These arenas are found in cyberspace, mass media, advertisement, theme parks, malls and amusement centers (among others).

As suggested earlier, these new loci of visual stimulation are primarily market driven by nature. They include the everyday thoroughfares of routine; intentional sites where the constant wave of materialist, technological and informational visual stimuli (signifiers of the un-cloistered activities of the everyday) wash over their human targets. Within such localities and stimulations, knowledge and awareness likely comes from

unrelenting, continuous exposure at the day-to-day humdrum routine of living. Its absorption becomes unconscious and behaviouralist inspired.

Resistance

For some schools of thought, the visual, instrumental battering in relation to all aspects of the individual's life and behaviour is seen as symptomatic of a contemporary and general human malaise (Abbs, 2003). From the frenzy and superficiality of profit-driven and institutionalised-inspired experience, a trivialising of emotion is occurring. This idea has its antecedence in Dewey's (1980 [1934]) earlier cautionary observation that there is always a risk of sensations becoming mere automated responses to stimuli at surface level.

In more contemporary discourse, Kristeva (1995) is also cautionary. Her concern surrounds our abilities to attain personal, unified and substantial experience within the current cultural environment. She sees this new environment as elaborated by the bombardment of popular and transient technological imagery. Kristeva (1995) considers the down-side, the urgency in a situation where the individual is becoming robotised and transformed into virtual images. She sees this being achieved through the constant propagation of visual culture/consumer imagery and fears that the reality of our world is slipping out of our control and moving away from the capabilities to maintain its comprehension (Kristeva, 1995). In other words, we simply cannot distinguish the reality from the illusion.

Similarly, Greene (1995) sees the multitude of imagery coming from technological communication stunting imaginative thinking. Greene (1995) also recalls Dewey's denunciation of "sloppiness, superficiality, and recourse to sensations as a substitute for ideals" (Dewey cited in Greene, 1995, p. 126) to draw attention to the current climate of conformity and prescribed, agentic codification of experience.

What is being proposed here is that the "predigested concepts and images in fixed frames" (Greene, 1995, p. 124) which encroach daily upon our senses pervert the possibilities of personal actuality and the alternatives achievable through imaginative response. For example, depression is assuaged by the fleeting experience of possession and participation in shopping -- our dreams become whitewashed with that which is

saleable -- while a ubiquitous predictability overshadows our ideas of what *actually* could be possible (Greene, 1995).

To counteract such regimentation, Greene (1995) sees the imagination, the ideas of possibilities, being fostered more through the ideas of unpredictability rather than the predictable and the instrumentally premeditated. The possibilities of the imagination and the unreal are honed on informed engagement, rather than what she sees as the apathetic passivity which is borne of imagery associated with post-industrial commercialistic conformity (Greene, 1995).

Corresponding to Greene's concern over the lack of percipient exercise of imagination and the possibilities of alternatives is found in Ruinard's (2004) on-going action research into the postmodern aesthetic (as expressed by a selection of Generation-Y diploma of graphic design students). For example, when presented with representative examples of both western and japanime animation, Ruinard (2004) observed that her research group was overwhelming more interested in the western animation than that of current japanime animation. The success of the western animation was not so much put down to aesthetic superiority. On the contrary, its popularity was based (according to dissenting participant observation) on the notion that learners did not want to invest the time and energy required for engagement with the more complicated story lines associated with japanime animation. Instead, the majority preferred the 'quick fix' of western animation because of its familiarity and on the basis of it being more direct and simple to understand (Ruinard, 2004). Here, predictability and familiarity, rather than the exercise of effortful imagination and alternative possibilities as evidenced in Ruinard's (2004) research, seems to validate Greene's (1995) concerns.

To this can be added the notion that the once clear separation and delineation of the internal and exterior world. That is, the personal/private from the public has become not only blurred, but obscenely combined (Baudrillard, 1983). For example, those actions and desires once privately ritualised, personally rule-governed and distinct in personal, private symbolism are now no longer separable from the visual public domain (Baudrillard, 1983). Our personal domains are blended, reinvented, communalised with other private domains (and the pre-destined desires of commodity-driven commercialisation). The result is a composite, where an illusory apparition is projected

and shadowed in our place. This re-invented image is thrown back at us, re-inforced through incessant projections of communication and advertising saturation. Finally, we are interrogated and mirrored in the projected image until that depersonalised illusion is inseparable from our concept of self. Our reality, as Kristeva (1995) observed earlier, then slips covertly out of our own control.

The points being made above concern the viability of the large amount of throw-away visual imagery (propagated on mass-market ulterior motivations) to successfully accommodate an intrinsically robust or meaning-full concept of self and aesthetic experience. Dissenters may ask whether the nature of commodity/consumer visual culture, its intentions of immediate visual grasp and superficial gratification of consumer desires, promote the characteristics of aesthetic experience which Dewey (1980 [1934]) ascribed as complete and unified? Is it salient enough to generate transformation into participation and communication? Are they, as Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) requires, worthy objects in themselves, capable of activating personal transcendence and helping us escape our mundane existence? Or do they simply amplify it?

Visual culture is, in some respects, the descendent of Dewey's (1980 [1934]) celebration of the ordinary occurrence, complete with the possibility for personal vivification, if a unified communion is achieved. However, where Dewey (1980 [1934]) acknowledged that the formal art object could in fact be a focal point for having a contemplative aesthetic experience (again, if that occurrence was full, unified and consummatory), the nature of the everyday aesthetic experiences associated with visual culture is established through fleeting, fragmented and disorientating visual imagery (Duncum, 2003). Indeed, in responding to much visual culture, our reactions are not ones usually associated with contemplation of qualities or meaningful problem solving. Nor are entertained the roles of the individual's prior experiences in shaping what that individual experiences. As Gergen (1994) notes, what we encounter -- and how we encounter it -- is manifested by an assemblage of experiences and ways of knowing from the past. In counterpoint, much popular visual culture denies or exploits the past for the immediacy of the now. It requires no historic referent other than pastiche or parody or mediated effort on the viewer's part to receive its full perceptual impact. Comparisons may be useful here. The aesthetic experiences of intrinsic/essentialist theories involve a

degree of percipience and effortful subject engagement toward assuming an aesthetic attitude (as discussed earlier). Correspondingly, within most cognitive and pragmatist-inspired aesthetics, self-initiated effort is required to find successful problem solving schema and the apprehension of significant meanings, symbols, codes, texts and interpretations. These are subjective induced states. By contrast, the effects of experiencing some aspects of popular visual culture can be seen as hallucinatory and directionless for the viewer. They are objectively defined.

For example, this notion is exemplified by observing everyday visual culture's nature. That nature being, as Duncum (1999) sites Featherstone (1991), more;

... of the sense of intoxication, sensory overload, disorientation, and the intensities of experience to be had where there is a playful mixing up of codes and numerous unchained signifiers (Duncum, 1999, p. 295-6).

By its nature then, this aspect of experiential popular visual culture celebrates the flashy, sporadic and strobe light-like assault on perception, rather than that of the individual's livedworld. We are entertained by its flash, its agenda -- but not for too long. This is because the engineered experience is by its nature and intent transient and forgettable, in order that the current image may not be a deterrent signifier for the plethora of consequentially introduced imagery. Art or significant object becomes commodity; a means rather than an end. Its lifespan is engineered simultaneously with its creation.

The search for meaning

As proposed from the above postmodern inspired observations, relational and instrumental fortification of the aesthetic, or demise of the traditional definition of aesthetic altogether, is through the consignment of relevant significations. These meanings go well beyond those of motive-less contemplations of an artwork's formal qualities, as proposed by essentialist theory. They now extend into the artwork's signification as an object within a sociocultural context. In other words, they are to be read, analysed as artifacts embedded with particular societal time and space implications

(Freedman, 2003; Crowther, 1993). Therefore, intrinsic argument for universalities (or metanarratives) is negated. Our experiences of art become social constructs, based on the co-construction of knowing (as referred to earlier). What takes over now is concern for pluralities of interpretation of object and experience contingent on the demands of context. In other words, there is no one correct way to regard aesthetic or interpretational response. All responses are viewed through the specificity of a time/space cultural lens. All responses are suspect.

Here too is the pragmatic nullification of elitist preoccupations that separated high brow art forms and their contemplations from low brow or popularist pursuits. Also rejected are the presumed essentialist injustices inherent in the idealisation of notions concerning gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural beauty or correctness through stereotypical universalities. It is interesting to note that although aspects of popular visual culture can be considered subsumed within these postmodern concerns, its apparent bias to *favour* stereotyping and idealisation, as observed earlier by Parsons (2002), is antithetical to the general postmodern proposition.

Now, to regard the meaning behind a painting of an apple is to regard the full consequences of its depiction in time and place. Our postmodern concerns regarding the depicted apple may be many. Along with our traditional introduction to its sensuous qualities are also the possibilities of purpose-full sociocultural implications and reductionism. For instance, is the apple symbolic of a commodity which signifies economic, cultural or social stratum? Is there innuendo related to anti-feminist or religious connotations through subjective associations with temptation or guilt (biblical)? Is there moralistic or behavioural intent (an apple a day)? Is there a double coding of interpretation to be found in the fact that within an age of genetically modified food, are we actually considering an apple in the first place?

While these examples might seem far-fetched, they nevertheless illustrate the postmodern concern regarding works of art and their experiential meanings. What is suggested is that artworks are products of particular contexts, steeped within their situatedness. Here, the experiencing of works of art is contingent on interpretation and appreciated only through an understanding of the particular sociocultural constrictions from which they evolve (Lankford, 1998).

For example, consider the same imaginary portrait of the eighteenth century noble family (referred to earlier), all gloriously costumed and assuming the confident postures of the privileged. Now, consider the relevance of this painting for the lives of those who work the aristocrats' land. Psychologically, the presumed graceful bearing of the depicted family (or the virtuosity of technique displayed by the painter) may well be viewed from the tenants' perspective only as a despised visual proclamation of feudal tyranny. For the tenants, a Kantian (1952 [1790]) attitude of disinterestedness regarding the work may be difficult or impossible to attain. That is, the tenants may have no positive content or contextual reference regarding the painting. If we bring back Gergen's (1994) earlier proposal -- that what we encounter and how we encounter it is made sense of by assemblages of experience and ways of knowing from the past -- then a history of punishments for failed crops or tardiness of rent may well influence the tenants' dispositional interaction with the painting.

Feminist viewpoints

Within feminist thought, other proposed aspects of modernist injustice are propagated through patriarchal essentialist metanarratives that relate to the philosophical and historical idealisations and universalities of beauty, art and truth.

Here, it is suggested that our personal and societal aesthetic is based on a history written to reflect particular sets of values derived from the masculine point of view. It is proposed that the production, public control and normative evaluative standards of art have always been the reserve of male domain (Bovenschen, 1985). Therefore, what we perceive as relevant art, the physical and metaphysical depiction of women, their societal roles and hierarchical positioning, are products derived from a male supremacist agenda. Because of this, our collective consciousness has been appropriated by dominant cultural values.

Feminist argument contends that the female viewpoint and psyche has been ignored, marginalised or is agentically presented or re-synthesised from male subjectivity (Parker & Pollock, 1987). They ask how can there be universal consensus about concepts related to aesthetic formulations when those formulations are postulated without conations or input from an entire gender?

Feminist artists and theorists, in keeping with postmodernist sentiments, have asserted their dissent and reconstructive art agendas within a plurality of fronts. That is, they believe that the traditional views held in all aspects of contemplation and production of art (because of their pedigree) are to be challenged. The focus of art shifts toward exposing the manipulative and political aspects of male dominance and the marginalisation of authentic female persona historically and in more contemporary arenas (Parker & Pollock, 1987). Within this view, the faces of art as seen through both visual culture and traditional art disciplines can be considered propagators of a male dominated, cultural status quo.

In addition, feminist propositions challenge the dismissive attitudes which categorise women's art as simply decorative or dextrous (Parker & Pollock, 1987). They also challenge the objectification of representations of women which propagate their identification exclusively with domesticity or femininity (Parker & Pollock (1987). Through advocacy of increasingly valid but divergent viewpoints from those of male inspired essentialism, feminist aesthetics initiate new and re-evaluative praxis within the area of standards for aesthetic evaluation (Devereaux, n.d.). Here, the status and viewpoints of theoretical and experiential investigations relating to traditional subject matter, fetishism, lesbianism, body adornment, the role of crafts and materials for legitimate artistic pursuits, fantasies and realities are introduced or re-evaluated through the female persona.

Furthermore, growing feminist critique can also be found at the cutting edge of discourse concerning misrepresentations and objectification of women within the (again) male dominated arenas of the new "spatio-temporally based technology" (Nalder, 1993). That is, virtual reality and cyberspace. As Nalder (1993) observes:

Because of the new possibilities for the regeneration of old knowledges or the generation of knowledges of a different kind, women are taking a position against the transportation of the old order of social relations—exploitation, exclusion and domination—into this developing space (Nalder, 1993).

These generations, regenerations and misrepresentations within the current and foreseeable future ‘informatics of domination’ concern the ‘male gaze’ objectification and reconstruction of women in computer and video games, the production of knowledge bases founded on, or continuing, repression and exclusion of women and through other cultural transformations (Nalder, 1993).

As seen from the above observations, feminist discourse helps reveal the inadequacies of European patriarchal essentialist propositions which attempt a complete account and closed-conception of what (essentially/universally) constitutes art (Parsons, 1993). To this, much contemporary feminist critique now argues for the abandonment of all notions which purport formulating plausible aesthetic theory based on universals (Garber, 2001), opting instead for the “irreducible multiplicity” (Hein, 1990, cited in Garber, 2001, p. 160) inherent in the complex ways of understanding and knowing the world.

In summary, feminist theories propose alternative socio-cultural perspectives and divergent points of view for critical inquiry. Along with the advocacies and achievements of other marginalised social groups and activities, feminist critique has assisted in grounding and widening the sphere regarding what can and is considered valid for aesthetic (or contextually meaningful) action and contemplation.

Socialising art

As observed above, theories within subjective/contextualist epistemologies deal with the idea that art has social implications and responsibilities. Art is considered to be a purposive social behaviour.

Reflecting this pragmatic characteristic, most discourse related to social theories of art do not allow for things transcendental or metaphysical. They are viewed with suspicion or condemned outright in that they do not actively reflect the body corporate. Fundamental here is the replacement of art from the esoteric to the everyday as a matter of necessity. This is because art is seen not as a vehicle of Schopenhauer-inspired (1966 [1819]) escapism or a means of glorifying individual imagination or autonomy, but as simply another cultural tool to promote societal well-being.

The purpose of experiencing of art becomes reductionist and instrumental. Within this framework, the character of art is now seen within the processes of society, reduced from the illusory requirements of philosophical investigations, of intuitions and other-worldliness. Art's purpose lies in the pragmatic, the ordinary activities and functions which benefit the particular society in question. It becomes a non-threatening instrumental tool for the enrichment of the everyday, a modest social function or activity equivalent to cooking and eating, interesting conversation or a vacation (Heywood, 1997). Issues of art's value and relevance again are regulated by its abilities to sustain and nurture the requirements of enriching the lives of those individuals (and groups) within its specific social environment.

Correspondingly, as in instances of postmodern/visual culture, an object's or activity's relevance and longevity as an art form is maintained by societal familiarity and consensus. Here, the aesthetic experience itself may be regulated by societal ordinance. That is, the pleasurable experience associated with viewing artworks is embedded with status quo, communal (rather than individual transcendence) ends. In other words, we enjoy art because of its ability to foster communal harmony. It is re-affirming, familiar and non-contestational.

SUMMARY

In summary, what is found in the examination of this loosely associated and generalised grouping of subjective/contextual schools of thought, is an instrumental aesthetic and aesthetic experience grounded in participatory, informed and agentic engagement. It is also an experience where meaning replaces values and ideology replaces the motiveless aesthetic. Here, aesthetic response is a relational response steeped in personal/cultural importations and is seen as context-specific and particularised. It disavows universal truths for fragmentation and pluralism. The experience is temporal and dependent on viewers' ever-changing interests and desires. In certain circumstances, these ever-changing interests and desires may be prescribed or influenced from the lobby of various agencies and the extraneous manipulations and motivations of vested interest.

Significant here is that the subjective/contextualist positions generally recognise and propose a re-conceptualisation of art and aesthetic experience. In so doing, the

general concepts of subjective/contextual propositions derived from this chapter's examination involve:

(1) a de-emphasis on the sanctified art object and promotion of the instrumental value of experiencing artworks in order to vivify all areas of life. This vivification (through critical inquiry) encompasses social, political, economic, moral, gender, sexual preferences issues, and so on; (2) a position which advocates interpretative sociocultural *meanings* associated with the object or experience rather than intrinsic disinterested aesthetic contemplation of formal qualities; (3) the pluralities inherent in meanings surrounding art are considered temporal, situation/audience specific, indeterminist and negating of universal claims or authority; (4) that experiencing is effortful -- art involves cognition and discursive knowing; (5) a de-valuation of the hegemonic position of fine arts through its subjugation into social construction art theory and contemporary visual culture.

Table 2 below presents the general orientation and comparison of the major intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist properties concerning the experience of art as examined in the last two chapters. The intrinsic/essentialist perspectives are presented in the left-hand column, while the antithetical perspectives associated with subjective/contextualist positions appear in the right-hand column. In addition to presenting the two opposing perspectives, this table graphically presents those properties and characteristics which may or may not become apparent within the forthcoming observations of livedworld reflections and responses regarding the aesthetic experience as exhibited by the research participants.

Table 2- Some characteristic comparisons of intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextual properties

intrinsic/essentialist	subjective/contextual
Intuitive and primarily subject-orientated (with the exception of formalist thought which considers perceptual qualities originating within the object itself, that is, object-orientated).	Subject-orientated. Advocates interpretative sociocultural meanings and associations of the artwork rather than intuitive contemplation.
Non-reducible. Emphasis on aesthetic values and objective properties (internal formal relations of line, colour, form etc of the work). These are shared commonalities within all artworks.	Relational. Emphasis on meaning. Meanings themselves are considered temporal, situation/audience specific, indeterminist and negating of universalist claims of totality.
Empirical universal/essentialist qualities contained within the perception of the art object. Aesthetic qualities and characteristics are universal truths which all people can comprehend (if perceptive or trained).	Rejection of universalist claims and legitimised discourse. Experience is effortful and requires cognition and discursive knowing. Emphasis on contingencies.
Autonomous aspect of artwork.	Art work as instrumental. Art as a tool for social construction of knowledge. Art as an inculcating agent for the vivification of all aspects of daily life.
Non instrumental judgment, appreciation and experience. The separation of aesthetic knowing from motive-full moral, ethical, political or cultural/social implications or interpretations.	There is no separation of the aesthetic domain from worldly knowledge and associations. Art is fashioned with a conscious, is political and agentic.
Aesthetic pleasure is predicated on assuming subject- induced viewpoint/aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness (motive-less contemplation).	Disinterestedness is rejected for purposeful sociocultural interrogation. Moral, political, ethical, cultural/social implications enrich the experience, making appreciation multidimensional.
Primarily passive contemplation experienced simply for its own sake or potentially intensified through subject familiarity with essentialist codifications and experience-specific content. Non-intentional aspect.	Intentional aspect. The requirement of essentialist codifications and formalities are rejected. Instrumental and pragmatic aspects advocated.
The separation of 'high' art from 'low' popular art. Aspects of elitism.	Boundaries of low and high art blurred. The subsuming of high art into popular and visual culture. Glorification of the common place.
Acceptance of modernist theory.	Rejection of all attempts at legitimisation of theory. Postmodern.

As a supplement for the above properties and for general reader orientation, Table 3 below sets out the major generalised contrasting attributes of modernism and postmodernism. As intrinsic/essentialist epistemologies are aligned with modernist tenets, and subjective/contextualist points of view with those of postmodernism, it is advantageous to present a basic orientation of these doctrines. The purpose of this table is to act as a supportive referent and summative supplement for the observations and arguments which have been presented in this and earlier chapters. Modernist attributes are listed in the left-hand column, while contrasting postmodernist attributes are listed in the right-hand column.

Table 3- General attributes of modernism and postmodernism

modernism	postmodernism
Art works are autonomous and can be appreciated for their aesthetic experience by assuming a disinterested aesthetic attitude. The exalted position of fine art objects is rarified while generalist arts and crafts are rejected.	There is a condemnation of eliticism. The distinctions between high- brow and low- brow art practices and appreciation are dissolved. Art is construed to be an item of cultural production and reproduction. It is instrumental and value laden through contextualist/sociocultural meaning and relevance.
Art, like civilization, is seen as a linear, historical progression. Each progressive art style is seen as surpassing the one before it, advancing the quality and potential of art.	The proposal here is that civilization historically has not made linear advancement. That is, it is de-railed through actual periods of decline and non-progressive states.
Social change is promoted through the pure and instrumental- less motivations of the recognised art community. The arts community is seen as removed from society's misadventures.	Political/economical influences on society are seen as reflected within art community. Exclusivity and privileging of knowledge of art is questioned. The art community is now seen as acting as a forum for cultural critique and debate.
A higher, more personal essence and reality for the experiencing of aesthetic experience is promoted through pure formalistic styles and relationships involving abstraction. The general rejection of realism.	The promotion of a new realism is forwarded based on the study of society and culture (complete with uncertainties and pluralities). The appearance of the façade, rather than realism grounded in nature, is promoted.
The assumed pureness of artistic form, traditional concepts of beauty and meaning are advocated through a reduction of elaboration. A feeling for organic unity is advanced. Ornamentation and decoration are rejected.	Meanings are 'double coded' through the use of eclectic styles and appropriations from other periods of art which, when seen in its totality, can be viewed at many cross- levels of meaning and interpretation. Elaboration and adornment is promoted. Traditional concepts of beauty are dismissed.
There is a quest for the assumptions of universality, essentialist styles and perceptions of reality which transcends the pluralities inherent in popular styles, local or ethnic concerns. What may be incorporated from the above concerns is to be reorganised and conceived in the manner of formalistic and expressive doctrine.	There is an embracing of eclecticism, recycling and plurality which promotes multi layers of meaning and interpretation.
The implication here is that older realities are creatively destroyed by the incoming, newer realities, thus supporting the linear, historical progression of art.	The past and present are integrated through the blending of eclecticism and historical appropriation.

(Derived from a table presented in Efland/Freedman/Sthur, 1996. P. 42)

Some staunch and inflexible advocacies exist within both of the two general epistemologies discussed so far. However, the opening up of the concept of art and its appreciation as a cognitive process, complete with co-constructions of knowledge, points a way for possible conciliatory propositions. Some of these conciliatory propositions will now be advanced in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRIDGING ESSENTIALIST AND CONTEXTUALIST PERSPECTIVES

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In order to advance a less theoretically restricted understanding of the concept of aesthetic experience, conciliatory positions are now advanced. These conciliatory positions attempt to amalgamate aspects of the two earlier observed opposing epistemologies. Generally, these can be considered as attempts to build bridges so that the intrinsic/essentialist qualities of a work of art and its contextual abilities to be read as signifiers can be engaged. These bridging concepts are achieved in this chapter through examinations of aspects of bio-evolutionary theory, aesthetic experience as a hybrid conceptualisation, pragmatist aesthetics, post-formal aesthetics, and other notions which promote a blending of fine art appreciation with that of contextual relevance.

The dichotomy of philosophic thought regarding the nature of aesthetic experience is a separation that some consider arbitrary (Shusterman, 2001). Indeed, the implication that these two distinct orientations have no common ground in which to dialogue would misrepresent current schools of thought (Fenner, 2003b; Shusterman, 2001). Today, many views advocate an eclectic, reconciliatory attitude, the blurring of boundaries which had previously demanded adherence to a particular perspective about the nature and characteristics of aesthetic experience (Eaton, 1998; Shusterman, 2000a). Both the intrinsic qualities of a work of art and its abilities to be read as a textual referent within a contextualist proposal are now being seen as synergic in the establishment of a working definition for aesthetic experience.

For example, Efland (2002) maintains the multiple forms of cognition, propositional and non-propositional, spring from the same basic source: of fundamental and primary bodily and perceptual encounters within the environment, which is itself considered culturally sourced and constructed. It is in the ability to build from both sources freely that promotes the possibilities of represented and extended metaphorical symbolic understanding. This, in turn, imaginatively creates and reflects our lifeworlds. So, what seems an intuition may in fact be merely the ability to experience and draw from an undivided world of both mind and body. It is thinking coupled with feeling and a

synergic interplay between individual dynamics and the social world. This becomes the reflection of a lifeworld built from imagination fortified with the access and extension of sources “ ... as represented and extended symbolically in thinking, feeling, and willed action” (Efland, 2002, p. 171).

BIO-EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Efland’s (2002) initial conciliatory statement which suggests multiple forms of cognition springing from fundamental and primary bodily and perceptual encounters within a culturally sourced and constructed environment finds some correspondence with recent Darwin-inspired bio-evolutionary theory. This can be seen in the re-positioning of art and its appreciation as an adaptation for survival, an emotional response to fantasy, imagination and stylised rehearsals for cultural activities (Dissanayake, 1995). Within this proposition, art is looked on as a behavioural tendency which is both innate to the species and based on selective, context-specific survival values. (For an introductory sampling of various biological adaptation premises, see De Sousa, 2004).

According to Dissanayake (1988; 1995), art experiencing is seen as a general tendency to enhance and make special, rather than ‘art’ as a specific or single concept. It is professed to be a biologically intrinsic and universal necessity for the continuation of humankind. However, while the predispositional behaviour of art, or aesthetic making special (Dissanayake (1995), is a prerequisite for species survival, its identifiable forms and meanings are derived from, and specific to, individual society and cultural specific inculcations and gate-keeping.

So, what is being implied here is that, biologically, art is found in the proclivity to decorate, exaggerate, rarify and appreciate things and events in the hope of promoting and charging phenomena with spiritual/cosmic/magical intent and signification. Its intention is to elicit assistance in species continuation by exercising some influence within the environment (Dissanayake (1995). These acts of extraordinary experience are employed to cognitively prepare and familiarise the individual and community for activities related to survival and to understanding experience. By proposing a Darwin-inspired bio-evolutionary perspective to aesthetic experience, the role of culture-creating with that of instinctive biological motivations are blended (Dutton, 2006). In so doing, it

suggests the acceptance of intrinsic/essentialist ineffable transcendence and participations with 'other worlds' of imagination as interfacing with characteristics derived from rationales embedded in sociocultural dispositions. Here, experiences of art become holistic events. They are justified products of both mystery and meaning -- biological, intrinsic behaviours interlocked with cognition and dispositions which are culturally sourced. Therefore, Darwin-inspired bio-evolutionary theory acknowledges a conciliatory positioning which refutes the separation of feeling from reason, mind from body.

AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AS A HYBRID CONCEPT

Correspondingly, in attempting to clarify contemporary attitudes, Fenner (2003b) describes the situation as one in which the field of aesthetics can be seen as a hybrid. Here, both the sophisticated empirical approaches regarding the nature of experience co-exist with philosophical views and bases. This is because in art, there is no one prescribed resolution that can cover all contingencies (Eisner, 1966); that the privileged employment of a specific, theory driven epistemology negates what Greene (1995) refers to as the possibilities inherent in the ineffable nature of the phenomenological and individualised response to art and experiences in general.

For instance, within a suite of colour field, non-representational paintings identical in formal composition, individual viewers may be drawn or repelled from certain paintings in the set simply because of the psychological assessments they bring to certain colours or combinations. In addition, pluralities and contingencies are also required if one is to meet the demands of an artworld that is in constant expansion and re-definition. Expansion and re-definition of what constitutes the properties and values which are deemed aesthetic to a specific time and place can be seen as simply expanding variables within the aesthetic equation. They become interchangeable properties, coupled within context specificity, which one attends for promoting subjective gratification from the experience.

So, what is being said here is that aesthetic qualities can also be read as having contextual meaning. Sensations are cognitions. Cognition springs from the fundamental bodily and perceptual encounters once solely, and incorrectly, identified with the essentialist domain. As suggested, individual agency within this conflation of feeling and

thinking is influenced from sociocultural input. Therefore, what is considered aesthetic in terms of qualities and definition becomes relative to situated cognition. Here, aesthetic properties and context specificity are interchangeable accordingly to meet the demands of an ever changing environment and art world. Sensation is tacit mediation. We are not passive in aesthetic encounters. We are actively engaged (Wertsch, 1995).

POST-FORMAL AESTHETICS

A kind of hybrid conception is also fostered through the proposal of a post-formal aesthetic. Here, Efland (2004) contends that the dichotomy involved with, and dominance of, visual culture over traditional 'fine art' today does not exempt aesthetic experience or aesthetic inquiry from cultural/context relativity (a point also advanced by Boughton, 2004; Parsons, 2002). That is, a desired balance can be achieved by crediting the aesthetic experience with cognition (i.e. construction of meaning) as well as the attributes of attending the artwork for intrinsic possibilities.

Efland (2004) believes the autonomy of art is closely linked to its abilities to vivify our cultural life in general (Efland, 2004). Art, in Efland's (2004) proposition, acknowledges both objects within popular culture and those found within the traditional fine arts. By this recognition, a middle ground is drawn where the understanding of objects can be viewed through their context in addition to perceptions related to art criticism practices. That is, observing how these contextual referents are represented is arrived at through the guidance of the perceptual aspects of the object (Efland, 2004). For example, by serving the organisation and re-organisations of experience, finding associations, contrasts and widening perspectives for meanings (Goodman in Efland, 2004) both aesthetic and sociocultural conditions are met. Here, as earlier suggested, "... meanings *have* aesthetic qualities and ... aesthetic qualities are meaningful" (Parsons, 2002, p. 32).

According to post-formal aesthetics, the percipient's visual experience can be heightened and informed through an awareness of both precepts and concepts. Indeed, experience is weakened when the importance of sociocultural themes derived from visual stimuli disavows exploration, analysis or critically informed judgments regarding the perceptual qualities of the visual stimuli. After all, it is precisely those perceptual

qualities which drew initial percipient attention (Efland, 2004). So, the cognitive complexity of the visual signifiers of consumer/information phenomena associated with visual culture and those associated with traditional fine arts are equal.

So, as Efland (2004) sees it, contemporary and future visual culture will require equal attention to both the object's aesthetic qualities and its informed contextual implications (Efland, 2004). To limit the exposure of one or the other's contributions in fostering the individual's understanding in terms of personal and micro-macro community identity is to limit both personal and communally shared experience. In post-formal aesthetics, the perceptual initially attracts and then instigates critical inquiry. What is being proposed here is that a proper appreciation and interrogation of, say, visual culture, requires both the interplays of aesthetic qualities and contextual meaningfulness. Like Weitz's (1956) concept of opening up the notion of what constitutes art generally, the aesthetic experience is now broadened to accommodate expanded definitional characteristics. That is, there are more things to be included in and considered, both essentially and contextually, if one is to attempt comprehensive and robust formulations of aesthetic experiences as phenomenon.

PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

Another contemporary theory that attempts to broaden the sphere of aesthetics into visual culture and popular art can be found in the pragmatist aesthetics as advanced by Shusterman (2000a). Like Dewey (1980 [1934]) and Efland (2004), Shusterman (2000a) credits the aesthetic experience for its capacity to continuously vivify everyday life. Yet, he also advocates an eclectic blurring of the historical dualism among theory and experience concerning universalist verses transitory and pleasurable popular idioms, as well as between active experience and contemplative reflection. The reasoning behind such a blurring is to promote a more open and accepting appreciation and interaction between high and low brow art and their audiences. By doing so, the seeking of pleasurable aesthetic experiences can be pursued without concern for contravening snobbish or isolationist hierarchical undercurrents (Shusterman, 2000a).

To this end, Shusterman's (2000a) pragmatist aesthetics attempt to reconcile determinant aspects of analytical aesthetics with that of the pragmatist's acceptance of

indeterminacy and flux. For example, Shusterman (2000a) proposes the broadening of fine art to serve utilitarian purposes. Once freed from an essentialist isolation of ineffable and autonomous 'art for art's sake', fine art examples could be employed as powerful instrumental agents. This could be accomplished through initiation of critical debate regarding their previously dormant sociocultural and political dimensions.

For pragmatist aesthetics, past concepts about the legitimacy of what constitutes art and privileged aesthetic response are seen as too restrictive. Like the earlier idea of post-formal aesthetics, pragmatist aesthetics proposes that both concepts of aesthetics and art need to be expanded to take in all aspects of visual culture. For Shusterman (2000a), it is not the universal notion of aesthetic quality that separates 'high' from popular art forms, as aesthetic quality may be present or negligent in examples from both.

In addition, Shusterman (2000a) proposes that essentialist principles which attempt to separate 'high' from popular art cannot be philosophically determined at all, but rather are constituted through historic and sociological bases. This, he contends, allows for interchangeability in status for artworks (2000b). In other words, as with Dewey (1980 [1934]), the object or event remains relevant to the aesthetic experience only as long as it retains the ability to generate and sustain the required unified, consummate and vivifying effects for the subject. This is true for the immediacy of the experience and for its experience in later reflection.

In pragmatist aesthetics there is no permanency or essentialist guarantees within the experiential, shifting relativity. There are no universal absolutes. This is because the relevance of qualities and properties within that experience is contingent upon their instrumental capacities to enrich the goal of heightened and renewable subjective perception. Things change. For the pragmatist, reality is a process, an interaction, rather than acquiescence to static claims for universal truths. For Shusterman (2000a) and Dewey (1980 [1934]), the goal is in the promotion of art as experience, not empirical justification or units within conceptual classifications.

By concentrating on art *as* an experience, Shusterman (2000a) proposes to open the definition of what art is in order to incorporate popular culture. Theory's role then becomes re-conceptualised as a rhetorical agent to promote our attention towards the experiential art phenomenon. The validity in considering aesthetic value and appreciation

is then bestowed on objects (both fine and popular) due to their ability and requirement to stimulate pleasurable consummatory experience (Shusterman, 2000a). In other words, the consummatory values for the percipient of the object viewed, whether fine art or popular, necessitate classificatory changes to what is deemed art or is worthy of aesthetic contemplation. Therefore, and again remembering the open concept of art as proposed by Weitz (1956), the definitional restrictions of what is considered art must be widened and ready for continual adjustment to fit new and incoming phenomena.

These incoming objects or events may be instilled with purposeful, utilitarian intent. Such objects or events may now include fashion, posters, rap or any assortment of objects or events from popular culture. Antithetical to the dictates of analytical or essentialist propositions is that the *process of reality* (i.e. the experiences with the object) defines and initiates the positioning of that object's classification and role for subsequent theory.

As observed, in pragmatist aesthetics this process can be instrumentally informed by theory as well as incorporating the immediacy of experience. Any dichotomy is resolved through the requirement of ever-expanding re-conceptualisations regarding the meanings of art and aesthetics. Here, no paradox exists. It seems that both essentialist preoccupations and pragmatic instrumentalism can be entertained providing they are conducive to the promotion of a unified and calmative percipient experience. By rejecting aspects of a strict functionalist viewpoint (where the experience of art is seen as a means of addressing sociocultural values), Shusterman (2000b), like Dewey (1980 [1934]), stresses an aesthetic experience which is intended to be primarily consummatory rather than being instrumental in value (Shusterman, 2000b). That is, for pragmatist aesthetics, it is only the desired hedonistic end of the *process* which is of consequence:

... its immediately felt rewards of pleasure, intensified and meaningfully enriched awareness, and heightened vitality ... [rather than] ... because of any specific practical purpose outside that experience for which it serves as a means (Shusterman, 2000b, p. 10).

The heightened consummatory value to which Shusterman (2000a; 2000b) refers to is one which is fortified with the practical applications of art within the human experience. Both the intrinsic and the functional sociocultural aspects inherent in experiencing art cannot be seen as mutually exclusive. To privilege one over the other weakens our experiential exposure and gratification when interacting with art. Here, we consider and allow any and all qualities and meanings that act to reinforce art experiencing as life-enhancement.

AESTHESIA

A type of co-existence, or re-adjustment between the intrinsic/essentialist and the subjective/contextualist positions, is also offered by Grace (1996). To do so, she enlists the less prescriptive concept of *aesthesia* (i.e. perception by the senses; the ability to feel) with the notion of the aesthetic. This, she proposes, can broaden the conceptual base in that the capacity to feel cannot be seen solely as a privileged factor within the domain of bodily sensation. Here, the ability to feel also spills over into a sensuousness of thought as an embodied experience. In so doing, *aesthesia* incorporates such domains as the moral, ethical or contextual -- ways of knowing which have traditionally remained distinct from the aesthetic modality (Grace, 1996).

Again, what is proposed is an informed perception of the aesthetic which sees no dichotomy between feeling and reasoning. It supports the concept of perception as an extension for thinking, feeling and communication. This fundamental premise echoes Arnheim's (1969) earlier proposition of the false dualism between perception and reasoning and directly informs the concept of visual perception as a cognitive activity. By assuming the particularity of agency within sociocultural and personal history to the concept of heightened somatic response, Grace (1996) dismisses universalist discourse and embraces the multi-dimensionality and contingencies inherent in sensuous response.

THE ECLECTIC IMPERATIVE

As suggested here and in Chapter One, conciliatory theories advance a wider position of the aesthetic experience. They are more amenable to encompassing aesthetic, non-aesthetic and even anti-aesthetic modes of responses. They acknowledge that all, some, or

combinations of frames of references can be used as descriptors of heightened experiential encounter. Here, positive aesthetic experience results from the interaction of various importations derived from negotiations between the personally subjective *and* the presumed objective qualities of the artifact.

Eclectic stances are necessary to embrace the life-enhancing possibilities a heightened encounter with art can afford. They suggest that it doesn't matter whether we attend the heightened perception of the formal, designal aspects of a composition (i.e. its essential qualities) for its own sake, actualise the meaningful visual messages of individual/societal emancipation or draw personal comfort from emotionally sympathetic content. This is because all the above experiential responses can add to the vivification of life. All help establish the appreciation of art works in order to positively influence, elevate and articulate the human spirit within its environment (Dewey, 1980 [1934]).

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Conciliatory theories suggest an opportunity to incorporate aspects of both intrinsic/essentialist and subject/contextualist theories into the aesthetic experience. This amalgamation begins with the acceptance of sensuous response to aesthetic qualities as being foundational in the sequence of establishing cognitive processes and eventual meaning making. Here, the sensuous modality of knowing, now locked into the socio/cultural matrix, opens the way to explore and perceive previously unorthodox objects and events. As Grace (1995) proposes, the capacity to feel spills over into a sensuousness of thought as an embodied experience which can involve such contextual-specific domains as the moral or the ethical. Within conciliatory propositions, the validity in considering aesthetic value and appreciation is found in the prerequisite capacity to foster pleasurable consummatory experience. Additionally, fine art can also now be employed to act as socio-historical referents as well as objects for individual dependent isolated contemplation. Correspondingly, visual and popular culture objects and events can be appreciated for their life-enhancing capabilities without the prejudices associated with high or low brow presuppositions. This is because the common denominator in both cases is the draw of initial perceptual qualities to begin the process of a final positive response. Furthermore, there is now proposed a sociological and

historic interchangeability to the status of appreciated objects, rather than a philosophical mandate, which sees experiential relevance only with respect to an intended positive outcome. That is, the experience with the object now dictates that object's relevance as being worthy of aesthetic classification. This is true whether the experience is derived from inputs of essentialist, contextualist or in combination. Here, praxis drives theory.

As observed in this chapter, conciliatory concepts of what constitute art and its appreciation attempt cooperative interpretation where it is believed that adherence to either major epistemology may prove too restrictive. Conciliatory positions believe that subjectivity can not be rule-governed. One size will never fit all. The contrariness inherent in human agency sees to that.

It would seem that traditional notions and characteristics of aesthetic experience need to be expanded and fortified with contemporary concerns. This is because the ability of the traditional aesthetic to 'define' has not been periodically or sufficiently modified to keep pace with the ever-expanding visual phenomena currently acknowledged under the vast definitional 'umbrella' of fine art/visual culture. However, simply because the intrinsic/essentialist positions can not adequately fulfill the totality of definition, it does not mean that many of their concerns are not justified or defensible. They simply do not provide a conclusive picture. The same can be said of subjective/contextualist positions. Relativism is too simplistic an answer for that which will always remain partially aloof to logical discourse.

Summarily, if we view the final destination of positive aesthetic experience as the primary goal, then establishing or defending the theoretical means by which we arrive at it becomes secondary and subservient to the desired experience. In such a proposal -- and in such a contemporary climate of possibilities -- it does not seem heretical to eclectically select from each.

As distilled from the propositions presented in this chapter, conciliatory positions advocate: (1) a conflation of presumed variant positions through a creation of hybrid epistemologies intending to expand, re-define and re-invent the conceptions of aesthetic responses; (2) the fortification of the notion of concept-less perception of essentialist aesthetic experience with cognition (construction of meaning), allowing context relativity to strengthen perceptual experience; (3) a more relevant and open concept of what

constitutes the object worthy of aesthetic encounter; (4) the idea of experience as an embodied phenomenon; and (5) the perceptual qualities associated with the object to be exercised in conjunction with critical examination of the signifiers of visual culture.

Having examined intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextualist and conciliatory impact upon the concept of aesthetic experience, an examination of explicit characteristics of aesthetic experience illustrating aspects of epistemological positions is proposed. The intention here is to observe actual past attempts at formulating taxonomies. This will introduce the reader to their formulation and structure, prior to presenting the inchoate taxonomy proposed by this dissertation's findings. These past explicated characteristics of positive aesthetic experience are advanced by a selection of individual scholars, now presented in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX
EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS OF AESTHETIC
EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Having advanced a reconciliatory position between the perspectives of the intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist epistemologies in Chapter Five, representative examples of past explicated characteristics of aesthetic experience are now presented.

The purpose of this chapter is to present some explicit characteristics of positive aesthetic experience proposed by a small selection of past prominent scholars. The selection is qualified by the scholars' conspicuous formulations of actual taxonomies of aesthetic experience characteristics which have sustained relevance for contemporary debate. The notable omission of feminist input within this section will be addressed in the methodology chapter.

The importance of this preview is in observing and explaining distinct characteristics which show influences from the opposing and conciliatory epistemologies observed so far. Its purpose then is complementary. It seeks to present, first hand, concretised attempts to formulate taxonomies of the characteristics of aesthetic experience -- which is the overriding aim of my own phenomenological research presented in Chapters Eight and Nine.

The presentations of the proposals are not intended to privilege one viewpoint over another; nor are these observations and assumptions to be considered as conclusive or exhaustive on the subject. The selection is simply presented to exhibit workable and representative cross-sections of relevant thought, to acquaint the reader with formatted taxonomies and consider where conciliatory proposals may present themselves.

The structure of this chapter consists of a sequential observation and examination of the proposed characteristics of each selected scholar and their correspondences with aspects of intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextualist and conciliatory epistemologies. A general summary of the characteristics is then presented, followed by a concluding table which sets out the shared characteristics of aesthetic experience observed. These observations will then be used later in Chapters Eight and Nine to establish complements or contrasts concerning this dissertation's

findings regarding the positive characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting.

The major theoretical contributions in this section are from: Monroe Beardsley, Harold Osborne, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Robinson, Gerald Knieter, David Hargreaves and Rod Taylor. Their abbreviated qualifications appear in the Appendix. Their contributions are as follows.

INTRINSIC/ESSENTIALIST CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Monroe Beardsley

Beardsley identified the individual as having an aesthetic experience:

... during a particular stretch of time if and only if the greater part of [the individual's] mental activity during that time is united and made pleasurable by being tied to the form and qualities of a sensuously presented or imaginatively intended object on which [the individual's] primary attention is concentrated (Beardsley, 1969, p. 5).

In other words, the experience is structured through the viewer's attendance toward two aspects afforded by observing the object's intrinsic elements. The first is attention to the formal qualities of artistic structures such as line and colour, etc. that Beardsley (1969) labels the phenomenally objective field. The second features a response to the affective features and qualities (i.e. feelings and emotions as phenomenally subjective) and which are evoked *only* through an internalisation of the phenomenally objective field. A true aesthetic experience occurs when the viewer experiences both these elements.

Furthering the above points, Beardsley (1981) ascribes the following four propositions that he believed to be almost universally held concerning the nature of having an aesthetic experience. Here:

1. The viewer's attention is firmly fixed upon the heterogeneous (but interrelated) components of a phenomenally objective field (as in visual, auditory or verbal). This phenomenon is separated from aspects of, say, simple daydreaming or utilitarian interrogations through the object's ability to concentrate and focus our gaze. In other words, the object controls the viewing experience (Beardsley, 1981).

2. Intensity of experience is attained by the concentration of experience. The

emotional, psychological sensations we may experience are bound to (and emanate from) the phenomenal field of the object. This concentration of intensity fixes our attention only in specificity to what we are observing and not to outside influences. The intensity of the experience may dispel outside interferences such as extraneous movement or sounds. In other words, the concentration is free and unhindered (Beardsley, 1981).

3. The experience has an unusually high degree of unity and coherence in that there seems to be an ordered progression inherent in the experience. In other words, like Dewey's (1980 [1934]) consummatory aspects of having an experience, Beardsley (1981) identifies the aesthetic experience as continuous, as having an innate guiding power which leads toward culmination. That is, it has a beginning, middle and end (what separates Beardsley (1981) from Dewey (1980 [1934]) here is Beardsley's notion that the experience is governed solely by the phenomenal field of the object)). Even when interrupted, the coherence of experience can be easily re-entered (Beardsley, 1981).

4. The experience is resolved and complete in itself. This notion refers to a 'continuity of development' -- having achieved a feeling of equilibrium and finality which is remembered in memory as a single experience without the accompaniment of outside interferences or references (Beardsley, 1981).

The last two above propositions concern the nature of aesthetic experience as relating to matters associated with the concept of *unity*. Beardsley (1981) assumed that the intensity of feelings associated with the experiential state of unity were in direct correlation to the intensity (higher or lower) of the aesthetic experience. This he referred to as 'magnitude.' Any magnitude variations in terms of unity (i.e. completeness and coherence) and the experience's complexity and intensity regulated whether the aesthetic experience was either better or poorer than another. For Beardsley (1981), true aesthetic experience is an infrequent occurrence. This is because rarely do both the objective and the phenomenally-subjective elements required for the experience present themselves with sufficient force or sustained integration during an artistic encounter.

Formalistic contentions also imply that while other objects and natural phenomena may well possess these elements to higher or lesser degrees, examples of monumental (e.g. modernist) art provide the best catalyst. Justifications are based on Beardsley's (1981) perception that good art is beyond instrumentalist concerns, void

of functionality and can be appreciated solely for its own sake. The final effect on the viewer is one which is hedonistic (pleasurable and uplifting) and one in which a rare state of aesthetic *gratification* was achieved (Beardsley, 1982b; Smith, 1991).

Beardsley's characteristics of aesthetic experience

Beardsley (1982a) proposes that there are five characteristics which constitute the aesthetic experience. In order to qualify as aesthetic, an experience must possess the first characteristic and at least three of the other characteristics.

In the following passages, descriptions of the characteristics of aesthetic experience are quoted directly from his article "Aesthetic Experience" (Beardsley, 1982a, pp. 288- 289) and are presented in italics. These passages are followed by brief commentary.

1. Object directedness

A willingly accepted guidance over the succession of one's mental states by phenomenally objective properties (qualities and relations) of a perceptual or intentional field on which attention is fixed with a feeling that things are working or have worked themselves out fittingly.

In other words, the object of attention must have sufficient visual power and cohesion (derived from both formal qualities such as line, colour, etc. and phenomenally subjective associations) for viewers to relinquish presuppositions and allow them to be fully absorbed within contemplation of the object. In later writings, Beardsley (1982c) ascribes a kind of 'essential institutionality,' whereby he proposes that there may be an essential cultural function to artworks (Beardsley, 1982c).

2. Felt freedom

A sense of release from the dominance of some antecedent concern about past and future, a relaxation and sense of harmony with what is presented or semantically invoked by it or implicitly promised by it, so that what comes has the air of having been freely chosen.

That is, by the immersion within pleasurable, intense contemplation of the work of art, a resultant sensation of one's spirits being lifted occurs. Being part of the experience has the ability to lessen outside influences on the viewer's immediate states of mind -- the experience becomes inseparable from the resultant effects.

3. *Detached effect*

A sense that the objects on which interest is concentrated are set a little at a distance emotionally—a certain detachment of affect, so that even when we are confronted with dark and terrible things, and feel them sharply, they do not oppress but make us aware of our power to rise above them.

This characteristic, as well as aspects of characteristic 1. *Object directedness*, is aligned (but not iconoclastically tied) with the notion of disinterestedness discussed earlier. While important and considered a possible feature of the art experience, Beardsley (1982a) separates himself from essentialist scholars such as Stolnitz (1960) and Osborne (1970) in his view that the effect of detachment is not *necessarily* prerequisite for aesthetic experience. The presence of this characteristic seems dependent upon the intentionality of the proposed object's affect and fluctuates by varying degrees (Beardsley, 1982a).

However, if present, Beardsley's (1982a) characteristic of detachment implies that the viewer is capable of separating the actual work of art from its subject matter. It exists as a type of fiction once removed from that being depicted. For instance, while viewers may be overwhelmed with the power and tragedy perceived through viewing a Classical Greek sculpture depicting a dying soldier, the sculpture itself is never confused with an actual event of death. Seen here, the degree of our emotional state is regulated by the reality of the experience.

4. *Active discovery*

A sense of actively exercising constructive powers of the mind, of being challenged by a variety of potentially conflicting stimuli to try to make them cohere; a keyed-up state amounting to exhilaration in seeing connections between precepts and between meanings, a sense (which may be illusory) of intelligibility.

This is the proactive effort of the viewer to 'read' the work of art, to make sense and engage cognitive-like links to solve or connect the work's parts in order to comprehend the totality of what is being presented. It is, "... the experience of discovery, of insights into connections and organizations ..." (Beardsley, 1982a, p. 292), which, in turn, make personal understanding of the artwork possible.

5. Wholeness

A sense of integration as a person, of being restored to wholeness from distracting and disruptive influences (but by inclusive synthesis as well as by exclusion), and a corresponding contentment, even through disturbing feelings, that involves self-acceptance and self-expansion.

Beardsley's (1982a) final characteristic concerns the sensations of self-actualisation. This renewal of the spirit is in direct response to the feelings of coherency and internal satisfaction the viewer receives from a heightened experience with a work of art. The encounter not only has the ability to emotionally lighten the burdens of everyday life, but also to point toward new personal horizons.

In summary, Beardsley's (1982a) aesthetic experience is one where the viewer's concentration is directed towards the qualities and form intrinsic to the work of art. This is in correspondence with aspects of essentialist perspectives such as the aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness. This correspondence can be seen in Beardsley's (1982a) concept of detached effect and the idea of object directedness. In aesthetic experience, viewer attention is focused on both the object's formal qualities (e.g. line, colour, etc...) and affective features (e.g. emotions, feelings). The final state of hedonistic gratification is also attained through the characteristics of: (1) emotional release; (2) a lessening of concern regarding extraneous interferences outside the dynamics of the experience; (3) a recognition of a degree of non-instrumentality of the art object (detached effect); (4) proactive viewer participation to find connections and organisations in which to establish the experience as cohesive and unified and a feeling of wholeness and; (5) personal integration that leads to self-actualisation.

Harold Osborne

Harold Osborne is another advocate of aspects of essentialist theory that share certain commonalities of aesthetic experience as advanced above. It also brings in the conceptual link of appreciation to that of aesthetic experience (Osborne, 1968; 1970). In so doing, he identifies eight characteristics which he feels address the unique manner in which we *attend* aesthetic experience. He believes these features, both collectively and individually, help us to understand and differentiate aesthetic experience from other ways of experiencing. Osborne's (1970) eight characteristics of the aesthetic experience may be outlined as follows:

(1) In perceiving aesthetically, we become centred on the object or event. That is, it stands apart and becomes abstracted from its immediate environment. During such experience, the object is 'framed apart' from its surroundings and becomes isolated in perception for contemplation. Our attention is 'arrested' or fixed by the object or event. Awareness of extraneous surroundings or implications is dispelled by our contemplative focusing. Osborne (1970) uses the analogy of the fixed targeting device of a painting's actual frame, employed to centre our concentration.

(2) During this fixed concentration, we do not conceptualise or discursively think about the object. Our concentration is directed solely to the object itself and is not effected by any practical or theoretical observations or classificatory implications. That is, the aesthetic experience exists separate from theoretical or practical outside associations (Osborne, 1970).

(3) When apprehending aesthetically we perceive the object as a complex structure of interrelated parts. The parts, however, cannot be seen as constituents that can be discursively addressed in isolation. In other words, the parts are articulate to perception only in relation to the perception of the whole. We do not dwell on associations of its isolated components. Here, we perceive the entire picture, its totality, rather than as an assemblage of independently operating classification of symbol, identity or meaning maker (Osborne, 1970).

(4) As all practical and theoretical concerns are checked, the aesthetic experience can be said to have its own feeling of detachment (i.e. disinterestedness), serenity and emotional colour. Because we are absorbed in the contemplation of the object in its own right, discursive associations and personal idiosyncratic moods, emotions and predispositions are held in abeyance. In other words, we have no inward dwellings and all contemplation is related to the perception of the autonomous work of art (Osborne, 1970).

(5) As our awareness increases toward the object in perception, there is a loss regarding percipient plays of imagination and meditative musing. In other words, the aesthetic experience negates the presentation of symbols of ideas or images as conductors for imaginative speculation. These are assumed indulgences and preoccupations, all of which act as detractors from the concentration of the object in perception. That is, concentration is directed entirely toward the object. There is no day-dreaming or fanciful psychological embellishment (Osborne, 1970).

(6) Aesthetic experience concerns the appearance of the object presented, not with its real existence. We contemplate the manifestation, the apparition of perceived states, rather than the physicality of the object itself (Osborne, 1970).

(7) Aesthetic experience involves absorption which is due to the narrow field of contemplation and awareness confined to direct perception. As a consequence, our mental alertness and faculties are stimulated, while the experience attains a type of heightened and enhanced quality. There is a feeling of impact and vividness associated with the experience. There is also a loss of time sense, body consciousness and the sense of place. Osborne (1970) proposes that “... we become identified with the aesthetic object by which our attention is gripped and held” (Osborne, 1970, p. 35). However, this sensation of absorption never overpowers our ego-consciousness (we never lose the awareness of being spectators). We are but slightly removed in order to be cognisant, aware and absorbed by the heightened reality and vividness of the experience (achieved through concentrated perception on the object) (Osborne, 1970).

(8) While any object can be considered a candidate for aesthetic appreciation and experience, it is works of art which are best suited to elicit the prolonged and repeatable activity of aesthetic experience. This is because they are intended to promote contemplation in the aesthetic mode through their sufficient perceptual complexities. In other words, they hold more robustly our aesthetic attention in perception, whereas contemplation of other objects may not support such an activity, thus falling into realms of the practical, instrumental or subjective sentimentality (Osborne, 1970).

In summary, Osborne's (1970) eight characteristics have commonality with those proposed by Beardsley (1982a). For instance, Osborne's (1970) interpretations concerning the aesthetic object being abstracted from the environment, concentration being fixed on the object which is contemplated in a non-discursive manner, and the belief that art objects are the primary source for prolonged and sustainable aesthetic experience echoes Beardsley's (1982a) claims for object-directedness, detached effect (i.e. disinterestedness) and the belief that art objects are the best catalyst for the promotion of aesthetic experience. In addition, both taxonomies share an intrinsic/essentialist perspective through the promotion of non-instrumentality and through the concept that the pleasant, heightened experience affordable through contemplation of the formal qualities of a work of art is justification in itself for

seeking out such experiences.

CONTEXTUALIST AND CONCILIATORY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Robinson

Structural elements

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) advance a basic definition of aesthetic experience within its structural elements as being “... an intense involvement of attention in response to a visual stimulus, for no other reason than to sustain the interaction” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 178).

As a consequence of this initial and heightened experiential interaction, the subject witnesses feelings described as:

... a deep and autotelic involvement ... intense enjoyment characterized by feelings of [1] personal wholeness, [2] a sense of discovery, and a [3] sense of human connectedness (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 178).

The term autotelic refers to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) earlier studies concerning optimal experiences, or 'flow,' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and shares commonality with aspects of Maslow's (1968) earlier investigations into peak experiences. Here, flow can be defined as sought experiences entered into for the sake of the experience itself. This experience is immediate and is its own reward. In this regard, the elements of flow and Csikszentmihalyi's & Robinson's (1990) structural characteristics of aesthetic experience are correspondent in some respects to certain intrinsic/essentialist propositions presented earlier in the dissertation. This can be seen in Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) comparison of optimal experiences with that of the defining characteristics of aesthetic experience, as proposed earlier by Beardsley (1982a).

For example, Beardsley's (1982a) characteristics of *object focus* and the *sense of felt freedom* relate to the flow characteristics of *merging action and awareness* (where attention is focused upon the activity) and *limitation of stimulus field* (where past and future consequences are negated for a total concentration on the immediate phenomenon). In addition, Beardsley's (1982a) criteria of *detached effect* and *active discovery* are paralleled with Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990)

characteristics of *loss of ego* (i.e. a transcendence of the self) and *control of actions* (i.e. the employment of sufficient skills to combat the challenges of content). Finally, Beardsley's (1982a) contention of the element of *wholeness* is mirrored somewhat in the optimal experience's characteristic of *clear goals, clear feedback* and its *autotelic nature* (non-instrumental, personal reward) (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). Of these characteristics, Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) research indicated that the attentional dimensions of *object directedness, limitation of stimulus field* and *loss of ego* were the most prevalently discussed by the research participants.

By reviewing the above observations of both optimal experience (flow) and aesthetic experience, we can formulate an abridged working taxonomy of Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) structural elements of the characteristics and criteria for aesthetic experience. However, it must be noted that these structural elements are contingent upon first addressing the more expansive *Informational content* of the experience (discussed after). The structural elements are presented in table format below. The left-hand column lists the structural elements, or characteristics. The right-hand column lists the discriminating qualities of the characteristics.

Table 4- Structural elements (characteristics) of aesthetic experience proposed by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990)

Structural element (characteristic)	Discriminating quality
(1) <i>Merging of action and awareness</i>	The attention of the percipient is centred on the object.
(2) <i>Limitation of stimulus field</i>	There is no awareness of past or future.
(3) <i>Loss of ego</i>	There is a feeling of loss of self-consciousness and an additional sensation of transcendence of ego boundaries.
(4) <i>Control of actions</i>	Perceptual and cognitive skills rallied to overcome challenges presented by the work.
(5) <i>Clear goals, clear feedback</i>	The subject's effortful interaction is rewarded by the experience itself.
(6) <i>Autotelic nature</i>	The experience is intrinsically fulfilling. The experience is non-instrumental. There is no need for external rewards. Within the autotelic nature of the experience, the percipient may experience sensations of (a) <i>personal wholeness</i> , (b) a <i>sense of discovery</i> and (c) a <i>sense of human connectedness</i> .

(Distilled from Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Informational content

However, what Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) discovered is that while the structural characteristics of aesthetic experience (as described above) may be experienced and recognised as having universal applicability irrespective of their emotional or cognitive content, the experience's informational content, which they believe is pre-conditional to having the experience, has no such universal application.

In other words, the structural characteristics (e.g. loss of ego or transcendence) we feel are dependent upon our ability to come to terms with the experience's content. That content, far from being universal, is subject-particular and steeped in a type of sociocultural co-construction of knowledge. That is, response is constructed through the definitions of culture as well as personal ontologies. Through these constructs, they contend that the aesthetic experience is formulated through a blending of information inherent within (i.e. coming from) the art object *and* that of retrieved and tacit knowledge stored by the percipient. In this respect, Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) research proposes a somewhat conciliatory attitude regarding epistemological stances. This is because both the formal values of the artwork are objectified for the viewer, yet those qualities, in order that they may be internalised as heightened subjective response, must be first conditioned by socioculturally based content.

Their proposal of what constitutes the elements of this content is broken down into two sets of preconditions which must be met in order for the aesthetic experience to actualise. These are referred to as (1) the challenges contained in the object, followed by (2) the skills the subject possesses. They are outlined as follows:

1. Challenges contained in the object

The challenges contained in the object relate to four main dimensions (or ways of response) within aesthetic experience, those dimensions being: (a) Perceptual; (b) Emotional; (c) Intellectual; and (d) Communicative. Each is outlined below.

(a) Perceptual dimension

The perceptual dimension refers to the physicality of the work itself and to the viewer being drawn into the experience by formal qualities of the work (e.g. size and scale, colour, line, texture, compositional elements, etc.). This intensified awareness of the formal qualities can also trigger traditional concepts of harmony, order and balance

(among other essentialist notions of beauty). There is also a desire to engage other sensuous modalities of knowing (such as touch).

While a large proportion of these feelings experienced through perception may be articulated with some clarity, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) propose that a portion of the response remains ineffable. The work's sheer presence speaks for itself. That is, there is a feeling that transformationally goes beyond looking or feeling and has a direct relation to what Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) observe as "... the admission of the affective and interactive power of form and the surface of the work" (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 33). This equates with notions of the intrinsic/essentialist epistemologies regarding the intuitive draw of the artwork's formal qualities to initiate the aesthetic experience.

(b) Emotional dimension

Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990) also propose that the dimension of emotional response, like perception, is evident in most aesthetic experience. This dimension concerns the work's ability to elicit emotional responses within the viewer. These primary responses Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) see as assuming either positive or negative emotional shadings, yet may change depending upon the duration of time spent interacting with the work. The emotional dimension is frequently introduced within the viewer through transpirations of surprise or feelings of familiarity and can assume such connotative states as comfort or nostalgia. These feelings are in relation to viewer sympathies and associations regarding personal histories which may embody past associations or engendered experiences. While the initial introduction to the work must meet with a precursory positive emotional response, that seminal affect may change and become more complex through periods of extended contemplation.

(c) Intellectual (cognitive) dimension

The intellectual or cognitive dimension pertains to the viewer's desire to find the clues, cues and codes in order to interpret the meanings inherent within the work. In other words, we use our intellect to attempt understanding. These meanings may be visually presented in easy access for viewer interrogation, or may be hidden or disguised through such devices as allegory or symbolism.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) see the engagement of cognitive strategies and interpretation as ways in which the viewer seeks either closure or openness. Strategies for attempting closure relate to employing direct problem solving skills, such as categorisation, to ascertain the work's definitive and individual meaning for the viewer. Closure, for many, is an integral part of appreciation. This is because closure may elicit self-actualising feelings of mastery and accomplishment.

Openness, on the other hand, pertains to investigating the work for the seemingly endless insights discoverable through ongoing facilitation. In other words, we see and appreciate the cognitive games and are intrigued, rather than annoyed, by the work's complexities and contingencies.

Within Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) proposal of an intellectual dimension to aesthetic experience are three major modes of interacting with a work of art. These modes consist of: (c1) appreciation of the work historically, (c2) appreciation of the work in an art historical context and (c3) appreciation of the work biographically.

These facets of the intellectual dimension, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) believe, are integral in positioning the work within a social and cultural milieu. By doing so, the work becomes an integrative resource which works alongside history, opening the way for viewer insight and personal investigations into eras, art movements, or artistic personality. All of these facets can be as nurturing agents for the creation and understanding of the work. Art sets up personal interest and experiences of the worlds it depicts. It mirrors or distorts eras, customs and sociological idiosyncrasies. By doing so, it establishes within the viewer recognition of his or her place within the larger society.

Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) research proposes this experience at times to be a circular process whereby we observe the work as a link to setting up a dialogue with the past. We then reconsider its context, which, in turn, re-opens the work for further interpretation. In addition, the aesthetic response is empowered by our recognition of the artist's intent, purpose, reasoning and idiosyncratic behaviours.

(d) Communicative dimension

The fourth dimension of the aesthetic experience, as proposed from Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) research, deals with the dimension of communication. These interactions can be seen as internal dialogues which are viewer

initiated in response to certain visual aspects presented by the work.

Again, this dimension works in cooperative action with the perceptual, intellectual and emotional dimensions. The communicative dimension relates to the thoughts and feelings which the work provokes. This occurs not only upon initial introduction, but also through continual change and effortful interrogation. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) refer to the dialogues as significant *feeling states*, or the qualitative rapports that are established between viewer and art object. The feeling states are often characterised by the use of metaphorical language to describe the interaction. Examples of such interaction can be found in personifications such as, “the work spoke to me,” or attributing to the work communicative activities such as singing, shouting or whispering (to name a few).

Here, communication dialogues fall under three broad categories, those being: (d1) communications involving an era or culture; (d2) communications relating to the artist; and (d3) communications which takes place within the viewer. These communication dialogues are discussed below.

(d1) Communications involving an era or culture

The first category, communications involving an era or culture, can be further subdivided into two modes. The first deals with the distinctions of the past to the present, while the second refers to their commonalities. For example, we set up dialogues with the work’s historical references which may stimulate internal discourse concerning the vagaries of customs and preoccupations. On the other hand, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) cite examples where the similarities of disparate eras may induce dialogue due to the work’s depicted, “symbolic intention and usage or on the simple facts of humanity” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 64). In other words, there is a mutuality of understanding which transcends time through such objects or events with identifiably allegorical intent (i.e. war, love, etc).

(d2) Communications relating to the artist

Communications with the artist concerns the experiential sensation of sharing with the artist his or her intentions and realities. For example, by viewing the swirls and agitation within technique and mood of a late Van Gogh painting, we believe that we can feel, understand or relate to the turbulence of his mental state or the consuming ferocity of his vision.

(d3) Communications which takes place within the viewer

This refers to the personal, idiosyncratic and emotive response to a work of art. This response can present itself through feelings of personal association and sentiments, loss of ego and transcendence. In its most extreme case, the viewer is transported, through experiencing the work, into realms of fantasy and associations which have significant and mood altering effects.

In summary, like Beardsley (1982a) and Osborne (1970), Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) found that this exalted state is a rare occurrence and is, as in the cases of Beardsley (1982a) and Osborne (1970), almost always associated with the viewing of reputed masterpieces.

In addition, the viewer's idiosyncratic background in relation to culture/history, art history and biographical knowledge of the artist, together with his or her personal life history, are variables in the acquisition of heightened aesthetic encounter. Subject privileging (or ordering) of one of Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) dimensions over another within the experience may also influence the experience's direction. For example, one may privilege investigating the intellectual challenges presented by the artwork, requiring a more extended period of interaction, over the immediate felt perceptual aspects of form.

Additionally, the proposals of Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) concerning aesthetic experience share commonality with aspects of intrinsic/essentialist theories in regards to purpose-less, non-instrumental contemplation for no reward other than that which the experience itself affords. It also signals contextualist, effortful pro-activity on the viewer's part. In addition, as observed, there is a significant differentiation between the *structure* and the *content* of the experience.

Upon observation, the structure seems correspondent to traditional characteristics as described by Beardsley (1982a) and others and is in line with the psychology of optimal experience (i.e. flow). However, the aesthetic experience's *content*, divided into four dimensions, necessitate a purposive course of knowledge acquisition and informed sensitivity in order for the viewer to intensify the experience beyond that of singular perceptual immediacy.

What is being proposed is that in order for the experience to succeed, the viewer must rise to the challenges of the perceptual, emotional, cognitive and communicative aspects that are offered by interaction with the artwork. The percipient's levels of understanding in these areas dictate the complexity and magnitude of the encounter. Cognition and interpretation are required. This overall idea of the amalgamation of intrinsic perception and meaningfulness finds synergies with the proposals of Knieter (1971), who now follows.

Gerald Knieter

Knieter (1971) considers the possibility that while some may find qualities in art universal, the true universality concerning experiential interaction with art remains in the individual's capacity to respond to both internal and external artistic stimuli as a natural phenomena. He feels the purpose of evaluation of the aesthetic experience is better served by sidestepping 'elaborate systems of description' defining specific theories in order to concentrate on the essential characteristics of aesthetic experience generally. That is, to eliminate the need for artworks to substantiate theory by acting as validation examples for theory.

In proposing such a notion, Knieter's (1971) concept of aesthetic experience is based on the belief that individuals are merely reacting naturally to values and meanings that are inherent within them and *not* the object. In other words, the aesthetic experience rises out of a fundamental source, that source being our natural response (emotional and cognitive) to our livedworlds. It is a quality of *aesthetic personality* which, Knieter (1971) suggests, is shared by all.

It is to be found by witnessing humankind's aesthetic behaviours, rather than by observing elements or values which emanate from the art object. While Knieter (1971) sets out five characteristics numerically, no hierarchical order is implied. Indeed, they may all occur simultaneously. Knieter's (1971) characteristics of aesthetic experience are described in table format below. The left-hand column lists the characteristics. The right-hand column lists the discriminating qualities of the characteristics.

Table 5-- Knieter's (1971) characteristics of aesthetic experience

Characteristic	Discriminating quality
(1) <i>The aesthetic experience involves focus and is highly directional.</i>	Energy flows <i>from</i> the respondent <i>to</i> the work of art such that the respondent is stimulated by the object. To this, the aesthetic experience cannot be attained vicariously. In other words, it cannot occur merely through exposing a respondent to works of art in a casual manner (e.g. walking through a hallway with paintings in view), as a casual or fleeting encounter does not contribute sufficiently for percipient stimulation.
(2) <i>The aesthetic experience involves perception or the process through which data from the senses (percepts) are utilised.</i>	A percept is that which is known of an object, quality or relationship through sensory experience. It is a state of awareness rather than an image or memory. Percepts are organised around a series of related sensations actuated from internal or external stimuli. The organisation of a pattern of percepts may give rise to a concept or generalisation about a class of ideas, a percept or assorted data that is usually formed as a result of a group of related sensations, percepts and images. In this way, the aesthetic experience can be said to stress and require an active and directionary engagement of the percipient's sensory faculties and perceptions.
(3) <i>The aesthetic experience involves affect.</i>	There are two kinds of affective response which occur during an aesthetic experience. They are physiological change and feelingful reaction. Physiological responses are in reference to psychogalvanic change (electric changes in the body resultant from mental or emotional stimuli such as pupil dilation, changes in blood pressure etc.). Feelingful reactions refer to the heightening of a percipient's emotional state during the encounter.
(4) <i>The aesthetic experience involves cognition.</i>	Respondents cannot simply stay preoccupied in emotional reactions. They must be acutely conscious while affectively engaged. In other words, we come to a new experience with a backlog of other experiences from which we (to varying degrees) can draw structural comprehension links. Such links or intellectual awarenesses typically take the form of analysis, synthesis, abstraction, generalisation or evaluation.
(5) <i>The aesthetic experience involves the cultural matrix.</i>	Art does not exist in a cultural vacuum. The process by which one acquires one's value systems (acculturation) resembles the process through which one acquires one's social values. In other words, there exists a contextual, sociocultural element within the aesthetic experience.

(Distilled from Knieter, 1971).

In summarising Knieter's (1971) characteristics of aesthetic experience we see another significant shift away from essentialist perspectives. There is no advocacy here for the concept of an intrinsic, autonomous artwork. Instead, the viewer now initiates dialogue with the object and allows the artwork to naturally disclose its formal qualities, interpretations and meanings to the viewer.

In other words, both formal qualities (i.e. intrinsic/essentialist) and interpretation and meanings (i.e. subjective/contextualist) come into play through viewer initiation. In addition, the experience is heightened through purposive viewer engagement to find cognitive schema and to construct meaning. By these introductions, perceptual and meaningful responses are empowered through ontogeny and sociocultural associations. The aesthetic experience becomes both affective *and* value-laden. The heightened experience is characterised by the interaction of intrinsic, basic and natural aesthetic behaviours in conjunction with socially sourced mediations. Knieter's (1971) de-emphasis of theory in favour of the idea of natural response within experience is also observed within the characteristics identified by Hargreaves and Taylor which are now discussed.

David Hargreaves and Rod Taylor

Much has been done in terms of defining and exploring the concept of aesthetic experience theoretically. However, the subjective element inherent in art encounters always remains illusive to theoretical generalisation. Logic and deduction, it seems, can only go so far. The intrinsic meaning of art can never be fully defined through language, propositional meaning and critical argument. Moreover, for some (e.g. Abbs, 1994; Knieter, 1971), privileging theory over real-time activity can be detrimental to the aesthetic response. One of the ways to bring the experiential more into focus is through phenomenological means, as observed below in the investigations conducted by Hargreaves and Taylor.

illuminating experience and conversive trauma

To begin, the foundational work on what Taylor (1986) describes as 'illuminating experience' (i.e. aesthetic experience) was derived from Hargreaves' (1983a) earlier phenomenological gatherings. Noteworthy here is that Abbs (1994) later initiated a 'quasi' experiment with arts education student based on Hargreaves' initial research and found significant correspondences.

Hargreaves' (1983a) findings were based on responses to the question of how certain people believed they came to acquire their interest in art appreciation. From this simple phenomenological questioning sprang sufficient data for Hargreaves (1983a) to propose the idea that introduction into the arts could be seen as either conversively (i.e. positive) or aversively traumatic (i.e. off-putting). Our interest is only with the conversive theory, in that it relates to the acquisition of positive aesthetic experience). The conversive trauma is seen as:

... a single experience ... [where] ... preconceptions are destroyed by an unexpectedly pleasant experience ... [Its] most notable characteristic is that it is a relatively sudden, dramatic and intensive process of initiation into an art form (Hargreaves, 1983a, p. 140).

Hargreaves' (1983a) conversive trauma describes the percipient's initial introduction to the art form. To this, art's ability to sustain such states of awareness, the 'illuminating experience' (aesthetic experience), is considered by Taylor (1986) as a type of itemisation of all these moments (elements). These moments, originally detected by Hargreaves (1983a) as being related to conversive traumatic theory and to which Taylor (1986) attributes characteristics of illuminating experience, are now observed.

In the passages below, the listed characteristics are followed by italicised defining quotes taken from Hargreaves (1983a). Below these are appended further explanations.

The four elements/characteristics of aesthetic experience

(1) Concentration of attention.

“One is totally absorbed in or unexpectedly fascinated by the art object, caught up in it, even taken over by it. In a strong form of the trauma, one's sense of time and space is suspended and one loses consciousness of all extraneous matters. One is lost in the art object” (Hargreaves, 1983a, p. 141).

In other words, the participant experiences an essentialist-like forceful and overpowering feeling of being drawn towards the work's intrinsic nature. The loss of awareness regarding extraneous matters and one's place in the world also suggests that in its initial encounter stage there is a non-discursive nature to the experience,

again, an essentialist perspective.

(2) Sense of Revelation

“[o]ne has a sense of new and important reality being opened up before one or of entering a new plane of existence which is somehow intensely real. It is not merely that one's senses are, in contrast to everyday living, heightened and accompanied by a profound emotional disturbance; there is also a feeling of discovery as if some already existing core of the self is suddenly being touched and brought to life for the first time... The experience has cognitive or intellectual features certainly, but the emotional aspects are paramount”

(Hargreaves, 1983a, p. 141).

The suggestion here is that, while elementary cognitive processes are activated, the major thrust is intuitive in nature. One's sensations and emotions are momentarily confused and searching (in a positive, uplifting manner). There could also be considered a kind of spiritual *deja vu* that takes place. The heightened feelings and emotions culminate in ruminations not dissimilar to the desire for self-actualisation, as observed within the characteristics presented by Knieter (1971).

(3) Inarticulateness

“[o]ne feels unable to express what has happened in words, either to oneself or to others. For some time there is no desire to communicate the experience to others; but when this urge is present it is usually impossible to achieve. The affective aspects can be so powerful that, as it were, feelings drown the words”

(Hargreaves, 1983a, p. 141).

Again, this element is reminiscent of the essentialist perspective advanced by Osborne (1970) in which the viewer does not conceptualise or think discursively. The power is primarily intuitive and ineffable.

(4) Arousal of appetite

“[o]ne simply wants the experience to continue or to be repeated, and this can be felt with considerable urgency. In the weaker versions of the trauma there is still a lingering fascination which leads people to say that they felt 'hooked' on the art object in some way” (Hargreaves, 1983a, pp. 141-2).

This explanation can be linked with Beardsley's (1982a) concept of gratification and its correspondent desire to cultivate the ability for further experiences. It also testifies to a desire for proactivity and the sense of a more on-going power of the aesthetic experience, as opposed to instructional, pragmatic

experience.

A GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS PRESENTED IN CHAPTER SIX

Looking back over the characteristics of aesthetic experience presented by Beardsley (1982a), Osborne (1970), Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), Knieter (1971), Hargreaves (1983a) and Taylor (1986) we can observe adherences to certain perspectives within both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist epistemologies. There are also conciliatory and eclectic positions such as Csikszentmihalyi's & Robinson's (1990) and Knieter's (1971) being forwarded.

However, all consider the aesthetic experience to be beneficial and life enhancing, regardless of whether this state ensues through inductive enjoyment of art for its own sake (Beardsley, 1982a; Osborne, 1970; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990), or through meanings derived through interpretations explicated from the cultural matrix (Knieter, 1971; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). In addition, all taxonomies acknowledge (to varying degrees) the non-discursive nature and ineffable quality of aesthetic experience.

Table 6 below sets out some of the shared characteristics suggested from the above selected scholars' propositions. In the left-hand column are presented some of the major recurring characteristics to which the scholars in the right-hand column share (to varying degrees). The numbers appearing after the scholar's name are in reference to the aesthetic experience characteristics and/or propositions, as in Beardsley's case, as proposed within their previously covered sections.

Table 6- Shared characteristics of aesthetic experience

<i>Object Focus/ Object Directedness</i>	<i>Beardsley</i> (1) Object directedness; <i>Osborne</i> (1) Object centeredness; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (1) Merging of action and awareness object focused, (2) Limitation of stimulus field; <i>Knieter</i> (1) Stimulation drawn from object; <i>Hargreaves</i> (1) Concentration of attention toward object.
<i>Feelings of detachment</i>	<i>Beardsley</i> (3) Detached effect, set off from reality; <i>Osborne</i> (2) No theoretical or practical concerns, (4) Feeling of detachment, disinterestedness, (7) Loss of body consciousness, loss of time/space; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (2) Limitation of stimulus field, no awareness of past or future; <i>Hargreaves</i> (1) Time and space suspended.
<i>Feelings of active discovery</i>	<i>Beardsley</i> (4) Feelings of active discovery, exercising constructive powers, sense of intellectuality (possibly illusory); <i>Osborne</i> (7) Stimulation of alertness; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (4) Skills (cognitive) employed to overcome challenges, control of actions, (6b) Sense of discovery, (6c) Sense of human connectedness; <i>Knieter</i> (4) Employment of cognitive schema; <i>Hargreaves</i> (2) Feelings of new and important realities.
<i>Feelings of self fulfillment, wholeness, self- actualisation</i>	<i>Beardsley</i> (5) Integration as a person, gratification (hedonistic pleasure and sense of being up-lifted); <i>Osborne</i> (7) Enjoyment, contemplative attitude; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (5) Realisation of clear goals, clear feedback, intense enjoyment, (6a) Personal wholeness, (6b) A sense of discovery, (6c) A sense of human connectedness. <i>Knieter</i> (3) Feelingful reactions, both physiological and emotional; <i>Hargreaves</i> (4) Gratification of experience, arousal of appetite for further encounters.
<i>Perception of the experience as a unified whole</i>	<i>Beardsley</i> (Proposition 3) Unity and coherence, (Proposition 4) Totality of experience; <i>Osborne</i> (3) The parts of the experience are only important as they articulate the intuitive perception of the whole; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (5) Clear goals, clear feedback (intuitive ‘concreteness of presented image’ fortified by content awareness); <i>Hargreaves</i> (2) Observed as a single experience, while cognitive structures are activated, the major thrust is intuitive in nature.
<i>Inarticulateness</i>	<i>Hargreaves</i> (3) Ineffable nature, words can not fully describe.
<i>Feelings of identification with object</i>	<i>Beardsley</i> (Proposition 2) Emotional and psychological sensations bound to object, (1) Object directedness; <i>Osborne</i> (7) Identification with object by our attention being held and gripped, absorption; <i>Hargreaves</i> (1) Being lost in the object.

As observed above, despite initial differences presented by some of the contributors, there is much that can be envisioned as reconciliatory within the scholars' individual proposals and in their relation to the earlier propositions of the two major epistemologies.

The explicated characteristics above and the theoretical propositions regarding aesthetic experience covered in earlier chapters, have now laid the conceptual groundings for this dissertation's forthcoming particular exploration of positive aesthetic experience characteristics in painting.

However, prior to that exploration of characteristics, this research's selection and employment of methodological tools and procedures need to be examined. This examination is required to insure that the methodologies are deemed appropriate for my research's aim. Again, that aim is to elucidate the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting through the discursive and non-discursive presented essences of my research participants. To underpin this investigation and act as a focus for the topic and collection of data and analysis is the phenomenological research question: *What are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?*

Because of this aim, the intended methodology needs to be appropriate to filtering subjective livedworld essences of the research participants. It also requires the minimisation of theoretical pre-conditionings and must be responsive to the idiosyncratic, interpretive and inductive nature of subjective response. The methodology should also be flexible and open enough to foster a kind of reflected familiarity with the research question. This will allow a capturing of essences, non-discursive and discursive data which 'responds' rather than 'explains'. All these requirements suggest a recruitment of methodologies aligned with qualitative phenomenological and reflective approaches.

So, with the background informing chapters complete, methodological issues are now addressed in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses the design, methodology and applications employed in this research. Generally, it pursues a qualitative/phenomenological epistemology/paradigm and is eclectically structured according to heuristic research methodologies as prescribed by Moustakas (1990; 1994) and Douglas and Moustakas (1985). It also draws upon aspects of heuristic research in the tradition of human science phenomenology of Van Manen (1990) and contributing aspects of general expressive research forwarded by Willis (2000; 2001; 2002), Willis & Smith (2000). Finally, aspects of reflective practice by Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985a; 1985b) and concepts surrounding tacit knowing espoused by Polanyi (1983) are incorporated into its design.

The chapter begins with a description of the investigations surrounding the research topic, aim and how the topic was approached. Next, the need to separate theoretical explications from phenomenological data is advanced. This, in turn, advances a defense of the qualitative approach employed here. The selection of a heuristic and phenomenological methodology is argued and an overview of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic methodology is presented. Within this section, underlying concepts as identifying with focus of inquiry, self dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing and inward frames of reference are discussed.

Other sections follow where the inclusion of myself as a research participant, the selection of the remaining participants and their selected paintings from which they would focus their reflections are discussed. In addition, the selection and assessment of research sites and ethical concerns are addressed.

From here, tools for data collecting, such as reflective writing, responses to set questions and interviews are examined. An explanation of collection, collation and analysis of data used in this research is then promoted which incorporates Moustakas' (1990) six phases of heuristic research. Previewed below, these phases include:

- (1) *Initial engagement*- Locating and isolating the significant research question;
- (2) *Immersion*- Becoming one with the question as it presents itself in all facets of daily life;

- (3) *Incubation*- The setting aside of the research question for gestation purposes;
- (4) *Illumination*- The discovery of new awarenesses which have remained hidden;
- (5) *Explication*- Themes, qualities and descriptive phrases are fully examined and;
- (6) *Creative synthesis*- The transformation of all collected data into a new and creative format.

Further aspects of collecting and analysing the data, such as line-by-line interrogation of full texts, colour and numerical coding and indexing are presented. Finally, issues of triangulation and validity are examined and the limitations of the study are outlined.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The focus of the research topic took the form of an aim. That aim was to elucidate the positive aesthetic experience characteristics in painting. These characteristics were to be explicated through the discursive and non-discursive data/essences from two artist/educators, one full time professional artist and one art theorist/educator.

Within this aim, the phenomenological question which underpinned the investigation and acted as a focus for the topic and the collection of data and analysis was:

What are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?

Being a practising painter and art educator, I derived the phenomenological question from a personal response and through involvement with the phenomena in question. That is, the question had both personal and general applicability. The internal search processes involved in formulating the question were achieved through personal immersion. This required the self-initiated processes of indwelling, internal frame of references and self-searching as discussed later.

In approaching the above phenomenological aim and question, in all data gathering interludes, participants were continually directed to respond without attempts to explain. That is, they were encouraged to address their reflections toward personal 'lived experience' descriptions without relegating the experience to causal explanations or interpretative generalisations (Van Manen, 1990). This personal

focusing was in an attempt to establish a repeated emphasis on what it was like. That is, to “... question something by going back again and again to the things themselves until that which is put to question begins to reveal something of its essential nature” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 43). It was hoped that this would establish a reflected familiarity with the question. That is, a continual unraveling and exposure of non-essential associations until an inner core of experience was exposed.

HOW THE RESEARCH AIM WAS APPROACHED

As in most expressive and phenomenological investigations, the research aim and question were developing before entering the research field. I acknowledge, as does most expressive research inquiry, that issues surrounding this exploration of the phenomenon of aesthetic experience were influenced by a personal, moral investment (Willis & Smith, 2000). As Moustakas (1990) observes, “... something that has called to me from within my life experience, something to which I have associations ...” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). In other words, both the motivation and the emphasis of my research were based on personal, subjective concerns and influences which had exercised (for some time) direct bearing on my own livedworld (Moustakas, 1990; Emery, 1996; Van Manen, 1990).

Moreover, having personal and direct experiential encounter with the phenomenon under investigation (in this case, aesthetic experience in painting) is prerequisite for heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). Here, the active, participatory role as researcher cannot be extracted and objectified from that which I research. It necessitates a personal commitment requiring my own placement within the situational, theoretical and phenomenological research contexts. It is this “... [e]mphasis on the investigator’s internal frame of reference, self-searching, intuition, and indwelling [which reside] at the heart of heuristic inquiry” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 12).

This is because my livedworld and practice are inseparable, embodied. They are also multifaceted. My role as artist, lecturer, appreciator, inquirer and my interactions as a participant within a societal sphere (as well as the possessor of a unique and subjective personal ontology) are what make up phenomenological research’s initial data (Moustakas, 1990; Van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, through a positive ‘exploitation’ of the researcher’s personal subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988, cited in Eisner 1998b), Eisner (1998b) endorses the idea of formulating a unique signature

within qualitative art-based research. He sees this personal (though informed) insight as being beneficial to the research situation by assisting the qualitative concepts of multiple, rather than single, views (Eisner, 1998b).

SEPARATING THEORY FROM EXPERIENCE

The intentions of the previous chapters have been to focus on elaborating the concepts and characteristics of aesthetic experience theoretically.

Along with those stated earlier in the dissertation, one of the purposes of reviewing this literature was in response to the qualitative requirements proposed by Minichiello et al. (1995). These requirements pertain to the literature review acting as provocation for thinking. That is, as stimulant for investigation and reflection.

According to Minichiello et al. (1995), reviews of theoretical literature can:

- (a) acquaint the researcher and reader with what has conceptually gone on before and places the research within context;
- (b) act as a referent for making schemes for understanding and questioning further data; and
- (c) assist through possible suggestions regarding planning and methodological design (Minichiello et al., 1995).

In addition to acting as an historical perspective and a source for future interpretation concerning the data collected, Garman (1996) proposes that the literature can be used as data itself. However, while my research's epistemology was qualitative, the methodology is also phenomenological in nature. Therefore, the assumptions and assertions derivable from earlier theoretical observations cannot be taken as fact, used as a prescribed framework or allowed to influence reflections or directions on later experiential essences (Glaser, 1992, cited in Minichiello et al., 1995). In other words, they were not to be considered a priori to the experiences of the phenomenological findings of the research participants. In the first instance, the theoretical and the experiential are to be considered initially separate and distinct lines of inquiry. This is because the phenomenological investigations and the essential themes which it produced had to be free to take their own course and establish their own significance.

In order to achieve this, theoretical pre-conditionings are minimised, least the research enterprise become simply an exercise in mimicking a pre-established theory. If this had occurred, the inquiry risks simply becoming “... a biased project conditioned by distorted readings of the past and utopian hopes for the future” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000, p. 1047).

So, the prior theoretical propositions became valuable only *after* the catching of the qualities, core and essential themes; these themes being extracted through the reflections of subjective aesthetic experience. That is, the ‘*portrayal*’ of the mixing of subjective and objective facets of the experience linked with actual people in actual time (Willis & Smith, 2000).

The values of theoretical positions are in terms of comparison. Through re-visiting observation of possible similarities or dissimilarities and the possible iterative characteristics which both theoretical and phenomenological sections demonstrate within the time/space/participant specificity of this research. The amalgamation of both theoretical and experiential reflections suggests that within some phenomenological data such collaborations between factual and hermeneutic descriptions could be mutually supportive (Nielsen, 2000). For example, declarative factual information concerning the modernist emphasis on virtuosity of technique, placing the subject matter into its historical referent or use of allegory can be seen as factually supportive information assisting a more dynamic phenomenological encounter with, say, Picasso’s *Guernica*.

Therefore, what was envisioned was an addition of comparison regarding propositions arising from participants’ reflections, the theories themselves and livedworld subjective essences (as advocated above by Minichiello et al., 1995; Garman, 1996). In addition, the intention was to strengthen the representation and illumination of the phenomena for the reader and to address aspects commonly associated with concepts of validity (Garman, 1996) (addressed later).

A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

To elucidate reflections on individual dispositional phenomena, in relation to what might constitute the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting, required the subjective and naturalistic position offered by qualitative research methodology. The idiosyncratic, interpretative and inductive nature of the research aim necessitates approaches that are intolerant of being eclectic, flexible and less

determinist (Bamford, 1999; Kantor, 1997; La Pierre, 1997). These approaches were necessary in order that the focus could be turned toward the qualities of context specific, experiential phenomena and away from scientific-empirical formulations of generalisations and causality, favoured in quantitative paradigms.

In addition, the research methodology requires being sensitive to individuals' defining social realities through the evaluation of events and meanings as personal and subjective constructs (Burns, 1994). This is because the desired subjective meanings are to be found in the messy, indeterminate psychological indexes and identifications which shape our interpretations of the environment.

For example, consider a nervous and erratic abstract cityscape (composed of bridges and other New York City industrial landmarks) created by John Marin. Here, the cityscape may be internalised and understood more readily and profoundly through personal associations and reflections by those who live and work within that abstracted and busy environment. In contrast, an enlightened South Dakota rancher might appreciate the design aspects of Marin's work, yet may be hard pressed to associate or elicit much else from the encounter. This is because the rancher's interpretation and feeling for the same life-experience would come from other, more familiar rural stimuli. It would be found, say, within the visual tensions and electric movement of a cattle stampede painted by Frederic Remington.

Correspondingly, the data required for this dissertation could not be sourced through prescriptive, analytical measurement. It was better gleaned from particular narrative and descriptive accounts; through more inductive (i.e. aesthetic) rather than scientific (i.e. deductive) modes of knowing. For example, the appreciation and experiential impact of a John Marin abstract painting representing the Manhattan Bridge does not come from counting the number of struts and cross beams depicted. It comes through the visual and psychological tensions which are represented and the compositional devices which serve the emotive feelings induced within the viewer.

Here, the patterns and meaning of knowing are better derived from the researcher's and participants' deep textural and non-discursive explications. That is, what is needed is an exploration into indwellings (i.e. tapping into what is known and what is felt), of self reflectivity and the search for tacit, internal sources of knowing the phenomena in order to discover its livedworld nature and meaning (Moustakas, 1990). In this way, the qualitative approach proposes the notion that "[u]nderstanding is visceral ... [therefore requiring that] ... [t]he fully interpretative text plunges the

reader into the interior, feeling, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching worlds of subjective human perception” (Denzin, 1995, p. 16, cited in Emery, 1996, p. 25). A more simple analytical tool might deny this full representation of the livedworld.

By this, I mean that facts, logical deduction and causality cannot paint the full, holistic representation as advocated above. What needs to be exhibited and explored in order to represent the ‘visceral’ aspect of understanding are the patterns and meanings which present themselves in holistic, intuitive and emotional response (Heywood, 2000). What is called for here is what Geertz (1973) referred to as ‘thick description,’ a delving beneath the surface of literal meaning into the experiential understanding and knowing of those who attend it (Geertz cited in Eisner, 1998b).

Therefore, the selection and structure of the methodological approaches had to ensure that these gatherings of descriptive phenomenological essences -- “... the inner essential nature of things ... a quality ... a description of a phenomena” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177; p. 36; p. 39) -- formulate themselves as much as possible without bias or presupposition. It needed to be 'grounded research', hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-testing (Kantor, 1997). It should not be based or committed to any particular prior knowledge (Minichiello et al., 1995). In other words, direction was generated toward the often ambiguous and multi-dimensional aspects of inductive knowing. By its nature, this inductive knowing cannot be empirically predicted. This is because these dimensions “... cannot easily be categorised as factual or non-factual ... [or] ... reside within conceptualisation” (Nielsen, 2000, p. 9) as they present themselves in experience. Hence, there was a need and preference for a subjective, naturalistic qualitative approach.

The de-privileging of a conceptual framework

For some qualitative research purposes, the distilled associations and characteristics of the aesthetic experience proposed within the theoretical explications as addressed earlier could well be considered an adequate conceptual framework.

However, because of the phenomenological methodology selected to pursue my research aim, and the desire to seek potentially new horizons, the formulation of a conceptual framework based on presupposed theoretical characteristics was set aside. This was considered advantageous in order to safeguard against a rule-governing research method through constructs of predetermined and fixed methodological

procedures. The justification here relates to the idea that the methods must be flexible and adaptive, discovered or invented, in response to the questions as they present themselves (Van Manen, 1990). In other words, the explication of phenomena -- the manifestations that are inherent in experience (Willis, 2001) -- are best served by a conscious attempt to remain open to any alternative direction which might present itself hermeneutically. An initial theoretical conceptual framework prior to collecting data suggests a presupposition of prescribed routes for investigation. This is antithetical to the open-ended methodological stance of heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990).

Furthermore, as this dissertation appropriates from qualitative grounded theory, it was conceived that findings would emerge as the study proceeded: as the data were collected, analysed and interpreted. That is, its emphasis was on the process of discovery (Kantor, 1997). Analytic codes and categories (Charmaz, 2004) or core themes and patterns (Moustakas, 1990) gradually emerged from the collected data, not from preconceived hypothesis (Charmaz, 2004). Here, simple ontological inspired *sensitizing concepts* replaced initial conceptual frameworks as starting points to initiate participant disclosure. From this point, authentic categories emerged as a result of the interaction of observer and the observed (Charmaz, 2004).

Summarily, the establishment of an initial conceptual framework at the idiosyncratic level of experiencing would restrictively pin down aesthetic experience characteristics prior to investigation. This is because in order to pursue heuristic understanding I had to come with no pre-focused hypothesis to test. In order to accomplish this, the research question and aim were the key imperatives to orientate, negotiate and frame research proceedings. Preferable was a framework and method orientation of research which could extract thematic elements surrounding the experience for the participants *as they unfolded*.

By attempting this naturalistic approach, the assumed characteristic properties and themes from the participants could then be compared, contrasted and analysed in relation to the established theoretical frameworks advanced in Chapter Three through Six. In addition, this final comparison would also assist in establishing triangulation.

The selection of a heuristic/phenomenological approach

To secure these aims, a general phenomenological inspired methodology which drew upon the heuristic research methodology of Moustakas (1990; 1994) and Douglas and

Moustakas (1985) was selected. In addition, aspects of the human science phenomenology as advocated by Van Manen (1990) and the expressive phenomenology orientations of Willis (2000; 2001; 2002), Willis and Smith (2000) in combination with aspects of reflective practice as advocated by Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985a; 1985b) were also adapted. In taking this blended position, the selection of systematic inquiries acknowledges the concept that methodology associated with art-based research is primarily an eclectic assortment of many systematic approaches used in combination (Bamford, 1999).

Heuristic research

Emery (1996) contends that the requirement to focus on deeply subjective sensory responses is well served by heuristic inquiry (Emery, 1996). She considers the methodological approach appropriate because of its ability to integrate and blend both the emotional and intellectual aspects of the phenomenon.

She also sees the suggested six phases of methodological inquiry advocated by Moustakas' (1990) and Douglas and Moustakas' (1985) heuristic phenomenology (discussed later) as advantageous in presenting and recognising the possible similar natures and meanings of an experiential state. This observation is based on Moustakas' (1990) contention that autobiographic-like self inquiry and dialogue with other interested participants concerning questions about one's place in the world will inevitably have direct bearing on social or [perhaps] universal significances (Moustakas, 1990). The presented explication of the subjective relatedness of the experiential state may have the ability to resonate its meaning and characteristics to those who have similarly encountered such states (Emery, 1996).

By doing so, it is proposed that a type of intersubjectivity to the experience, as attested to by language, social interaction and the mental processes and content similarities, may produce a feeling which approximates temporal, qualified objectivity. People can be seen to experience similarly, thus allowing for the examination and delineation of an essential experiential structure (Tointon, 1986).

From this perspective, the outcomes regarding an exploration of the characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting are not solipsistic (i.e. pertaining only to the particularised or obsessive preoccupation with oneself), but are generalisable in application (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1997; Piantanida et al., 2000).

An overview of Moustakas' heuristic research methodology

As Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research methodology plays an integral part in the methodological formulation of the dissertation, an overview of its concepts, phases, and processes seems appropriate.

Moustakas' (1990) use of the word *heuristic* refers to the employment of a clustering of processes which assist the personally involved initial researcher in formulating a systematic internal search (which is in response to an experiential question). So, from the beginning, this search had to be in response to a question of personal researcher significance. In this way, it was subjectively sourced, an internal investigation aimed at disclosing the nature and meaning of a phenomenon, as well as being the source for researchers' self awareness and actualisation (Moustakas, 1990; Douglas & Moustakas, 1985; Van Manen, 1990). The nature and meaning of the phenomenon explored and its personal significance to all involved in the research process was through the reflections, illuminations and revelations of direct, first person accounts of those who had encountered the phenomenon in question (Moustakas, 1990). These acts of disclosure are realised through:

... [a] recreation of the lived experience; full and complete depictions of the experience from the frame of reference of the experiencing person. The challenge is fulfilled through examples, narrative descriptions, dialogues, stories, poems, artwork, journals and diaries, autobiographical logs, and other personal documents. The heuristic process ... [requires] ... vivid perception, description, and illustration of the experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 39).

The critical processes employed for the systematic procurement of meanings are previewed in the table below. The left-hand column presents the critical processes. The adjoining right-hand column describes their discriminating qualities.

Table 7- Moustakas' (1990) critical processes

Process	Discriminating quality
(a) <i>concentrated gazing</i>	Where one concentrates on a search for meaning in response to a personally compelling question.
(b) <i>focus on a topic</i>	Where the topic or question is formalised.
(c) <i>methods</i>	Where the methodology for preparing, collecting, organising, analysing and synthesising data evolve.

(Distilled from Moustakas, 1990)

The interrelated concepts inherent in these critical processes are now discussed individually. These concepts comprise the notions of: (a) Identifying with the focus of inquiry, (b) Self dialogue, (c) Tacit knowing, (d) Intuition, (e) Indwelling, (f) Focusing and (g) Internal frame of reference.

(a) Identifying with the focus of inquiry

According to Moustakas (1990), the researcher must become one with the question. This type of inverted familiarity is achieved through the processes of self-directed and open-ended inquiry and an immersion within the active experience itself (Moustakas, 1990; Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). The initial self-motivation for pursuing the question is expanded through an exploration of the researcher's personal knowledge and associated held significances of the phenomena. Here, a holistic understanding of multiple meanings and the unique patterns of experiencing the phenomena commences with self discovery and awareness.

This awareness may be motivated by a systematic and iterative personal inquiry into the makeup of the experience in question. It is achieved by formulating a personal engagement with the question through a constant blending of personally constructed concepts and the active and reflective phenomenological feeling in experience. It is an orientation of inquiry whereby the practitioner becomes one with the phenomena or situation through the interaction of "reflective conversation" (Schon, 1983, p. 163). This state is further enhanced, as Moustakas (1990) suggests, by allowing the question its own voice, to pose and validate its existence and meaning through the acts of self reflection on one's own notions of personal meaning and social implications .

(b) Self dialogue

One of the ways of achieving the above and to further explicate the significance and meaning of the experience is through what Moustakas (1990) considers self dialogue. For Moustakas (1990), self dialogue becomes the critical beginning for possible depictions of the experience's core themes and essences. This is important because these themes and essences are the building blocks to discovering the characteristics and qualities of the phenomena in question. To begin, we must enter into dialogue with the question. That is, to speak directly to the experience and engage in question and debate (e.g. here, I kept a journal of personal dialogue). The concept of self dialogue suggests the importance of open, honest and willing self disclosure and the subsequent explication of tacitly held experiential knowing to be foundational to the overall concept of knowledge (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1968; Douglas & Moustakas, 1985; Jourard, 1971, cited in Moustakas, 1990). In addition, self disclosure facilitates the self disclosure of others by establishing itself as an exemplar for contributory participation. That is, one feels more confident and secure in presenting ideas and feelings after having experienced the disclosures of others. This is because we may feel more familiar and at ease in knowing that others have exhibited their commitment. Perhaps we become more inclined to add to the empathetic pooling of thematic cores and essences the more we are made aware of like sensitivities and understanding (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985).

(c) Tacit knowing

The power and revelation of tacit (undeclarable) knowing allows the inception of “... the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterize heuristic discovery” (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 49). In other words, we begin to sense the unity of an experience by understanding its individual component parts long before we can discursively understand or describe its totality. The notion of tacit knowledge explains the idea that we all know more than we can tell (Polanyi, 1983; Schon, 1983). Tacit knowing is a type of spontaneous behaviour, of experiential knowing, which is not the result of prior intellectualisation (Schon, 1983). In formulating the elements inherent in tacit knowing, Moustakas (1990) cites Polanyi's (1964) divisions into the *subsidiary* and the *focal aspects* of experience. The former aspect denotes the observable, perceptual elements which stand out in experience. We recognise them often as the identifiable changing and vague cues and clues within our consciousness.

These become unique and distinctive (Moustakas, 1990). According to Polanyi (1983), the focal elements are either implicit or subliminal and present themselves as unseen and invisible dispositional elements. It is when the combination of these two elements of experience are realised in combination that tacit knowledge of the phenomena is achieved. For example, we understand the idea of taking a bath with associations of recognisable elements such as the tub, water temperature and associated brought-into-memory images of bathroom environments, either real or imagined. However, the tacit knowing of the experience of taking a bath also registers within undisclosed sensory, discursively undeveloped knowing -- sensations allusive to subsidiary identification. These focal aspects relate to the undisclosed aspects within experience. For example, they are the un-specifiable natures inherent in the *feel* of the hot water upon aching muscles, the dreamy scent of the bubble bath or the temporal transcending bliss of associated complete relaxation.

(d) Intuition

One of the essential characteristics of knowledge acquisition is the ability to construct patterns, relationships and inferences (Moustakas, 1990; Polanyi, 1962). Intuition is held to be the conductor which connects the explicit with the qualities of tacit knowing. Here, according to Moustakas (1990):

[i]n intuition, from the subsidiary or observable factors one utilizes an internal capacity to make inferences and arrive at a knowledge of underlying structures or dynamics. Intuition makes immediate knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic or reasoning (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23).

Moustakas further states that in the intuitive process:

... one draws on clues; one senses a pattern or underlying condition that enables one to imagine and then characterize the reality, state of mind, or condition (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23).

It is this ability to bridge the known with the unknown that establishes the inchoate formulation for a surmised whole and unified conception of the phenomena (i.e. to the best of our abilities to envision a whole and unified experience). It is

through a process of examining and re-examining the cues and clues which present themselves through rigorous inferential interrogation. Through intuition, one discovers patterns and meanings which may fortify, enrich and extend the knowledge base.

(e) Indwelling

The process of indwelling requires the researcher to turn inwards in order to seek insights into the deeper meanings and signification inherent in the question. It is a practice dependent process which targets the beginning understanding and acknowledgement of intuitive manifestations along with the ineffable (focal) and observable (subsidiary) aspects of tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1964, cited in Moustakas, 1990). Conlan (2000) refers to indwelling as a fermentation period where the researcher taps into what is known and what is felt. It reflectively attempts a *meditative awareness* (Adams, 1995, cited in Conlan, 2000) whereby sitting with the question and experience in concentrated, open- reflection draws to the surface its essential qualities and meanings. These qualities and meanings provide the data for further focusing and final portrayal through creative synthesis (Conlan, 2000; Moustakas, 1990).

Here, we follow the clues and cues of consciousness, we dwell inside its factors in order to explore every avenue of nuance, fact, texture or implication which may shed light and extend meaning regarding the contemplated phenomena.

This process is considered non linear or logical. While maintaining a conscious and deliberate attitude, unlike simple day dreaming, indwelling necessitates the following of leads by any manner or sequence in which they present themselves into consciousness. Here, we remain with the phenomena in question, going over its intuitive and tacit aspects and insights over and over again. By doing so, a general, more vivid presentation of the phenomena may begin to appear. It is likely to unveil itself through the discovery of its representations of feelings and emotions, facts and fantasies and the representations of its aspects in autobiography, poetry, music, art and in other non-discursive and discursive associations. By bringing to the fore and making conscious the details of the experience, we slowly and incrementally gather in the constituents of the life experience, attempting explication through reflective analysis (Moustakas, 1990).

(f) Focusing

Moustakas (1990) defines the concept and process of focusing as:

... an inner attention, a staying with, a sustained process of systematically contacting the more central meanings of experience ... [it] ... enables one to see something as it is and to make whatever shifts are necessary to remove clutter and make contact with necessary awarenesses and insights into one's experience ... [it] facilitates a relaxed and receptive state, enables perceptions and sensings to achieve more definitive clarification, taps into the essence of what matters, and sets aside peripheral qualities and feelings (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25).

According to Douglas and Moustakas (1985), focusing allows new meanings and perceptions of the experience through prolonged periods of renewed researcher's concentration directed toward personal signification. Heuristic research steps used to achieve focusing include a kind of slowing down on the researcher's part; a kind of personal re-grouping of attention and intention. Here, the researcher attempts to consciously clear an inward space in order to tap and re-tap into the states, qualities and significations which may illustrate the phenomena's meaning and concentrate on clarifying the question(s). Through focusing, the researcher attempts to contact new personal explanations and examples in order to elucidate the experiential characteristics of the phenomena. In other words, its purpose is for clarification. It is an attempt to draw out and explicate possible neglected core themes (Moustakas, 1990).

(g) Internal frame of reference

All heuristic knowing is based on the concept that to understand any human experience one must source it through the phenomenal understandings of that experience from the participant point of view (Moustakas, 1990). This knowing is drawn from the well of the individuals' inward worlds, of their experiences and personal significances and explanations that they attach to it. This relates to both its factual and metaphysical aspects. The internal frame of reference requires empathetic

observation and understanding of percipient perceptions, feelings, thoughts and sense-making.

This internal frame of referencing is premised on the subject's experience, their personalised experience and portrayals of experience, which provide its validity (Moustakas, 1990). One must assume an empathetic position to what it is like for them (not others) in order to correctly ascertain and explicate its personal meaning. In addition, free and spontaneous self disclosure may assist researchers in adjusting or recognising their own point of view.

In order to collect such personalised portrayals, researchers must create an atmosphere of trust, openness and connection. The success of phenomenological heuristic research rests on these premises. We must attempt to be attuned to and understand the phenomena from the view of the person who has had or is having the experience: to see and understand the experience through their eyes.

POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES WITHIN SELECTED METHODOLOGY

Despite this dissertation's concerted attempt at systematic inquiry, there are limitations to aspects of phenomenological methodology. These potential limitations are found in quantitative critique which focuses on the feasibility to responsibly deploy systematic rigour to investigations which deal with the psychological messiness of subjectivity and in understanding the nature and implications of consciousness generally (Chalmers, 1995, cited in Salmon, nd.). So, there are doubts concerning the trustworthiness of self-knowledge and our ability to bracket off predispositions. For some, the significance of our livedworld awareness:

... remains a half-certain, half-dubious accumulation of acquired indirect knowledge, a mass of significant images and ideative representations, abstract thought-counters, hypotheses, theories, generalisations ... [which, in turn, make our internal knowing] ... narrow and imperfect, our interpretations of its significances doubtful ... (Aurobindo cited in Salmon, nd, p. 7).

In addition, some believe that it is not possible to fully bracket (i.e. mentally detach from preconceived concepts and assumptions held while examining the phenomena). As Heron (1992) observes, "There is a dialectical tension ... between the bracketed concepts and the declaration ... [which suggests that] ... [t]here is no

such thing as an absolutely pristine revelation of what the experience is really all about” (Heron, 1992, p. 9). That is, our descriptions cannot be totally separated from interpretation -- and interpretation is embedded in sociocultural input and the interpretative demeanor of language and writing itself. In terms of the characteristics of aesthetic experience observed, the observations may indeed possess disguised or other non disclosed agencies which impact upon issues of validity.

Furthermore, while Abbs (1994) advocates phenomenological investigations into aesthetic experience (a field of research, he believes, where little work has been attempted), he nevertheless sees potential limitations and pitfalls. While not insurmountable, these concerns revolve around questions of prior selection and truthfulness of participants’ accounts, collation and interpretation issues (Abbs, 1994).

These points being noted, it must be assumed that all research methodologies have both their strengths and weaknesses. The final selection of methodologies must be based on the researcher’s critical inquiry into what systematic base and eclectic distillations will best serve the project’s aim.

It is my belief that the heuristic and phenomenological systems which were put in place within this research were sufficiently robust for the task.

PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

My inclusion as participant

The inclusion of my voice within the research is a fundamental philosophical and methodological requirement of heuristic investigation. My personal gaze and commitment are the prerequisites for heuristic intention and process. Indeed, my personal involvement through direct, vital and personal encounters with the phenomenon investigated warrants my active participation (Moustakas, 1990). My participation is called for because of my connectedness and relatedness to the question (Schon, 1983). Seen in this light, the heuristic question and its explication are in essence my autobiographical search co-joined with the like-minded autobiographical searches of co-participants.

In other words, this research was fundamentally my quest shared. The auto-ethnographical nature of my own experiences within the research culture was intended to foster personal growth and awareness (Van Manen, 1990). In addition, it was to act as an entrance point for self-other interactions and explication of experience (Ellis, 2000). It is argued here that my contributions regarding interpretation are intended to

advance the aesthetic integrity of the dissertation, rather than detract from it (Piantanida, et al., 2000).

Participants' selection and their chosen paintings

The participants included in this research were myself and another artist/educator (both primarily painters), one professional full time artist-painter (with some past private tutoring experience but without educational institute associations or teaching qualifications) and one academic art theorist/art commentator/educator.

The two artists/educators and the academic art theorist are based within the Centre for Arts, Culture & Creative Industries (CACCI), Southbank Institute of Technology. The professional full time artist-painter works independently from her Brisbane studio. The principal participants were:

John Tarlton - (myself) A fifty-six year old male art lecturer at the Centre of Arts, Culture and Creative Industries at Southbank TAFE and practicing painter. Bachelor of Arts (Fine arts) (State University of New York at Albany); Master of Arts (Fine arts) (State University of New York at Albany); Bachelor of Training (Griffith University); Master of Education (Griffith University). I have had numerous exhibitions and am represented in public and private collections. The paintings I selected to illustrate the aesthetic experiences were *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* (1995) by Steig Persson and *The Marble Table* (1925) by Georges Braque. (Both paintings illustrated below).

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Steig Persson. *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* (1995). Oil on canvas.

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Georges Braque. *Marble Table* (1925). Oil on canvas.

Chris Worfold- A 34 year old male art lecturer at the Centre of Arts, Culture and Creative Industries at Southbank TAFE and practicing painter. Bachelor of Visual arts (Queensland College of Art); Bachelor of Visual Arts, Honours (Queensland University of Technology); Graduate Diploma in Education (Queensland University of Technology). Chris has had numerous exhibitions and is represented in public and private collections. The paintings selected by Chris to illustrate his aesthetic experiences were *The Conversion of St. Paolo Malfi* (1995) by Julian Schnabel and *Thatched Cottages at Cordeville* (1890) by Vincent Van Gogh. (Both paintings illustrated below).

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Julian Schnabel. *The Conversion of St Paolo Malfi* (Two panels from the twelve panel series (1995)). Gesso, oil, resin and print on canvas.



Vincent Van Gogh. *Thatched Cottages at Cordeville* (1890). Oil on canvas.

Caroline Penny- A forty year old female full time professional painter and recent mother. Diploma in Fine Arts (Bristol Polytechnic). Caroline has had numerous exhibitions and is represented in public and private collections. The paintings selected by Caroline to illustrate her aesthetic experiences were *Emmie and her Child* (1889) by Mary Cassatt and *Argenteuil* (1872) by Claude Monet. (Both paintings illustrated below).



Mary Cassatt. *Emmie and her Child* (1889). Oil on canvas.



Claude Monet. *Argenteuil* (1872). Oil on canvas.

Dr. Elizabeth Ruinard- A forty-five year old female art theory lecturer at the Centre of Arts, Culture and Creative Industries at Southbank TAFE. Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (University of Queensland); D.E.A. (la Sorbonne); Ph.D. (University of Queensland); Bachelor of Training (Griffith University). Elizabeth has published numerous art-related articles and criticisms. The painting selected by Ruinard to represent her aesthetic experience was *Lavender Mist: Number 1* (1950) by Jackson Pollock. (Illustrated below).

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Jackson Pollock. *Lavender Mist: Number 1* (1950). Oil, enamel and aluminum on canvas.

Criteria for selecting participants

The criteria and purpose of selecting the artists/educators and an academic art theorist was to help ground the research within the context of adult vocational education. This was seen as advantageous in that any findings and conclusions may have direct personal bearing, as well as more generalised application to the fostering of aesthetic experience within this sector. The selection of the art theorist/educator was also in an attempt to observe the aesthetic experience once- removed from the reflections of creators. The professional full time artist was selected as a possible counter balance to

institution-based practitioners. It was envisioned that this independent voice, free from the discursive aspects associated with instructing in art, would offset any possible domination of studio/classroom rhetoric and assist in more generalised data collection.

The selection of participants from the three categories, rather than all participants being selected exclusively from artist/educational, academic/theory or professional full time art activity, was to establish what Stokrocki (1997) terms a collaboration of “polyphonic voices” (Stokrocki, 1997, p. 51). This creation of multiple signatures within the research was intended to ward off possible participant exclusivity problems.

The added requirement of educational practice for the artists/participants was to ensure sufficient descriptions of characteristics and articulation of the aesthetic experience. This requirement was introduced to address the difficulties that Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976), cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990), encountered while researching aspects of the aesthetic experience derived solely from art practitioners. For instance, their research, using only art practitioners without pedagogic practices, found that as a rule independent artists were directionally self-obsessed toward their own sphere of creativity and, therefore, generally uninterested in viewing art works other than their own. In addition, their sole positions as producers rather than observers of art often prompted prejudiced and idiosyncratic opinions (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, (1990)). Interestingly, the art critic Sylvester observed this same behaviour in dealings with the artists Bacon and Giacometti (Sylvester interviewed by Tusa, 2003). An expanded pedagogic interest for the artists/participants was intended to dilute such presumed preoccupations.

The second requirement for the artists/educators within the research group -- that of being a professional and practicing artist -- was also made in response to later research into aesthetic experience conducted by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990). Here, the concern centred on their research being restricted to responses derived solely from museum professionals. These professionals comprised curators, educators and directors of major art collections; key players from various large corporation art holdings, prestigious private galleries and societies and large metropolitan public art galleries and museums.

The reality of personal agendas in any participant group must be acknowledged. However, the concern here was that the sole responses of these key players employed in institutes, which, by the nature of institutes, value art as a privileged commodity might be overly influenced by corporate accountability and narrow content-specific expertise. Their position as high salaried ‘art brokers’ within institutes with vested interests to promote certain restricted aesthetic viewpoints may question the possibility that intrinsic response may be distorted. For example, if we advocate from a visual culture point of view, what sometimes is labeled ‘fine arts’ can in actuality be seen “ ... not so much as dazzling or even high human achievements, but as products representing what those in power choose to praise” (Eisner, 2001, p. 8).

Here, phenomenological ‘bracketing’ of external influences might be difficult (as earlier noted). My participants, on the other hand, include employed artists/educators outside the museum-business world of art as commodity and rarefied object. Their personal livelihoods are not intertwined or dependent on acquiescence to modernist museum/private gallery policies or agendas.

In addition, the exclusion of data from practical creators of art limited Czikszenmihalyi’s and Robinson’s (1990) research to responses founded in discursive, propositional knowing. The inclusion of the artist/creator voice as a bona fide practitioner of the trade helped promote the discovery of aesthetic experience characteristics based in application. This inclusion could then be used to expand the characteristics of aesthetic experience from a practical standpoint. It can be viewed as an attempt to balance the more declarative and discursive argument.

By incorporating artists/educators as participants, I believed that both intuitive knowing (which may be heightened or even indigenous to practitioners), and the discursive input derived from educated and informed praxis, would best be served. As pointed out by Langer (1953), the philosophy of art requires the input from the practising artist working ‘*from the inside.*’ This is required in order to “test the power of its [philosophy of art] concepts and prevent empty or naïve generalizations” (Langer, 1953, p. iv).

In response to the above concerns, my selection of participants (having incorporated elements from creation, appreciation and pedagogy) seems better situated and more representative of the key players within the context of this inquiry.

In all, there is an attempt to blend input from theory and experience, the discursive and non-discursive, the declarative and the ineffable -- samplings from the eye, the heart and the mind.

In addition, the participants were selected from a larger group of possible participants familiar to the researcher. In the final selection, general criteria considerations were also in an attempt to establish (as far as possible) equity regarding differences in age, gender, cultural, political and economic factors. Furthermore, a criterion for the final selection was the knowledge that each had experienced the phenomenon of an aesthetic experience and all were interested in furthering their insights into the nature and implications of that phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990; 1994).

Their selection was also based on their abilities at verbal articulation, integral positioning within the phenomena to be observed, and their willingness to share their experiences and thoughts. These attributes were considered beneficial for compiling sufficient quantity and quality data (Kantor, 1997). The selection also centred on the participants' observable passion, training, and roles as facilitators and creators and intimate participation in aesthetic experience.

Disclaimer on the preponderance of modernist paintings within the selection of paintings used in this research

All participants were advised of the subjective nature concerning their selection of paintings for reflection prior to beginning the study. This idea was initially presented to the (then) potential research participants in pre-study information, the required pre-research participant informed consent sheet and informally through discussions. Here, it was made clear that this research would take into account Weitz's (1956) and Eisner's (2001) contentions that art (painting, in this instance) should be considered as an on-going, open concept. That is, the selection welcomed the introduction of new cases and conditions of contemporary art practices, as well as traditional modernist painting. From here, the selections of paintings were left to their discretions, not the researcher's. In terms of a time line, the selections of paintings were done *after* their admission into the research group.

The unforeseen result of this non-influenced selection process displays a marked inclination towards predominantly traditional modernist paintings (a

somewhat unusual position for a contemporary study). However, this should not be read as intentional researcher bias. Nor, should it be read as indicative of the participants' sole preferences for a manner or consideration of painting. On the contrary, all participants are actively engaged within visual culture and postmodern agendas.

Because, from the onset of this research, I have attempted an open and presupposition-less attitude, the selection of paintings for reflection is simply how it is -- and simply reflects the participants' interests at the time, space and specificity of this research project.

Sites (selection and assessment)

Some of the sites where participant meetings and interviews took place included: (1) my residence and art studio in Cannon Hill, Brisbane, (2) individual studios and residences of the participants, (3) individual visits to art galleries and museums for the purposes of informal data collection and (4) informal meetings at CACCI, Morningside campus.

These sites were deemed appropriate for what Eisner (1998a) refers to as a *prefigured focus* concerning the phenomena and participants involved. The sites selected for this research included the environments of working artists' studios (complete with finished and in-progress artworks, related books and general artistic ambiance), art gallery strolls and informal meetings at an educational institution. These sites were considered ideal for their abilities to act as naturally occurring settings (Kantor, 1997). That is, they were environments where the livedworld phenomena surrounding aesthetic experience might be experienced, re-experienced, observed and reflected. They were also considered safe and non-threatening environments conducive to positive social interaction.

ETHICAL CONCERNS AND PROTOCOL

A relativist position toward ethical research philosophy, one that places the importance on the individual's well-being and dignity over that of the quest for knowledge (Cohen, 1994), underpinned all the research activities in this study. Furthermore, the guidelines suggested by *The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) and the *Human Research Ethics Manual* (Griffith University) (2003) were followed.

In addition, heuristic research implies that “... individuals are autonomous and self-determined. Being so, ethics arise from ‘inside’ oneself and the individual is responsible for decision-making regarding what constitutes moral/immoral action” (Beckstrom, 1993, p. 54). In other words, authority for determining what was ethically appropriate for inclusion for research purposes was owned by the individual participants and was not in response to restraints imposed by the researcher or from any outside authority.

All the participants were volunteers. The options regarding anonymity and confidentiality were waived as all agreed to being personally identified and associated with the research. Procedurally, the participants were privy to all data collected at all stages and their agreement was sought to allow information to pass from consecutive reflective development stages to agreement on the dissertation’s final presentation.

Furthermore, the participants were all known, in varying degrees of familiarity, to the researcher. Initial contact was through conversations at work and recreational events. At these initial meetings, we discussed the proposed topic, nature and methods which were intended to be pursued and inquired of their willingness to participate. Following this, an ‘*instructions to research participants*’ letter and a ‘*participation-release agreement*’ form based on *Griffith University Human Research Ethics Manual* and suggested examples by Moustakas (1990) were sent. The *participation-release agreement* was returned to me and placed in secured storage.

Research participation involved no physical or mental threats and the participants had a right to redress all collected data and progressive and summative analysis. They were also assured that their participation or association in the research could be voluntarily withdrawn at any stage of its development.

SELECTION OF TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The range of the methods for collecting data from participants comprised autobiographical and protocol writings, field notes, responses to set questions and tape recorded interviews. Appraising and refining the above data was additionally assisted through processes of individual and group review and discussions that were tape-recorded and transcribed. An elaboration of these tools is now presented.

Personal reflective writing and associated gatherings

Because of the potential rich source of subjective responses and visual qualities for comparison and interpretation related to the phenomena, emphasis was placed on participants, including myself, keeping personal reflective journals. The contents of these journals consisted of reflective autobiography (e.g. ontological, personal history), self-dialogue and self-reflection, narrative, poems, stories, anecdotes, associated sketches, reproductions of representative examples, conversation, metaphor, additional paintings, and so on. These formed an important data source because they permitted the participants to shape the data, in ways not possible through more structured approaches.

The justification for using protocol writing -- the creating of text from which the researcher can conduct a study (Van Manen, 1990) -- was based on the premise that in phenomenological investigations, accounts of the lived experience are promoted through participant-generated reflections. Indeed, Van Manen (1990) considers this act (writing) to be the most straightforward way to go about phenomenological research. As Van Manen (1990) suggests, the process of writing focuses the participant into a reflective attitude, unlike conversational exchanges which are more immediate. Writing the journal encouraged considered recall and allowed extended time for reflection and alterations or revisions through re-visitation. In this respect, the emphasis placed on reflective writing aligned more with the human science approach of Van Manen (1990), who views writing as a preeminent tool and synonymous with research, rather than Moustakas (1990), who views reflective writing more as an augmentation to dialogic interview.

Furthermore, the use of written data was based on the assumption that writing is one of the best ways of individual reflection and for the stimulation of effective shared reflection with peers and colleagues. Here, reflective writing was seen as an excellent mode of personal exploration (Bolton, 1998). These personal explorations were intensified for phenomenological purposes by instructing the participants to emphasise emotive and intuitive aspects and feelings. This attention toward 'feeling' regarding the reflective journal entries was correspondent to reflective practice as advocated by Boud et al.(1985a; 1985b) who propose explication of the meaning and significance of an experience being tempered through reflection. For Boud et al. (1985b), reflection becomes the purposeful interaction of two components. The first component is the experience itself. This consists of:

... the total response of a person to a situation or event: what he or she thinks, feels, does and concludes at the time and immediately thereafter... observations, thoughts, perceptions, reactions, awkward moments, and interchanges ... (Boud et al., 1985b, p. 18- 19).

The final component is the processing phase of reflection itself. Here, “[r]eflection becomes [the] important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it” (Boud, et al., 1985b, p. 19).

Much of the reflective practice used in this dissertation followed the three stage recommendation of these authors. The first stage required the participant to recall, or return to the experience in order to recount salient points. The second step involved an attempt to join with the *feelings* that surrounded the event while attempting to bracket out nonessential or obstructive thoughts. The final step was to examine and re-evaluate the insights gained from the reflection and to internalise this new knowledge. Here, the concern was for examining one’s conclusions in light of presuppositions and to ensure the newly acquired information was productively integrated into the individual's conceptual framework (Boud et al., 1985b). For these purposes, copies of instructions for following the three phases of reflective practice of Boud et al. (1985a; 1985b) were given to the participants.

This approach also supports the inclusion of additional material in an attempt to ward off the likelihood of being seen as self-fulfilling through the exclusivity of description regarding the initial event or issue (Moon, 1999). The inclusion of additional materials was central to the phenomenological methodology which advocated the inclusion of intuitions, anecdotes, poetry, reminiscences. Here, the participants were encouraged to ‘poetise’ their written reflections as much as possible. This was encouraged to further minimise the embedded logical and rational conventions associated with writing prose and thus expand the modes of reflecting and describing the experiences (Crotty, 1996). This helped to promote a more complete disclosure of the phenomenological livedworld.

Responding to set questions

It also is quite permissible within the phenomenological research to stand on the shoulders of giants. That is, to consult and utilise questions and findings from past literature which pertain to one's current investigations. This is perhaps acknowledged

because of the ever-changing influences upon lived experience and the time/space specificity of any phenomenological (or general qualitative/expressive) research. In other words, answers to the questions posed in one particular setting, selection of participants or time can be responded to quite differently when asked within another set of circumstances. Moreover, it was believed that the use of established phenomenological literature within my research could bring insight and creative contingencies regarding the pitfalls and possibilities of hermeneutic explorations. Simply stated, it could smooth the way. As Van Manen (1990) observes, it becomes a source for dialogue whereby one's attention to the 'personal signature' of noted phenomenological researchers helps inform one's own position. So, this approach permitted and promoted the questions and considerations of others in the field to strengthen my research efforts.

With these thoughts in mind, two sets of phenomenologically-orientated questions regarding aspects of the aesthetic experience (relating to the participants' selected paintings) were also given to the participants for written responses. Here, questions regarding the aesthetic experience once used by Abbs (1994) in a 'limited experiment' and Moustakas' (1994) suggested general follow up questions were employed. These are presented below.

Abbs' questions

By revisiting Abbs' (1994) simple and direct questions after a time lapse of over ten years, a comparison of those answers he collected with my own current research responses could point to a kind of universal characteristic inherent in aesthetic experience. Barring that, it could (at least) invite positive speculation concerning characteristics which have retained an over ten year shelf life (despite the ever changing patterns inherent in the *indeterminate, contextualized, and fragmented nature* (Bagnall, 1999) of postmodern contingencies)).

So, the purpose of the first set of questions posed for reflective protocol writing was to elicit recollections of felt sensations which surrounded aesthetic experiences as viewed in conjunction with the participant's selected paintings. Here, the paintings acted as affective springboards to encourage recollections of the aesthetic experience. The questions posed were as follows:

“Take any major aesthetic experience you have had in relationship to a work of art [paintings were used in this case].

A. *Details*

1. What was the work of art?
2. Where did you encounter it?
3. What age were you?

B. *The experience*

1. Try to describe as directly and fully as you can the nature of the experience.

C. *Reflections on the experience*

1. Looking, again, at your encounter have you any further reflections on the nature or structure of the experience to add?
2. Had anything prepared you for this experience?
3. What subsequent effects, if any, did the experience have on you in relation to the art and in relationship to your life as a whole?
4. Can you say what qualities it was in the work of art that released your response? Could it have been induced by *any* work of art or any other object?”
(Abbs, 1994, p. 68).

Moustakas’ questions

Following this, a further set of questions was initiated to ensure that the reflective protocol writings were subjectively rich and that their notations on the experiences were sufficient in terms of depth and scope. Here, the use of more generalised questions was introduced in order to expand upon the participants’ reflected experiences. These broader questions were devised by Moustakas (1994) as a ‘topical guide’ and were presented to the participants. They were:

What dimensions, incidents and people immediately connected with the experience stand out for you?

How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?

How did the experience affect significant others in your life?

What feelings were generated by the experience?

What thoughts stood out for you?

What bodily changes or states were you aware of at the time?

Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience?
(Moustakas, 1994, p. 116).

Additional questions

Additional probe questions, intended for clarification and further comment, also proved beneficial. These probe questions were formulated in response to my initial reviews of the participants' periodically submitted journals. The probe questions were formulated by me in a desire to clarify participants' explications and to pin-point discourse concerning emerging themes. Here, probe questions dealt with direct requests for explanatory (both discursive and non-discursive) responses regarding emerging characteristics. Specific examples here concerned re-visitations to aspects of the immediacy of encounter and the possible uniqueness or differentiation of aesthetic experience to ordinary experience (among others points). The probe questions also assisted in regrouping themes and essences by targeting participant response and re-aligning dialogue which, at times, varied from the dissertation's specific aim or phenomenological question. In other words, they helped tidy, focus and expedite avenues for characteristic and theme-specific data collection.

Interview

Interview as a methodological tool for gathering data was also employed. Its selection was based upon its capacity to draw out dialogue examples (i.e. data) which could represent the phenomena as experienced by the participants. In addition, interview was favoured for its abilities to encourage the investigated experience in presenting itself through expression and elucidation (Moustakas, 1990). It was believed that interview as a major gathering tool could assist in establishing accounts which effectively accessed other peoples' experiences and reflections on *their* experiences in order to identify the deeper meaning or significance of human experience in general (Van Manen, 1990).

The methods of interviewing consisted of a combination of *informal conversational interview* (where questions were generated in response to informal interaction with the participant), *standardised open-ended interview* (where pre-conceived questions were presented), and *a general interview guide* (where more non-specific issues or topics were suggested as catalysts for dialogue (Moustakas, 1990). Here, general questions and topics (relating to the phenomenological research

question) were initiated, with a final focus toward more specificity at the end of the interview (as in the use of predetermined probe questions). The pre-focusing of questions and topics for the interviews aimed to direct the participants' responses back toward my phenomenological research question and to clarify or expand themes explored in their reflective journals. The interviews were also informed through phenomenological guiding questions intended to elicit richer experiential response (see below). The phenomenological concerns that underpinned my interviews were again derived from Moustakas (1990). These concerns addressed:

What does the person know about the experience being studied?

What qualities or dimensions of the experience stand out for the person?

What examples are alive and vivid?

What events, situations, and people are connected with the experience?

What feelings and thoughts are generated by the experience?

What bodily states or shifts in bodily presence occur in the experiencing?

What time and space factors affect the person's awareness and meaning of the experience?

Has the person shared all of the significant ingredients or constituents of the experience? (Moustakas, 1990, p. 48).

During the interviews, I also incorporated the original research question, again, that being:

What are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?

While the above aspects of technical procedures for interview were used with varying success, the overall employment was one guided by researcher intuition. In other words, I attempted to extract essences of the aesthetic experience in painting following any which way the interviews seemed to go (at the price of later additional transcriptions and editing). During the interviewing processes, I acknowledged the observation of Rapley (2004), noting that:

... interviewers don't need to worry excessively about whether their questions and gestures are 'too leading' or 'not empathetic enough'; *they should just get on with interacting with that specific person* [author's italics] (Rapley, 2004, p. 16).

This changeable and eclectic response to interview procedures was also based on qualitative interviewing as expressed by Turkel (cited in Rapley, 2004). Here, reassurance for me lay in the advice to stay flexible and loose, observing that:

[i]n the one-to-one interview you start level in the unconfidence, in not knowing where you are going ... you experiment (Turler, 1995, cited in Rapley, 2004, p. 30).

COLLECTING, COLLATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Moustakas' (1990) six phases of heuristic research are comprised of initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis. These six phases of heuristic research mapped out the basic research design which I followed. In addition, the phases also guided and directed the research as aspects of the phenomena continually presented themselves. The phases are built around the assumption that direct human experience is the probity of knowledge (Moustakas, 1990; Dewey, 1980 [1934], 1977 [1938]; Kolb, 1976, cited in Boud et al, 1985a) and that through self inquiry this knowledge can be disclosed and explicated (Moustakas, 1990).

The importance of the research phases (and heuristic research in general) " ... lies in its capacity to recognize the universal nature of what something is and means and it is this recognition that resonates with those who have experienced similar feelings ... it seeks to explain the integration of emotion and intellect as they function in action" (Emery, 1996, p. 29).

Presented below is a brief description of Moustakas' six (1990) phases (earlier previewed) followed by my corresponding research actions. Acknowledged within these phases was a consideration and application of the interrelated concepts of identifying with the focus of inquiry, self dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing and an internal frame of reference (described earlier).

Moustakas' (1990) six phases of heuristic research

1. Initial engagement phase

The first phase involves locating and isolating a research question with personal and social significance. It is confronted through self-inquiry, self dialogue and autobiography. This phase involves a continued clarification until experience is presented in a simple, specific, clear and concrete form. Normally, the research question is arrived at by; (a) unsystematicised, free association of topics; (b) clustering interests into subthemes; (c) removing of subthemes which implied causality or possible assumptions; (d) extraction of the central theme from remaining sub-themes; and (e) clearly formulating the question specifically to what it was assumed to research. (Moustakas, 1990).

My research question was arrived at through the above recommended processes. Furthermore, my personal interest in the topic was a continuation and result of a re-formulation and crystallisation of the phenomenological question pursued in my Masters of Education thesis and a continued concern regarding student passive interest in art appreciation at work. To address this phase, a personal journal was kept, as well as frequent discussions concerning clarification and formulation of the question with a critical friend.

Once the research question was resolved (through personal immersion, self-dialogue and self-exploration), I began my own heuristic inquiry into the phenomenological question. In other words, I responded reflectively to my personal livedworld experiences of the aesthetic experience.

This was accomplished through: (a) the keeping of a reflective journal (incorporating both discursive and non-discursive data), autobiographical (ontological) reflections, (b) reflections on two specific paintings which had personal aesthetic experience significance and (c) addressing the two sets of questions (from Abbs, 1994; Moustakas, 1994) in relation to the paintings.

During these reflections, the three reflective phases of Boud et al. (1985b) (discussed earlier) were followed. Here, I manually recorded my reflections. Throughout these processes, emphasis was directed over and over again back to the phenomenological question. That is, *what are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?* From these documents a personal, individual depiction of the aesthetic experience's qualities and

themes was constructed.

After all participants had completed their reflective written responses and interviews, I collected and assembled all data. These collections included their annotated reflective journals, my unedited transcriptions from the tape recorded interviews and answers to the probe questions. Each participant's data was individually sorted and assigned into discrete named working folders.

2. Immersion phase

This is a phase where one attempts to become one with the question through observing how the question presents itself in all facets of daily life, dialogue thought and self reflection. It is to search for intuitive cues and clues, observable and ineffable aspects of tacit knowing related to the research question (Moustakas, 1990).

Selecting one participant, I entered into what Moustakas (1990) refers to a timeless immersion into the material until a comprehensive understanding of that individual's experiences as a whole was apprehended. This act was accomplished through my attempts at self-dialogue, self-searching, tacit knowing and intuition (as earlier described). This process comprised a lengthy and intense engagement with the data: looking, thinking, empathising, arguing and admiring the specific texts and text analogues of the selected participant. I also engaged with the selected paintings in reproduction in an exhaustive search for clues and cues. I attempted to become empathetic to the participant's perspective: to see the aesthetic experience through the glimpses of another's livedworld. I attempted to induct its messages into my own various ways of knowing, to know it like the back of my hand.

I made annotations in my personal research journal, focusing on the concerns of this phase. I re-entered periods of intense self-searching and autobiographical interrogations. In addition, I collected associated discursive and non discursive examples of the phenomena to help clarify the proposed research aim. These included the searching out of personal stories, poetry, sketches, examples of paintings and associated photographs and sketches which I believed held signification.

3. Incubation phase

Moustakas (1990) proposes a sitting aside of the question in order that a gestation period might be entered into. Here, intuition and inner tacit dimensions are allowed to formulate, to become clearer. During this phase, researchers separate themselves physically, emotionally and intellectually from the question. This is much the same as removing one's self from the problem and letting things crystallise. (Moustakas, 1990).

I put aside the individual's data to "facilitate the awakening of fresh energy and perspective" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51). That is, I placed the data back into its folders and started a painting, concentrated more on my teaching practice and enjoyed family and friends. After a week or so I revisited the data, attempting to re-introduce myself without predispositions. A review then followed where I started to identify the qualities and themes which presented themselves. From this, an individual depiction of the phenomena was constructed, through various themes and essences. After subsequent examination I then compared these responses with my own heuristic investigation.

Following this incubation phase, the individual depiction was then shared with the participant in order to verify comprehensiveness. Misrepresentations and further participant explanations and examples were solicited and noted. These alterations were then added to the individual depictions and a final clearance from the participant in terms of accuracy of account was attained.

After successfully completing the first individual depiction, the same processes were sequentially administered to each preceding participant's data until individual depictions of all participants were represented.

4. Illumination phase

This phase concerns the breakthrough into consciousness of the qualities and clustering of qualities which have perhaps remained hidden, overlooked or distorted. The discovery of new awarenesses and fragmented knowledge is conducted with an open state of mind, receptive yet not concentrated. One begins to see and piece together that which was before unseen. The overall job of uncovering the essences and meanings is carried through by the explication of fortified tacit knowledge. New knowledge may make its appearance (Moustakas, 1990).

The individual depictions were then gathered together and I began another stage of immersion and rest periods until I had grasped the common qualities and characteristics. From here, I constructed a composite depiction -- where “ ... all the core meanings of the phenomenon as experienced by the individual participants and by the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52) were explicated. These comprised the predominant characteristics of the witnessed aesthetic experience exposed by the research and all pertinent participants’ resonances and depictions pertaining to them. This composite depiction of the group regarding the phenomena of aesthetic experience and its observed characteristics reflected and included the components suggested by Moustakas (1990), namely:

... exemplary narratives, descriptive accounts, conversations, illustrations, and verbatim excerpts that accentuate[d] the flow, spirit, and life inherent in the experience ... vivid, accurate, alive, and clear ... encompass[ing] the core qualities and themes inherent in the experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52).

5. Explication phase

Here, all relevant themes, descriptive qualities and essences are examined more fully in order to establish various layers of meaning. A more complete apprehension occurs through the sifting of implications derived from various points of view, features and textures of the phenomena. Additional refinements, amendments and corrections are made. Thorough familiarity with all data, qualities and constituents, themes and explicated meanings are achieved and the results assembled (Moustakas, 1990).

For this phase, I returned to the raw data of the individual depictions and constructed individual portraits of the participants, allowing both the investigated phenomena and the individual identity of the participants to emerge. These individual constructions were arranged by the prevailing themes, their explications coming to life through the personal signatures apparent within the uniqueness of each of the participant's quotes, responses, anecdotes, poetry and prose. I once again interrogated the participants' voices for clarity and uniqueness of experience. Here, I searched for nuances and particularities until what I felt to be a comprehensive description of predominant characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting had been actualised. At the conclusion of this phase I believed that I innately understood and had assembled all the characteristic resonances and information I needed to precede to the next phase -- the attempt to comprehensively represent my research's aim.

6. Creative synthesis phase

This final phase involves the transformation and shape-shifting of all collected themes, constituents and essential essences into a new and creative format. According to Moustakas (1990), this creative synthesis usually takes the form of narration empowered by quoted material, examples, poetry, art works or other creative channeling. What is envisioned here is the creative heightening of awareness through a synthesised presentation which acts to mirror the researcher's passion and the unique character of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1990).

After discursively previewing the explicated characteristics (which comprise Chapter Eight), I constructed what I hoped to be “... an aesthetic rendition of the

themes and essential meanings of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52). This was enacted through creating an embellished narrative (creative synthesis) built around what I observed to be the iterative and correspondent characteristics of the aesthetic experience as portrayed and resonated by the research participants. Again, the synthesis was re-enforced through the incorporation of individual participant’s creative texts and text analogues in an attempt to further intensify the uniquely personal responses of each participant (Moustakas, 1990) interacting within like-experiences.

Issues of literary style, sequence and matters regarding cohesion and rhythm within the embellished narrative were trialed and eventually formulated. In addition, this creative transition process, the building of the dissertation’s embellished narrative, was seen to assist the cogency and plausibility of the experiential reflections. That it, its literary formatting somehow helped to create (initially for me and then my critical friend) an innate feeling of structural verisimilitude regarding the overall project. The creative synthesis comprises Chapter Nine.

FURTHER ASPECTS OF COLLATION AND ANALYSIS

Coding

In the first phase of collation, all pages of the participants’ reflective journals, notebooks, their responses to their selected paintings, answers regarding the two sets of questions, responses to the probe questions and my transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews were assigned line numbering. This was done to establish a more effective system for cross-referencing and as a means for material citing used in the later analysis stage (Steinmetz, 1991; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). In addition, line numbering was used for the referencing of the line-by-line search to identify essential statements that would later establish phenomenological essential themes (Van Manen, 1990).

Colour coding was also employed to assist identification of material relating to conceptual or thematic categories and frameworks. The use of the various forms of coding mentioned was the preferred method for collating and analysing data. Coding was used because it promotes and supports researchers to make judgments and meaning concerning texts of similitude (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). In this respect, “Coding ... [becomes] ... the heart and soul of *whole-text analysis* [authors’ italics]” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 274).

In addition, large margins within the transcripts were created to accommodate the unforeseen accumulation of collation and analysis annotations, researcher reflective memos and to maintain order and legibility. These concerns were further addressed through employing additional photocopies of the original documents (Steinhouse, 1988). Later, additional inputs from the participants were also colour coded.

The search for themes

The documents that provided data were searched for the presences of themes. These core themes and essences usually defined themselves through verbatim quotes regarding specific feelings (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This was achieved through a line-by-line search of the documents, as suggested by Van Manen (1990).

The repetitive and time-intensive line-by-line investigation of the data was invaluable as a discipline in that it fostered a growing familiarity and nurtured the required empathy with each participant. That is, it assisted me in establishing Moustakas' (1990) requirement of researcher intimacy with the participants' livedworld perspectives. This is because the line-by-line searches demanded that I be immersed personally in the data from the very start (and throughout the research). By doing so, it promoted an awareness and understanding of not only the apprehended phrases or words, but also of the meanings and resonances which surrounded them. In addition, the line-by-line interrogation of the texts (and the personal commitment it required) seemed more in tune with the underlying holistic heuristic research concepts of inquiry addressed in this dissertation.

Here, evidence of these evolving themes was noted through the recording of the participants' usages of iterative phrasing, metaphor and idioms. The goal was to identify those qualities and themes which reflectively manifested themselves from the participants' experiences.

Characteristic of this type of examination is a process of separating what reflections were deemed relevant or inconsequential through a kind of progressive reduction (Steinhouse, 1988). For instance, I systematically eliminated an over emphasis of autobiographical facts or reminiscences which did not seem pertinent to the project's aim. Here, a continual weeding of the case records (from their original size toward a more concise document) allowed the observation of essential themes

and contexts to be slowly exposed and come into focus. This systematic ‘hunting out’ of themes is a favoured method of content analysis extensively used in qualitative research in the arts (Ely, 1991). Through this informed culling patterns began to emerge.

The indexing of the pertinent phrases, sentences and larger portions of text also assisted in locating and formulating the ‘evidence.’ Finally, the effectivity and efficiency of my analysis phase was again supported by a systematic ordering of phrases and key ruminations through the systematic use of colour coding and line numbering.

TRIANGULATION AND VALIDITY ISSUES

Attention was given throughout the data collection, analysis and findings procedures to matters of triangulation, or the corroboration of evidence (Kantor, 1997). However, the triangulation methods used within this research did not seek the substantiation of factual, scientific ‘reporting’ or apodictic ‘truths.’ This is because this research recognised the concept that knowledge is perspectival (Eisner, 1998b; Smith, Robert, 2000), provisional (Mishler, 1990; Eisner, 1998b) and open to debate and judgment (Eisner, 1998). That is, its validation or ‘measurement’ could not be strictly gauged through privileged rules, procedures or techniques (Emery, 2006; Mishler, 1990, cited in Smith, Robert, 2000). It did not deal with static categorical variables but with the messiness and inconsistencies found within the pluralities and shape shifting aspects of human experience (as noted earlier regarding qualitative research in general).

Rather, the truthful appearance of this research had to come from producing what Eisner (1998b) refers to as “... a mind-mediated version of what we take to be the case” (Eisner, 1998b). That is, the establishing of verisimilitude based on what Eisner (1998b) further proposed as simply “... seek[ing] a confluence of evidence that breeds creditability” (Eisner, 1998b, p. 110). This creditability can be validated through the idea of its embeddedness within social discourse and its final utility within the research community (Mishler, 1990).

In addition, final validity and sufficient triangulation can be seen as being in response to the phenomenological preference of *plausibility* -- that is, “whether it is true to our living sense of it” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 65) and to overall contextual *trustworthiness* of the generalisations, interpretations and observations (Mishler, 1990). The final ‘believability’ of this research rests on its expressive abilities to

establish insight, coherence and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1998b).

Again, according to Eisner (1998b; 2006), this version of ‘believability’ must be overseen through:

(a) *structural corroboration* (the use of checking consistencies and inconsistencies within collected multiple data for reasonable interpretation and evaluation),

(b) *consensual validation* (the use of informed others to validate descriptions, evaluations, themes and interpretations) and

(c) *referential adequacy* (the persuasiveness of the text to promote reader empathy and reflected interaction) (Eisner, 1998b; 2006).

Regarding the above points, the *structural collaboration* of evidence in this research was accomplished by enlisting several different viewpoints and methods to check emerging themes or methodologies for consistencies or inconsistencies. This process addressed issues of validity, trustworthiness and reliability. In terms of triangulation and *structural corroboration*, the various vantage points used for data collection in this dissertation were:

- (1) Participants’ reflective journals and non-discursive additions.
- (2) Reflections on up to two specified individually selected paintings.
- (3) Protocol writing to predetermined questions in relation to the paintings.
- (4) Revisited annotated reflections to their answers regarding the above.
- (5) Tape-recorded interview.
- (6) Validation through systematic individual reflection.
- (7) Group reflection/agreement.
- (8) Verification through critical friend.

Consensual validation was achieved by enlisting the assistance of a critical friend, the contributions of the participant-researchers themselves and the content and methodological expertise of my doctoral research supervisors.

The *Referential adequacy* of this dissertation rests upon its ability to present the portrayed qualities within a certain light, one which promotes believability and credibility for the reader in terms of real world associations. That is, in this

dissertation's attempt to create a kind of virtual reality (Barone & Eisner, 1997, cited in Willis, 2000; Garman, 1996) incumbent on reported credible response relating to aspects of aesthetic experience in painting. In addition, referential adequacy was achieved through the rendering of a creative narrative, intended as an aesthetic, multi-voiced and persuasive literary vehicle for reader contemplation.

While the systematic triangulation within this dissertation relies upon the empathetic reading of multiple types of data, it is interesting to note that the opinions of prominent qualitative researchers vary on the number of alternative collection, analysis and findings viewpoints or methods required for triangulation. For instance, Kantor (1997), and Ely (1991) are satisfied with two methods or viewpoints, while La Pierre (1997) sees the need for a minimum of three distinct vantage points.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Certain limitations of the study must be acknowledged in terms of the approaches and procedures undertaken. These limitations are presented as follows:

(1) There are certain reservations concerning the ability to phenomenologically bracket presuppositions in that response is seen to be inevitably fixed within values and conventions. Also, there are certain reservations regarding the dubious significance of our livedworld experiences in that their manifestations may be seen to be constructed from limited and imperfect recall. This, in turn, can bring up issues relating to interpretation, bias and the trustworthiness of participant's accounts (also refer to earlier section concerning the potential weaknesses within selected methodology).

(2) The limitation of the numbers of theoretical and scholars' contributions that comprise the discourse in Chapter Two through to Chapter Six due to the large and varied amount of scholarly research within aesthetics, sociocultural issues, art appreciation and art educational research methodologies in relation to the dissertation's time and space restraints.

(3) The notable absence of explicated characteristics or taxonomies of aesthetic experience by women scholars in Chapter Six. While characteristics of aesthetic experience can be extrapolated from the writings of such scholars as Langer (1953;

1957a; 1957b) or Greene (1995; 2001), the requirement of Chapter Six necessitated actual taxonomies. The lack of significant input from recognised female scholarly voices concerning the indexing of aesthetic experience characteristics is perhaps a reflection of actuality concerning the priorities set within feminist discourse. That is, the idea that past feminist debate was taken up with addressing more pressing issues relating to patriarchal dominance concerning production, public control, normative evaluative standards of art and the role of women and their hierarchical positioning (Bovenschen, 1985). In other words, there was little value for feminist agendas in explicating characteristics of aesthetic experience when those same characteristics could be construed as simple reinforcements for the historically male dominated view of what constitutes art and its appreciation (i.e. reinforcements for modernist injustices). To this can be added the idea that current feminist debate advocates the abandonment of all notions of formulating plausible universal aesthetic theory (Garber, 2001), as previously observed in Chapter Four.

(4) The limited number of selected research participants sharing ethnic, socio/economic/political and locality correspondences and the specificity of participants' time and space.

(5) Participants' acquaintanceship with the researcher (like-mindedness).

(6) The exclusive focus on painting at the expense of other art disciplines to elicit characteristics of positive aesthetic experience. This has excluded the unique contributions that their inclusion might have generated.

(7) The unforeseen restriction inherent in the selection of predominantly modernist paintings. This limited the analysis and scope of heightened response to examples of traditionally defined fine art. As a consequence, it minimised the appearance and investigation of matters concerning aspects of postmodern and visual culture aesthetics.

All of the participants have knowledge and practice in postmodern and visual culture agendas, as attested to by their represented works and reflections within this dissertation. However, the homogeneous nature of this selection may point to possible undeclared presuppositional biases. The unforeseen hegemonic selection may also

reflect general predispositions associated within like age, socio-economic and political demographics. This, in turn, may point to possible unacknowledged privilege relating to interpretation. As a consequence, certain reservations regarding what constitutes suitable examples for pedagogical strategies for the fostering aesthetic experience may be entertained.

(8) The predominant use of reproductions of the participants' selected paintings for reflections and responses in this research, rather than immediate, recorded responses to present time/space experiential encounters (in authentic contexts).

This limitation concerns the idea of authenticity. That is, the reliance on reproductions/web imagery in a variety of formats and quality of reproduction may be seen to dilute the authenticity of the original object. For instance, by relying on reproduction, there is a suggestion concerning loss of experiential encounter with the original painting's "aura" [the idea of subject-directed veneration and awe] (Benjamin, 1968 [1936], p. 221). For Benjamin (1968 [1936]), this aura was defined as "the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (Benjamin, 1968 [1936], p. 221). In other words, the authority (power and control in perception) imbedded in the uniqueness of the object (in terms of cult and exhibition value) is devalued in reproduction format. The original's essential objective character, its mystique and significance (in real time/space) is forfeit. While Benjamin (1968 [1936]) saw the loss of aura as potentially emancipating, Adorno (1944) viewed the loss as detrimental to authentic reflection (Adorno, 1944).

However, it should be remembered that the original aesthetic experiences reflected on by the participants were based on experiencing original paintings in authentic contexts. The reproductions were employed as prompts for triggering that past, original heightened response; to act as means, not ends in themselves.

(9) The exclusive use of the concept of pleasurable, hedonistic response as the targeted category within aesthetic experience. While considered a legitimate reason for art experience (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Stolnitz, 1960, among others), it nevertheless omits various other heightened, non-hedonistic responses or intentions attributable to artworks (Carroll, 1999, among others). For example, the alternative roles and intentions of certain artworks to elicit non- or anti-aesthetic,

pragmatic or socio-political reactions, awareness or confrontation which can also induce heightened response.

(10) The relative short duration for reflection (six months) and the inevitable limitations and scope of the collection tools. For instance, the omission of implicit possibilities gathered through artists'/participants' creation of new work in response to the observed aesthetic experience and/or its characteristics.

(11) A potential Western cultural bias must also be acknowledged in that none of the selected paintings were chosen from outside the Western cultural milieu. In addition, the omission of Aboriginal or tribal representations outside the European 'comfort zones' of the participants may point towards the concept of aesthetic experience being primarily a concern of Western canon. That is, heightened aesthetic-like experiential encounter with Aboriginal or tribal art-kinds may well expose significant alternative or antithetical characteristics. Indeed, within a tribal context, the Western concept of aesthetic experience itself may be fallacious. While an investigation into what the concept of aesthetic experience or its characteristics may mean in an Aboriginal or tribal context would be fascinating, it is nevertheless deemed beyond the scope of this current study.

(12) The difficulties inherent in attempting to declaratively explicate non-discursive and ineffable qualities and resonances embedded within the inductive nature of sensuous knowing and the subjective areas of participant response.

Despite these limitations, it is maintained that the study still achieves cohesive and substantial signification within the terms of its intended phenomenological orientation.

Having discussed, justified and elaborated the methodology and procedures, the next two chapters provide the findings of this dissertation's phenomenological investigations concerning explicating characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting. In so doing, Chapter Eight introduces and previews the characteristics, while Chapter Nine presents a creative synthesis of those findings.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PREVIEW OF THE EXPLICATED CHARACTERISTICS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

OVERVIEW

An introductory listing and preview of the nine characteristics and five subsumed characteristics of the aesthetic experiences as explicated through this study are presented below. This introduction and preview sets out what was found in the study described in the previous chapter, and will be elaborated on in greater phenomenological detail in the chapter that follows. Because of the scope of the characteristics identified through the study, this introduction/preview is presented to provide support and act as an advanced organiser for the explication of the characteristics presented in creative synthesis format advanced in Chapter Nine.

In addition, the preview includes a table that lists the nine explicated characteristics (and five subsumed characteristics) and presents a summary of their purchase. A second table is then presented which positions the characteristics in relation to their general intrinsic/essentialist or subjective/contextualist epistemological orientations (as provided in Table 2, Chapter Four). Finally, resonances between this dissertation's explicated characteristics and those distilled from the characteristics proposed by the theorists presented in Chapter Six are considered.

AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES

A list of significant points about aesthetic experiences was observed through this study of artist-practitioners conceptions of the aesthetic and forms the basis of what is proposed here. However, the characteristics listed and previewed below, and as elaborated in Chapter Nine, are not advanced as a definitive list of the characteristics of aesthetic experience. Nor, are their explications exhaustive because of the limitations of this dissertation, participants' time and place, on-going behavioural contingencies and the subjective nature of the topic. Indeed, it is possible that the research participants may react differently in responding to other kinds of aesthetic experiences.

The findings here are simply the results from *this* particular investigation. That is, they are the *major* recurring themes that presented themselves in the specificity of

time, place and personalities, that constitute this study. As such, they are offered in the spirit of particularised scholarly discovery. They are presented in the prospect of their contributing to a generalised understanding of the characteristics of aesthetic experience; to find their place along the continuum of authentic art educational research results which run anywhere from influencing “ ... policy decisions ... [to] ... simply enlight[ing] our knowledge of idiosyncratic events” (Stokrocki, 1997. pp. 51-52) that comprise the aesthetic experience.

The characteristics and discriminating qualities are first listed below. This is followed by a section which furthers explanations of the respective characteristics.

EXPLICATED CHARACTERISTICS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Through analysis of the data, nine recurring characteristics (and five subsumed characteristics) of aesthetic experience presented themselves. For reader orientation and referencing purposes, the nine characteristics and brief summations of their discriminating qualities are presented in graphic format below, as originally observed in Table 1. In the left column, the characteristics are listed. In the right column, summaries of their discriminating qualities are forwarded.

Explicated characteristics and discriminating qualities of aesthetic experience

Characteristic	Discriminating qualities
1. Immediacy and totality of experience	Experience comes all at once; response to wholeness rather than reduced through parts; acknowledged in feelingful states and associations; no critical, conscious examination or discourse; experience more intuitive than mediated; design form blends with affective states; other sensuous modalities initiated by form; feelingful rather than analytical response.
(Dependent sub-characteristics)	The feelingfulness of experience did not require propositional knowledge.
(a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing	
(b) Effortless cognition	Understanding and awareness established through feeling rather than process of analysis; belief that cognition was somatic; cognition through sensuous immediacy.
(c) Non-sequencing of experience	No particular systematic ordering of experience.
(d) Divergent points of entry	No particular point of entry into experience; dependent on contextual predispositions of viewer.
(e) Aspects of the sublime	Inability to comprehend the magnitude and power of representation and the associations of deep subjective longings (conciliatory position).
2. Associative aspects innate in form	Elements and qualities of form trigger emotional and contextual associations; emotive, non-rational response to form.
3. Metaphorical response replacing measurement	Imaginative rather than objectified response; elements and principles of design acknowledged metaphorically; non-discursive.
4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the 'artist's eye'	Heightened awareness of technical aspects; awareness of innovative manipulation of materials, techniques and the artist's perceived intention internalised into emotive personal and contextual response.
5. Personal associations	Experience manifests personal, positive psychological associations; experience triggers recall of positive personal history; reaffirmation through subject matter, artistic styles, formal design relationships; associations to philosophical stance and universal themes such as love, death, existence, etc.
6. Sense of mystery	Ineffable quality to experience; non-rational.
7. Transformative aspects	
(a) In subject self-image	Promotion of heightened states of consciousness; promotion of desire for self-actualisation.
(b) In promoting the view that paintings transcend their physical objective status	Paintings become vehicles for personal transcendence; paintings become representations of subjective realities and creative processes; paintings maintain an intangible form within future viewer reflections.
(c) On-going power of experience	The experience has a long term positive effect and becomes an internal personal referencing for artistic and pragmatic situations; may be correspondent to pragmatic and practical requirements of the viewer.
8. Aesthetic experience and ordinary experience	
(a) Aspects of heightened perception and focus	Antecedence in ordinary experience; a perceptual sensitising and amplification of ordinary experience.
(b) Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness	Both notions of a unifying and consummate wholeness of experience and a non-unified and sporadic fragmentation of experience identified
9. Mind and body	Cognitive strategies employed on unconscious level within immediate, corporeal knowing; inductive rather than deductive; emotive, feelingful aspects of perception are considered a form of cognition; mentation and the immediacy of sensuous response become one in a heightened aesthetic encounter; no dualism acknowledged.

The above characteristics are now briefly examined individually in advance of the more elaborated narrative regarding the characteristics which comprise Chapter Nine.

Nine observed characteristics of aesthetic experience

1. Immediacy and totality of experience

Analysis of the data indicates that all participants experienced an immediacy and totality of experiences with artefacts (i.e. paintings) that is reminiscent of the concept of a global entity of the object as proposed by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990). That is, the heightened experience came all at once. The reflections and interviews also indicated that the encounters initially involved feelingful states and associations. These were free from critical, conscious examination or discourse and were in conjunction with and indistinguishable from their appreciation of the design of aesthetic works. The nature of these affective states experienced was a matter of personal choice and relevance. Yet, for all, the immediacy of the experience was intuitive rather than a mediated response. In addition, other sense modalities were subjectively activated. The initial immediacy was one where feelingful response took precedence over analytical concerns, it was claimed. This characteristic is perhaps the most important within the findings, as the immediacy and totality inherent in the positive aesthetic experiences of the participants can be seen to have a direct bearing on subsequent characteristics reported.

An additional five sub characteristics stem from the overall immediacy and totality of experience where identifiable. While these characteristics can be considered distinct, they are nevertheless grouped here because of their dependency and relationship to the parent characteristic. These are: (a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing; (b) Effortless cognition; (c) A feeling of non-sequencing within experience; (d) Divergent points of entry; and (e) Aspects of the sublime. They are now outlined below:

(a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing

Despite the fact that all participants (with one exception) had some degree of familiarity with the artists' works, the initial immediacy of impact within aesthetic experiences was claimed not to have been a product of prior knowledge. That is, the deductions assumed from the subjects' responses indicated that the feelingfulness of

the initial experience did not require underpinning domain knowledge, because it was not seen as a prerequisite for interacting with a painting. Here, didactic information in terms of the impact of pre-knowledge or past familiarity with the artist and/or style for three of the four participants did not rise to the conscious level in the immediacy of experience. On the other hand, all participants acknowledged that the aesthetic experience had promoted within them the desire for further personal investigation into the artists' work, history and associated influences.

The major impact of pre-knowledge seems to be in its abilities to act as vehicles for assisting reinforcement for the experience, the empowerment and continuation of aesthetic experience within the participants' consciousness after initial viewing and as a possible stimulant for participants to seek out such experiences in the first place or like-experiences in the future.

(b) Effortless cognition

The concept of knowing within aesthetic experience was assumed to reside within the heightened understanding the participants received through the sensuous modalities of knowing. That is, understanding and awareness were established through feeling, rather than through the processes of analysis: that it was known and understood somatically through the immediacy of response. Here, the immediacy of somatic response tended to overshadow conscious cognitive processing to a point where the experience seemed unmediated and effortless.

However, cognitive aspects implicit in understanding, associating, problem solving, identification (both literal and symbolic) and personal meaning-making were proposed as being present at the unconscious or tacit level. What initially could be misunderstood as passive contemplation was in actuality embedded in active mediation. That is, one form of understanding simply up-staged the other. Generally, the role of conceptualisation within the aesthetic experience is unclear. Here, an assumed unexplainable experiential nature becomes subsumed within the immediacy of response. If analytical processing or something else is going on and it is presumed by all participants that it is, it does not consciously present itself within the reported experiences' feelingful immediacies.

Nevertheless, the concept of effortless cognition suggested here embraces both the sensual and the cognitively mediated. That is, they blend and are considered as one in interacting with phenomenon. By doing so, it negates the traditional separation

of mind and body within experience. That is, the idea that mind and body are ontologically distinct categories, not reducible, and act separately in informing our concept of reality (this concept is further addressed in **Mind and body**).

Effortless cognition, as observed by the research participants, may also be aligned with the idea of cognition being purely a biological occurrence as suggested by Maturana's (1980) theory of *autopoiesis*, observed in Chapter Four. That is, living is a process of cognition whereby a closed living system is self-referential and structurally coupled with the environment. Here, cognition is recognised in terms of a basic ability to respond to environmental situations.

(c) Non-sequencing of experience

Analysis of the data from the research participants indicated that there is no particular systematic ordering of experience during aesthetic encounter. Rather, there is a multitude of possible rudimentary cognitive ordering procedures which are sporadic and individually applied. It is, as one researcher reflected, "all over the shop" (Elizabeth, Line 569). The initial perception of the design qualities of the painting may lead us into the work. However, the ordering of what is attended seems to be a matter of personal choice or is in response to the major impetus or intent of the painting.

(d) Divergent points of entry

Furthermore, the data indicated that there is no one way, no specific entry point for the participants into the immediacy of aesthetic experience. The sudden introduction within the experience seems influenced by contextual predispositions particular to the viewer. Within the case of this dissertation, a general familiarity with the painters and the paintings was already established prior to authentic experiencing.

Introduction was also recorded as initiated by growing familiarity with the work on both a sensuous and cognitive level. This form of entry entails a progressional aspect, a kind of mind-set that one voluntarily enters into in order to yield to anticipation and expectation (whether the heightened experience eventuates or not).

Alternatively, being taken by surprise was also a common introduction. Whether these surprise introductions were interrogated later for signs of contextual

implications or not depend on the discretion of the viewer, as their discovery would not, it seems, alter the immediacy of response.

(e) Aspects of the sublime

Within this sub-characteristic of the aesthetic experience can be found associative aspects of the sublime which are conciliatory with both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist thought as represented earlier by Burke (1987 [1757]) and Lyotard (1984) respectively. For example, the participants acknowledged an inability to comprehend certain abstract representations relating to such conceptions as infinity and mortality (Burke, 1987 [1757]), as well as responding to deep subjective longings and exaltation of new and radical modes of representing that remained abstracted and unrepresentable (Lyotard, 1984).

2. Associative aspects innate in form

The perceptual nature inherent in aesthetic experience indicated that the alignment of concrete elements, such as colour and line, and qualities such as balance, harmony and grace also acted as devices which promoted immediacy of affective response. That is, the surface structures and organisational elements themselves became elemental triggers for emotional and contextual associations. These were emotive rather than rational in perception and explanation.

3. Metaphorical response replacing measurement

Within their experiences, the participants exhibited a predisposition and enthusiasm for associating and describing the physicality of the paintings in metaphorical rather than analytical terms. This manner of description further embedded the immediacy and totality of aesthetic experience with an imaginative and emotive rather than objectified response. While obviously aware on an analytical level of the various and complex design methods employed within their chosen examples of paintings, the research participants' notations and experiences seemed to indicate that the mechanics -- the reading of the analytical 'blue prints' of creative assembly -- became central to the affective response. In this way, the appreciation of significant form seems to again relate to the feelingfulness of the painting. While discursive information and terminology concerning the elements and principles of design are tacitly held by the viewer, the preferred definitional responses to the states encountered are metaphorical

ones -- those that imaginatively and sensuously resonate with the non-discursive aspects of the experience (which will be elaborated later in Chapter Nine).

4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the ‘artist’s eye’

Acknowledged throughout the participant’s reflections was a heightened awareness of technical virtuosity, the manipulation of materials and techniques, and the artist’s particular vision which informed their aesthetic experience. This was referred to by the research participants in several instances as ‘the artist’s eye’. It was also acknowledged through researchers’ reflections that this inner vision might be related to the researchers’ propositional knowledge in the field as well as its tacit application during their experiences. It may also relate to the researchers’ acknowledgements of the practising ‘tricks of the trade’ (i.e. processes, skills, situated learning) needed to manifest their feelingful response. This comprised a heightened awareness of the technical aspects which activated (and became one with) the emotive experience. This characteristic of aesthetic experience seems to be founded on individual contextual influences and personal preferences. Hence, the stylistic treatments of surfaces by the selected painters were of personal relevance to the researchers. In addition, like Csikszentmihalyi’s and Robinson’s (1990) characteristic of communications relating to the artist (d2), the participants acknowledged sensations of sharing with the artists their intentions and realities.

5. Personal associations

To varying degrees, the participants shared a characteristic of personal past or present links and memories to their experiences. In this way, the aesthetic experience manifested positive psychological associations; that exposure to the paintings triggered cognitive recall of personal histories which were reaffirming to the subjects. This was apparent in terms of subject matter, preferences to artistic styles, formal design relationships and associations to philosophical stances and universal themes such as love, death, domicile and birth. These recollections contained both identifiable indexation (concerning recall of the actual environments where the works were viewed), emotive and philosophical states triggered by their representations. In addition, the participants manifested personal associations from differently sourced affective states concerning other personal experiences which they believed were sympathetic in essence to the paintings’ overall intent. These associations were

actualised within the immediacy of the aesthetic encounter or in further reflection and mediation.

6. Sense of mystery

Apparent throughout much of the data was the notion that the aesthetic experiences of the selected paintings held a sense of mystery and an ineffable quality which 'logical' explanation or critical reflection could not adequately capture. Much of what was emotively felt or intrinsically recognised were immediate connections whose sources stemmed from a presumed un-tappable unconscious (whether believed to be universal or personally idiosyncratic). The explication resided within the primordial experiences of sensations which, for the most part, could only be felt, deductively proven or discursively explicated. While later propositional input was seen as helpful in reinforcing the experience, it was not considered imperative. Problematic conceptual puzzles which existed were filled with synergies or by a simple surrendering of consciousness to the multi-faceted perceptual immediacy.

7. Transformative aspects

Transformative characteristics of aesthetic experience within the reflections of the participants were observed. These characteristics surfaced in notions relating to; (a) subject self image (i.e. perceptions of self), (b) in the belief that the perception of the painting surpassed its actual physicality (i.e. the object transcends its nature as an object in space and time) and became a vehicle for viewer transcendence, and (c) in the belief of an on-going power of aesthetic experience to promote positive reinforcement well past its initial experiencing.

(a) Subject self image

In terms of perceptions of self, all participants claimed that the heightened experiential encounters promoted what they felt to be an advanced state of consciousness which promoted new ways of seeing and knowing. These transformative states further established the desire for self actualisation and for positive life changes. These changes were felt in direct and indirect ways, influencing lifestyle, professional choices and philosophical positions, as will be observed within the creative synthesis, Chapter Nine. The experiencing of the paintings produced feelings of personal wholeness and meditative sensations which altered present

emotional states. Furthermore, they acted as stimulants and initiators for purposive action and as positive reinforcing agents for practical and pragmatic activities.

(b) The view that paintings transcend their physical objective status

There is a further belief that the perception of the painting can surpass its actual physicality, its nature as an object in space and time and become a vehicle for viewer transcendence. That is, the painting can transcend its objective status and be perceived as an imaginative window for subjectively viewing depicted imagery. This experience gives form to thoughts unique within imagination and personal contexts. It becomes a representation of personal and positive memories and a motivation for creative drive.

Furthermore, it is believed that once the experience of the image is ingrained, the actual object/painting need not be required in order to act in the above capacities. The painting now resides not only in its physical sense, but also in an intangible form; an idea or concept within inspiration and personal celebration which the participant can initiate at any time. It was also believed that a painting can possess and exhibit heightened realities. It can become a model for the world, a representation of subjective reality and a valuable illustration of the creative process -- all of which goes far beyond the mere sum of its objective parts.

(c) On-going power of experience

There is also a shared notion that the aesthetic experience has an on-going positive influence in both the practical and appreciative aspects of the participants' lives. It can have a substantial and beneficial longevity in that its intangible effect becomes a process, a proactive agent for personal growth and understanding. The experience itself can change and grow over time to accommodate future situations or influences. In most cases, it continues well after the initial viewing has passed and becomes an integral part of the personal referencing for both artistic and pragmatic concerns. This characteristic evaluation is shared by three of the four participant-researchers.

However, while the longevity, the on-going power of aesthetic experience, may be seen by the majority of participants as possibly indefinite, there exists a dissenting notion. This notion contends that the on-going power can have a 'use by' date. That is, the aesthetic experience is contingent on its ability to service the needs and requirements of the viewer. This is in terms of both artistic practice and appreciation. Here, aesthetic experiences maintain their unique positions in relation to

the growth and changing predispositions of the viewer. In other words, the on-going power of aesthetic experience may also be correspondent to pragmatic and practical requirements. The experiences must be able to withstand continuous interaction and interrogation, to keep giving as required by the viewer.

8. Aesthetic experience and ordinary experience

(a) Aspects of heightened perception and focus

Found within the reflections of the research participants was the notion that aesthetic experience had its antecedence within ordinary experience. That is, aesthetic experience was considered a perceptual sensitising, heightening and amplification of the ordinary.

In one reflection, it was described as a 'sense' description added to the drama and particularity of the ordinary moment. The aesthetic experience was differentiated from ordinary, pragmatic experience in its abilities to encourage internal dialogue within the viewer at a more profound level. It promoted effortful and personal inquiry well past the requirement for pragmatic attention. Aesthetic experience was a focusing of attention in response to the sensuous and meaning making qualities of the art object. It was a slowing down and re-creation of the moment where the experience could be relatively free from extraneous, disruptive elements not particular to the experiencing. This heightened, sensitised state of consciousness could be found within the attuned experiencing of all manner of objects and events within the environment.

(b) Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness

Three of the four participants believed that there was a unified and complete wholeness to the aesthetic experience. The idea of experiential wholeness found expression in the feelings of being enlightened, of all things coming together at the right time and the right place. Other expressions of experiential wholeness concerned the ideas of integration and harmonious interaction. It was a fulfilment of temporal experience which could re-invent itself in later reflection and immediate attachment, an intimacy and familiarity which became a unifying referent for future interactions within the environment. These aspects of totality were illustrated by recollections of calm, inward peace and personal re-invigoration.

Yet, on the other hand, the concept of fragmentation, of experience non-unified and sporadic, was also demonstrated. Here, it was proposed that the full

implication inherent in an aesthetic experience does not come all at once. It is linked with the requirements of the viewer's onward personal journey and must be able to grow and change as required. This necessitates that the experience be open, unresolved and able to progressively and perpetually unfold new discoveries and aesthetic puzzlements.

9. Mind and body

The responses seem to promote a synthesis of the influences of the mind and body. It advances the proposition that the emotive, feelingful aspects of perception are indeed a form of cognition. This suggests that cognitive strategies and the immediacy of sensuous response become one in a heightened aesthetic encounter (considered within the limitations and specificities of this dissertation). Here, corporeal knowing and perception of the sensuous modality of understanding within the immediacy of aesthetic experience is seen to be simply another domain within cognition. The 'making sense' of that which is presented in perception implies interpretation of symbolic and literal representations. It involves cognitive strategies which inform the experience on an unconscious level.

In so doing, the findings do not advance the dichotomy of mind and body -- which was based on the age-old concept of an immaterial soul. That is, Descartes' (1951 [1641]) notion of dualism and the idea that consciousness and self-awareness are aspects of a non physical soul-like dimension (mind). For Descartes (1951 [1641]), this mind presumably established our self-awareness and consciousness -- not the physical dimension associated with the intellect (brain) which received influences from non-rational bodily phenomena. He proposed that the intellect (brain) received input from sensory organs which, in turn, informed the soul-like (non-physical) dimension. Here, self awareness and consciousness lived outside the capabilities of the physical. Abstract thought, not the knowing within the physical material dimensions, was considered being.

On the contrary, this research seems more aligned to Grace's (1996) earlier noted concept of aesthesia. That is, a widening of a conceptual base where the capacity to feel is not solely assumed as a privileged factor within the domain of bodily sensations. Here, feeling spills over into sensuousness of thought as an embodied experience. Perception is an extension, is one with thought, feeling and communication. This is somewhat correspondent with Efland's (2002) idea that

multiple forms of cognition (i.e. both propositional and non-propositional) spring from the same source. That source being the fundamental and primary bodily and perceptual encounters within the environment (Efland, 2002).

Furthermore, this identified unification of mind and body may also relate to the ideas of cognition as a simple autonomous biological function (Maturana, 1980) or as a biological adaptation (Dissanayake, 1995), observed earlier.

The theoretical leanings of the explicated characteristics in reference to propositions forwarded by general intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextual and conciliatory propositions are now observed below. The left-hand column lists the explicated characteristics, which are then assigned appropriate intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextual and/or conciliatory columns. The placements of the characteristics are based on correspondences to observed and listed attributes of the epistemologies appearing within their respective columns. This is helpful for observing the general contributions of the epistemologies and to exhibit the general eclectic demeanour of the explicated characteristics. These observations will also be elaborated in Chapter Nine and Ten).

Table 8- Epistemological orientations of observed characteristics

Characteristics observed within participants' responses	Intrinsic/essentialist inferences	Subjective/contextualist inferences	Conciliatory inferences
1. Immediacy and totality of experience.		Intuitive and primarily subject directed. Immediate and feelingful rather than overtly mediated response.	Acknowledgment that cognitive strategies are employed at sub-conscious level.
(a). Aspects of pre-knowledge.	Non-discursive. Unmediated (3 researchers).	Pre-knowledge of artist and aspects of art history inseparable from experience (1 researcher).	Any mediation is believed tacitly employed (3 researchers).
(b). Effortless cognition.	Predominately at sensuous modalities level. A felt, inductive understanding.	Acknowledgement of underlying cognitive processes.	Belief that response is immediate and feelingful yet effortful and systematic cognition strategies are engaged at subconscious.
(c). Non-sequencing of experience and		Ability to engage work at any level or response at the context interest of viewer.	
(d). divergent points of entry.			Both intrinsic and contextualist interests may initiate entry.

(e). Aspects of the sublime.	Inability to comprehend magnitude and power of certain representations.	Exaltation of radical modes of representation and association of deep subjective longings.	Both theoretical positions of the sublime noted.
2. Associative aspects innate in form.		Response to designal aspects of work blended with context and relational specific influences.	Acknowledgment of designal appreciation and associated emotive psychological resonances it conveys.
3. Metaphorical response replacing measurement.	Subjective response seemingly in reaction to the feelingful states objectified by the art object.	Idiosyncratic and subjective rather than analytical response.	Both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist observed.
4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the ‘artist’s eye.’	Acknowledgement of essentialist characteristics of technical virtuosity, uniqueness of artist signature and universally held content themes.	Acknowledgment of unique employment of unorthodox materials and techniques. Personal preferences.	Both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist characteristics, as observed.
5. Personal associations.		Resonances are subject specific based on culturally sourced and personal ontology.	
6. Sense of mystery.	Ineffable and non-discursive quality.	Exaltation regarding innovative construction processes	Aspects of both positions observed.
7. Transformative aspects.			
(a). Subject self image.	Self actualisation. Feelings of integration.	Informs desire for practical applications of experience	Makes one feel intuitively more alive and instrumentally resolved.
(b). The view that paintings transcend their physical objective status.	Autonomous aspect. Vehicles for transcendence.	The experience speaks to the viewer at a personal level, is understood as having particular relevance to the viewer.	A synthesising of both the objective physicality and subjective notions into one entity (3 researchers).
(c). On-going power of experience.	Paintings continue to perceptually delight (3 researchers).	Experience with painting influence instrumentally influence future art practice.	Paintings enjoyed at perceptual and practical levels.
8. Aesthetic experience and ordinary experience.			
(a). Aspects of heightened perception and focus.		Intensified attention and heightened focus of ordinary experience.	
(b). Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness.	Autonomous aspect of art work. A satisfied culmination (beginning, middle, end) to experience (3 researchers).	An additional aspect of fragmented, inconclusive experience (1 researcher).	Conflation of perceptual uniqueness and intensified pragmatic discernment.
9. Mind and body.	Accepted as perceived intuitively; feelingfully.	Acknowledgement of subjective informed backgrounding embedded within sensuousness of response.	Somatic and noetic. Concept of employing various modalities of knowing. Sensuous knowing empowered by tacitly and subconsciously held discursive knowing.

(Table derived from dissertation’s observed characteristics and the epistemological positions taken from Table 2, Chapter Four).

In addition to the above observations of the general contributions of the epistemologies and the exhibited significant eclectic demeanour of the explicated characteristics, it is of interest to further observe mutual correspondences between the characteristics of aesthetic experience and those characteristics explicated by the theorists examined in Chapter Six.

Comparison of the existing theories with the characteristics of aesthetic experience explicated within the study

To accommodate such a comparison, six panels of generally shared characteristics of the aesthetic experience by the theorists observed in Chapter Six are presented. The number following the name of each theorist relates to the indexing of a correspondent characteristic within that theorist’s section presented in Chapter Six. Below each of these panels I have selected extracts from the research participants’ reflections which share like qualities and resonances. The numbers within the parentheses following participants’ names refer to the line numbering from the participant’s journals from which the passage used has been taken.

What is significant within this comparison is a remarkable correlation between some of the theorists’ propositions, some dating back over fifty-three years and contemporary thought as illustrated through the reflections of the research participants.

1. Object Focus/ Object Directedness	<i>Beardsley</i> (1) Object directedness; <i>Osborne</i> (1) Object centeredness; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (1) Merging of action and awareness object focused, (2) Limitation of stimulus field; <i>Knieter</i> (1) Stimulation drawn from object; <i>Hargreaves</i> (1) Concentration of attention toward object.
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... that incredible rush of energy and complete wonder. I’m grounded to the spot unable to move as a rush of adrenalin flows through me and I just stare and stare (Caroline, 493-495).

Its effect on me was hypnotic, severely fascinating. The painting seems to reach out, grab you and pull you toward it ... (Elizabeth, 174-176).

It's the overall thing (like music) that you respond to rather than the style or genre. Whether it's jazz or pop, good songs, like good paintings, have the capacity to transcend those genres. Similarly my appreciation of painting, my response to painting, is pretty immediate (Chris, 56-59).

It was almost confrontational in its appearance, it made me stop dead in my tracks, to see more, more closely (John, 361-362).

2. Feelings of detachment

*Beardsley (3) Detached effect, set off from reality;
Osborne (2) No theoretical or practical concerns, (4)
Feeling of detachment, disinterestedness, (7) Loss of body consciousness, loss of time/space.
Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (2) Limitation of stimulus field, no awareness of past or future;
Hargreaves (1) Time and space suspended.*

Sometimes it's just that something that makes you stop and I'll just be sucked in, time disappears ... (Caroline, 1485-1486).

When we are looking at images we are looking at spatial colour/tone. We are thinking what does this and that mean but we are also just enjoying the visual stimulation of the thing (Chris, 590-592).

You are totally incorporated into the painting and nothing else exists or matters during that time (Elizabeth, 613-615).

I was not aware of the past experience of any of the other paintings I had viewed. But I was strangely sensitised to the smells and peripheral colours and temperature of the immediate environment. The immediate environment seemed abstracted and nurturing for the experience. It seemed to come in closer, to slightly hum (John, 427-431).

3. Feelings of active discovery

Beardsley (4) Feelings of active discovery, exercising constructive powers, sense of intellectuality (possibly illusory);
Osborne (7) Stimulation of alertness;
Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (4) Skills (cognitive) employed to overcome challenges, control of actions, (6b) Sense of discovery, (6c) Sense of human connectedness;
Knieter (4) Employment of cognitive schema;
Hargreaves (2) Feelings of new and important realities;

I don't think I would ever grow bored with it how many times I looked at it. It's always surprising and relieving each time (Caroline, 1251-1252). They really never run out of things to tell us. There are pieces of art that can play with you I think ages on and you are always drawn back to them (Caroline, 1472-1472).

You would be looking at something but you would be actually looking deeper and re-creating it. Manifesting it in different ways (Chris, 410-411).

You're participating completely with the work with every fibre of your body and every molecule of your skin, listening for the colours and the rhythm and the texture and the dance of it all -- it's all happening under your fingertips and on the invisible hinges on the edge of your skin but it doesn't feel like effort ... (Elizabeth, 609-613).

... I did feel more intelligent, self assured with life in general, more ready to reflect on all sorts of things, in tune, focussed, aware, interested (John, 503-504).

4. Feelings of self fulfilment, wholeness, self-actualisation

Beardsley (5) Integration as a person, gratification (hedonistic pleasure and sense of being up-lifted);
Osborne (7) Enjoyment, contemplative attitude;
Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (5) Realisation of clear goals, clear feedback, intense enjoyment, (6a) Personal wholeness, (6b) A sense of discovery, (6c) A sense of human connectedness.
Knieter (3) Feelingful reactions, both physiological and emotional;
Hargreaves (4) Gratification of experience, arousal of appetite for further encounters.

... my experience of viewing it ['Lavender Mist'] made me feel as if I was intensely connected to nature -- in a field viewing a mass of blossoms or covered by a blanket of fog or mist or being lapped by a waterfall (Elizabeth, 106-108).

... I can go into a gallery feeling very flattened, exhausted, fed up or angry and then when you leave you are thinking that everything is possible. That you're buzzing, that the world seems different and positive. You're running, you're buzzing and you've got all this energy again. That you have been totally fed and watered by the experience (Caroline, 1522-1526).

And also there is a deeper understanding within myself, just in the older you get the farther you see into life and things like that. When I look into these [the paintings] I see and understand a lot more than I used to (Chris, 156-158) ... these painters and paintings influence me in very direct ways and in a lot of indirect ways too (Chris, 203-204).

Its experience influences the way I see the world immediately afterwards and like a vapour enters my back log of experience which will influence me in times to come. I can go back to the experience for inspiration, not only for art purposes, but for day to day experiences too (John, 679-682).

5. Perception of the experience as a unified whole	<i>Beardsley</i> (Proposition 3) Unity and coherence, (Proposition 4) Totality of experience; <i>Osborne</i> (3) The parts of the experience are only important as they articulate the intuitive perception of the whole; <i>Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson</i> (5) Clear goals, clear feedback (intuitive 'concreteness of presented image' fortified by content awareness; <i>Hargreaves</i> (2) Observed as a single experience, while cognitive structures are activated, the major thrust is intuitive in nature.
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I close my eyes and immediately re-create the image in my mind's eye, it's so complete an image, balanced and studied ... (Caroline, 1224-1225).

... on the other hand, it does really feel like an integrated, harmonious experience you have with it even though you have the opportunity to re-visit it. My experience is that the experience has been of a very complete experience, at the time (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1533-1536).

But the thing comes as a whole, a packaged thing ... (Chris, 31-32).

I was content and did not feel the need to share. A kind of inner peace. I was part of something which was unknowable; I was linked to something, the human condition perhaps, more tightly. I felt a kinship with the universe in me ... (John, 440-442).

6. Feelings of identification with object

Beardsley (Proposition 2) Emotional and psychological sensations bound to object, (1) Object directedness; Osborne (7) Identification with object by our attention being held and gripped, absorption; Hargreaves (1) Being lost in the object.

I want to be there and I don't need to be physically there because I feel as if I am there -- that my senses have moved into the image (Caroline, 1040-1041).

... there are things and people you have recognition of and there is this immediate connection, something going on there, whether its biological, spiritual or there's a connection to something unexplainable, inexplicable, at least to the conscious mind (Chris, 20-23).

Simultaneously, I found there to be something very sad about Lavender Mist; it moved me to tears and laughter and awe ... (Elizabeth, 111-112).

There's an immediate attachment to it. It becomes part of me, part of my personal referencing (John, 677-678) ... Through the years 'Marble Table' (and other works by Braque) has consistently presented to me an inward feeling of peace and an outward feeling of direction. If I stumble over a reproduction of it in an art book or magazine, whatever I had planned is briefly interrupted. I am immediately slowed down and give it several moments for reflection. Seeing it gives me a warm sensation,

makes me involuntarily smile, like unexpectedly coming across someone you love on a busy street. I want to slow down and talk awhile (John, 808-814).

It must be stated that the similarities apparent within the above comparisons and resonances of characteristics are not to be considered as advocating any position for universal characteristics. However, what is significant here is the idea that some of these characteristics of positive and heightened aesthetic response still remain relatively consistent. Despite their longevity and temperament, they are noteworthy because of their assumed contemporary relevance (as attested to by the research participants). This is so, despite the abundance of propositions advocating the fragmented, contingent and temporal natures of modern life.

In the chapter that follows, a fuller elaboration of the explicated characteristics is presented. This upcoming embellished narrative (creative synthesis) chapter incorporates narration informed by visual imagery, poetry, prose and participants' anecdotes. As foreshadowed, the creative synthesis is now presented in an effort to forward both the deductive and inductive nature of the phenomena under investigation.

CHAPTER NINE

ELABORATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE THROUGH EMBELLISHED NARRATIVE (CREATIVE SYNTHESIS)

OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

This chapter orientates and elaborates the analyses of the data and findings of the research through a creative synthesis involving visual imagery, poetry, prose and participants' anecdotes. This creative synthesis is presented as a narrative in an effort to advance both the deductive and inductive nature of the phenomena under investigation. Furthermore, within the narrative, subjects' accounts are extensively employed to 'exploit' [sic] the participants' personal subjectivities (Peshkin, cited in Eisner (1998b)).

To extend this point, paintings from the three participant-artists are also presented throughout in order to advance further an account of the feelingful states textually described. In this way, the paintings are intended to articulate and to assist in transferring the participants' aesthetic experiences. These qualitative and phenomenological strategies are employed to make the understanding of the examined characteristics of aesthetic experience more potent and holistic, yet accessible, for the reader (Nielsen, 2000).

For clarity throughout the section and in order to separate the participants' contributions from canonical references, the research participants will be referred to by their first names. That is, I shall be referred to as John, Chris Worfold as Chris, Caroline Penny as Caroline and Elizabeth Ruinard as Elizabeth. Corresponding numbering within the parentheses refer to the line from the participant's journals from which the passage used has been taken. In addition, the research participants' reflective journal passages (verbatim) will be distinguished through the use of italics.

Again, initially presented in Table 1, the characteristics elaborated through these analyses comprise:

Explicated characteristics and discriminating qualities of aesthetic experience

Characteristic	Discriminating qualities
1. Immediacy and totality of experience	Experience comes all at once; Response to wholeness rather than reduced through parts; Acknowledged in feelingful states and associations; No critical, conscious examination or discourse; Experience more intuitive than mediated; Designal form blends with affective states; Other sensuous modalities initiated by form; Feelingful rather than analytical response.
(Dependent sub-characteristics)	
(a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing	The feelingfulness of experience did not require propositional knowledge.
(b) Effortless cognition	Understanding and awareness established through feeling rather than process of analysis; belief that cognition was somatic; cognition through sensuous immediacy.
(c) Non-sequencing of experience	No particular systematic ordering of experience.
(d) Divergent points of entry	No particular point of entry into experience; dependent on contextual predispositions of viewer.
(e) Aspects of the sublime	Inability to comprehend the magnitude and power of representation and the associations of deep subjective longings (conciliatory position).
2. Associative aspects innate in form	Elements and qualities of form trigger emotional and contextual associations; Emotive, non-rational response to form.
3. Metaphorical response replacing measurement	Imaginative rather than objectified response; Elements and principles of design acknowledged metaphorically; non-discursive.
4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the 'artist's eye'	Heightened awareness of technical aspects; awareness of innovative manipulation of materials, techniques and the artist's perceived intention internalised into emotive personal and contextual response.
5. Personal associations	Experience manifests personal, positive psychological associations; Experience triggers recall of positive personal history; Reaffirmation through subject matter, artistic styles, formal design relationships; associations to philosophical stance and universal themes such as love, death, existence, etc.
6. Sense of mystery	Ineffable quality to experience; non-rational.
7. Transformative aspects	
(a) In subject self-image	Promotion of heightened states of consciousness; promotion of desire for self-actualisation.
(b) In promoting the view that paintings transcend their physical objective status	Paintings become vehicles for personal transcendence; paintings become representations of subjective realities and creative processes; paintings maintain an intangible form within future viewer reflections.
(c) On-going power of experience	The experience has a long term positive effect and becomes an internal personal referencing for artistic and pragmatic situations; may be correspondent to pragmatic and practical requirements of the viewer.
8. Aesthetic experience and ordinary experience	
(a) Aspects of heightened perception and focus	Antecedence in ordinary experience; a perceptual sensitising and amplification of ordinary experience.
(b) Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness	Both notions of a unifying and consummate wholeness of experience and a non-unified and sporadic fragmentation of experience identified.
9. Mind and body	Cognitive strategies employed on unconscious level within immediate, corporeal knowing; inductive rather than deductive; emotive, feelingful aspects of perception are considered a form of cognition; mentation and the immediacy of sensuous response become one in a heightened aesthetic encounter; no dualism acknowledged.

EMBELLISHED NARRATIVE (CREATIVE SYNTHESIS) ON THE EXPLICATED CHARACTERISTICS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

1. Immediacy and Totality

The findings of this research suggest that the *initial* introduction in a heightened positive aesthetic experience of painting is not cool and detached mediation. It does not begin with the calculating and discerning eye of objectivity. Nor is one immediately pulled toward any presumed urgency for ordering the experience into logical sequence or a desire for enacting cognitive problem/puzzle solving schema, though these concerns may underpin or follow in such an experience.

On the contrary, the introduction is one of overall and immediate impact; one where the physical presence and perceptive elements of the painting and conjoined affective states orchestrate the viewer's attention. That is, it is a pronounced interaction with the painting's entirety, a wholeness of encounter, the overall physicality of the painting, which Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson [1990a] refer to as the global entity of the object. It begins with viewer interaction with the design elements (i.e. colour, line, scale, repetition of form, movement, etc.) which transpires in what Carroll refers to as "design appreciation" (Carroll, 1999, p.189) -- or concentration on the form of the art object -- on an immediate and intuitive level. This informs the content and emotional impact of the structure and imagery for the viewer, all of which is achieved within the blink of an eye. In this respect, the dissertation's findings reflect Beardsley's (1969) earlier proposal of a two-fold aspect of aesthetic experience. His proposal was for a combination of the *phenomenally objective field* (i.e. formal qualities and artistic structures such as line and colour etc) with those of the *phenomenally subjective field* associated with the affective features (i.e. feelings and emotions) which are evoked through internalising the prerequisite objective field.

Because the perception of the painting's physical elements or design appreciation initiates the experience, one first needs a conducive object or event on which to react. From this perceptual beginning, aspects of various content/context or transformational responses become encapsulated within that initial physical and design immediacy.

In other words, feeling and structure blur into each other and back into the whole. The perceptual and aesthetic qualities inherent in form and surface become intermingled, concomitant and at times interrelated to the experience's affective nature. In correspondence with Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990a) and Eisner

(1978), the findings of this research indicated that perceptual qualities were not limited to vision, but also influenced and evoked researchers' preoccupations in other sense modalities.

For instance, it is a place where the viewer can “... *listen for the colour and the rhythm and the texture*” (Elizabeth, 611) and want “*to totally drink it in*” (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1422); or see “... *the visual play[ing] with the sense of taste and the tactile*” (John, 611). A viewer can experience a point where; “... *it makes me want to stop and stare and I almost want to eat it*” (Caroline, 1354- 1355). It is also a place where the experiencing of the colour green can be sensuously experienced as “*delicious*” (Caroline, 899).

The amalgamation of components, the blending of perceptual form (i.e. design appreciation) and surface treatment into affective, interactive agents within the aesthetic experience is instantaneous and seldom differentiated at the conscious level. That is, all researchers professed an awareness of the perceptions of form and structure. Yet, its isolation into a distinct and autonomous category for appreciation, as in traditional aesthetic contemplation and the notion of disinterestedness was minimised and seemingly conjoined with other sensorial and affective domains. In other words, design appreciation of the object's form became an integrated part of an overall experience rather than being the sole focus, as in Bell's (1947 [1914]) proposal of significant form. What we are personally drawn to explore correspondingly seems a matter of personal relevance. As Chris observed:

It's only through training that you begin to understand the division of elements, of line, tone, colour and those sorts of things ... you may even try to emphasise them in the conscious mind (Chris, 29-31). The same is true of any semiotic breakdown in terms of subject matter. The evaluation of all these things involves very rational processes (46-47). To use an analogy, they are like perspective drawing -- you want to know it but you finally want it to slip into the background of your mind so that it is not to the fore, not dominate the experience of the painting (48-50).



Chris Worfold. *Night Light* (2006). Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.



Chris Worfold. *A Fleeting Floating World* (2005). Oil and mixed media on sheet metal.

Chris continues:

For me, I don't believe the analytical aspects reach my consciousness or operate on a conscious level in the immediate response to a painting. It's a feeling thing (43- 44), of immediate connections predominately linked to things unexplainable, inexplicable -- at least to the conscious mind (22-23). The experience comes as a whole, a package thing and is very much involved with feeling (32-33).

Chris finds this feelingful, yet unexplainable, nature resonating somewhat in passages from Wordsworth:

... But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Falling from us, vanishings; ...

... for those first afflictions,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing ...

Wordsworth, W. Excerpt from the poem *Ode: Paulo Majora Canamus* (1807).

Chris's take on Wordsworth seems to suggest that we can see a more complete picture if that picture is lit from the un-analysed and non-distinct shadows cast from our subjective desires, rather than through the attempt to objectify those 'obstinate questionings of sense and outward things.' Chris proposes that the pictorial vision is enhanced by limiting that which is too rational. Chris's sentiments on non-analytical immediacy of experience echo my own reflections on *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*. Here:

It is as if the true meaning-ness and experience goes past, transcends its structuring. Although I am aware of the presence of numerous pickets and their regimented interstices, I do not count them when admiring the neighbour's fence. I take the fence in totally. I think aesthetic experience is like that (John, 251- 253).

This sentiment can be taken further. For instance, the avoidance, and even shunning, of analytical probing within the initial immediacy and totality of experience is again addressed and recalled in the lines from my following poem:

Towards a non definition (N.Z.)

After the storm,
before the churning thunderheads,
a rainbow bright as a child's birthday
has hooked Rangitoto Island like a fish.

I'll leave it like that.

I want no science or myth to explain,
to drain all colour out
and dress this moment for me
in logic or specious cloak.

To be here sliding eyes along its
arched backbone is enough,
my retinas reflecting prisms.

Ohms
or oms,
it does not matter.

Definitions will always
pale dull and earth toned.
Tarlton, J. Unpublished poem (1995).

Correspondingly, my aesthetic experience of Braque's *The Marble Table* also expressed the immediacy and intuitiveness of response. Through reflection, my awareness of its fluid, cubist-inspired compositional elements and designal structures also seemed to be immediately blended with affective response. That is, the objective designal elements inherent in its compositional format had conflated with psychological feelings which I believed were also present. For example, a reflection states that I could not:

... rationally identify the room. I felt the room... the essence (600-601). [It was] illusory form, not depicting but suggesting (612) ... I was truly absorbed into the painting (675). It was the painting that took over (667). Although I could never forget who painted it (my past influences from Braque's work being so influential), the painting's presence was the main attraction ... and it came all at once (684-685).



John Tarlton. *Duet* (1989). Charcoal/coloured pencil.

Furthering this, Elizabeth's experience of *Lavender Mist* seems initiated by the confrontation of designal elements such as massive scale and:

*[t]he dazzling colour, dancing, scintillating in front of me (Elizabeth, 4-5)
...in an unbelievable entanglement of skeins and tendrils of lavender, mauve,
pink, black and white (79- 80).*

Yet, it is the immediate totality of the experience that dominates. For example, Elizabeth maintains that:

The painting keeps your eye continually eager, not allowed to rest on any particular area (99-100), [where] my experience of viewing made me feel as if I was connected to nature -- in a field viewing a mass of blossoms or covered by a blanket of fog or mist or being lapped by a waterfall (106-108). Its effect upon me was hypnotic, severely fascinating. The painting seem[ed] to reach out, grab you and pull you toward it (174-6).

Like Chris and myself, Elizabeth's immediate experience seems to come as a whole. That is, she attempts to take in its full manifestation, rather than build up or construct the experience by concentrating on its distinct components. Again, form is inexplicably linked with emotional content. This is evidenced by Elizabeth's reflection which suggests that the experience:

... runs all over the shop. Everything all exploding at once, hyper-manic thoughts and reactions racing and dancing and bouncing around everywhere, all competing for priority in one's head/body (59- 61).

The immediacy and totality of the aesthetic experience is furthered by Caroline. Like the other participants, Caroline's observation below is also representative of the introduction of other sense modalities into the physicality of the work as well as taking in the totality of what is presented. This can be observed through the following passage:

... taking in the wholeness of the image -- the physical size and presence, the colours, the brush marks, the image itself. I can't think of what comes first ... [t]hat incredible rush of energy and complete wonder. I'm grounded to the spot and unable to move as a rush of adrenalin flows through me and I just

stare and stare. I want to touch it, to taste it, to run my hands all over the surface of the painting (Caroline, 497- 499).



Caroline Penny. *Along the lane, NSW* (1994). Oil on canvas

In addition, my reflections on *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* also promote the notion of immediacy and global entity within aesthetic experience. Here:

The experience cannot be solely dissected into states or stages. The entirety, the entity of the piece hits first, I saw the composites of the whole later (John, 252-254). *It [the painting] was almost confrontational in its appearance. It made me stop dead in my tracks... I took in the whole feeling of the piece, then studied the components which made up the whole -- the colour, size, bold chunky divisions of composition, then slowly absorbed the components back into the whole again* (361-364). *It seemed to simply display its visual flavour -- its feelingfulness -- its significance -- and in response to this presented knowing, I forced no reasoning, no intellectualisation on the painting* (368- 370). *I felt only a dark and primordial assurance* (383).

Summary

As advanced in preview in Chapter Eight, analysis of the data indicates that all participants experienced an immediacy and totality in their aesthetic experiences reminiscent of Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) concept of the global entity of the object. That is, the heightened experience came all at once. The reflections and interviews also indicated that the encounters were initially involved with feelingful

states and associations. These states and associations were free from critical, conscious examination or discourse and were in conjunction with, and indistinguishable from, their design appreciation. The nature of these affective states experienced became a matter of personal choice and relevance. The immediacy of the experience was intuitive rather than mediated response. In addition, other sense modalities were subjectively-activated. The initial immediacy was one where feelingful response took precedence over analytical concerns.

Five Sub-characteristics of Immediacy and Totality of experience

An additional five sub-characteristics of immediacy and totality of experience provide a more finely grained analysis of this characteristic, with their demeanours established as a result of the influence of experiential immediacy and totality. While each is distinct, they are nevertheless grouped here as sub-categories because of their dependency and relationship to the parent characteristic. These sub-characteristics are (a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing; (b) Effortless cognition; (c) A feeling of non-sequencing within experience; (d) Divergent points of entry and; (e) Aspects of the sublime. They are examined as follows:

(a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing

Despite all participants having some degree of familiarity with the selected artists' works (other than my involuntary introduction to Perssons' *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*) there was no conclusive agreement in terms of the impact of pre-knowledge or past familiarity with artist and/or style influencing or characterising the actual experience. It seemed the initial experience remained immediate and did not require underpinning domain knowledge. Yet, all participants acknowledged that the aesthetic experience had promoted within them the desire for further personal investigation into the artists' work and history. For example, I intentionally familiarised myself with other paintings by Persson after the experience of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*.

The major impact of pre-knowledge seems to be in its abilities to act as vehicles for assisting reinforcement for the experience, the empowerment and continuation of aesthetic experience within the participants' consciousness after initial viewing and as a possible stimulant for participants to seek out such experiences in the first place or like-experiences in the future.

However, instances of pre-knowledge characterising the aesthetic experience do occur. For instance, Elizabeth's reflective journal indicates that although her aesthetic experiences prior to *Lavender Mist* were primarily sensual, the encounter with the Pollock painting also entailed cognitive awareness of propositional knowledge in terms of style, historical, local and world-wide art scenes and Pollock as an artist and as a man. As she reflects:

In my recollection of my experience of this work it is impossible to separate out the cognitive dimension of that reaction and even as I responded to the work, breathing sped up, aroused, taken out of time, unable to arrest my gaze upon the work etc, simultaneously my knowledge of the conditions under which the work had been produced seeped into my consciousness at some level (Elizabeth, 117-122).

In this context, the interplay of Elizabeth's substantial understanding of art history and theory, in terms of enacting the clues and cues for assisting understanding and enjoyment, are part of her experience. Caroline also acknowledges prior knowledge of Monet's and Cassatt's output which can be put down as a general affinity with the artists, era, those types of paintings and her past participation within an educational system (Caroline, 1379-1381). Indeed, all participants share in these same affinities to certain extents. To these must be added Chris's personal interests in his selected artists' philosophies of life and art and their positions of influence on his own creative journey and my own discursive and personal affiliations with the work of Braque.

Yet the initial immediacy of the aesthetic experiences reflected on in this study tends to minimise the importance of prior knowledge in the actual heightened aesthetic response. Whether it is there or not does not seem to encroach upon the experience, as it is not seen as a prerequisite for interacting with a painting. Furthermore, there is a general agreement among the participants that didactic information did not (in the immediacy of experience) rise to the conscious level (Elizabeth's experience of *Lavender Mist* being the exception). As Chris explains:

The semiotic breakdown in terms of the subject matter and other concerns, the evaluation of these things in a very rational process, is something that I have been taught, that I have been made aware of. In a sense its like perspective drawing, you want to know it, but you finally want it to slip into the background of your mind, so that is not to the fore (Chris, 46-49) ... It is

the overall thing that you respond to, like music, rather than the style or genre. Good paintings, like good music, have the capacity to transcend those genres (56-58). Similarly, my appreciation of painting, my response to painting, is pretty immediate (58-59).

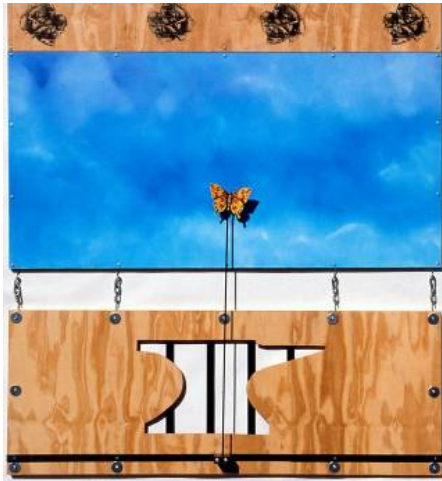


Chris Worfold. *Circus Roses 2* (2006). Enamel, oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

Chris's reflections and my own, in the case of the Braque painting, also suggest that pre-knowledge of the artist's output though tacitly held was considered inconsequential prior to and during the aesthetic experience.

The absence of any prior knowledge of Persson's work did not diminish my aesthetic experience of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*. Whether pre-knowledge would have improved it will never be known. However, with my knowledge of art theory, I was tacitly aware of the painting's stylistic demeanour and felt its approximate location along the line of contemporary Australian and overseas art histories. Yet these matters never entered into my experience with the painting and arose only in post experience reflection. During the response the painting had "*assumed its own presence*" (John, 423), and my sense of awe was unencumbered by categorical knowledge.

Analytic probing within subsequent reflection suggests the inevitability of prior knowledge influencing the participants' experience in knowing 'about' and 'in' art. It is an undeniable facet of their daily lives. However, whether such tacit information was used to inform the experience at a subconscious level can not be substantiated through the qualitative analysis and is therefore purely suppositional.



John Tarlton. *The weight of all that beauty* (1998).
Oil on wood and plywood construction.

Elizabeth's final reflection and anecdote on whether pre-knowledge is a prerequisite for aesthetic experience perhaps best resonate an overall participants' point of view:

I think not necessarily. It might help slightly in that it encourages one to seek out that kind of experience again if it's already occurred in a different context but I have seen kids from remote parts of Australia in a gallery for the first time ever absolutely blown away by something, just because it happens to them, not especially because they know about it or because they have willed it (Elizabeth, 582-587).

Summary

Despite all participants (with one exception) having some degree of familiarity with the selected artists' works, the initial immediacy of impact within aesthetic experiences tended to minimise the importance of prior knowledge in the actual heightened response. In this way, the feelingfulness of the initial experience did not seem to require underpinning domain knowledge because it was not seen as a prerequisite for interacting with a painting. Here, didactic information, in terms of the impact of pre-knowledge or past familiarity with the artist and/or style, did not rise to the conscious level in the immediacy of experience. On the other hand, all participants acknowledged that the aesthetic experience had promoted within them the desire for further personal investigation into the artists' work, history and associated influences.

The major impact of pre-knowledge seems to be as vehicles for assisting reinforcement for the experience, the empowerment and continuation of aesthetic

experience within the participants' consciousness after initial viewing and as a possible stimulant for participants to seek out such experiences in the first place or like-experiences in the future.

(b) Effortless cognition

For the most part, the concept of knowing within aesthetic experience resides within the heightened understanding the participants reported as being received through the sensuous modalities of knowing. Understanding and awareness were established through feeling rather than through the processes of analysis: it was known and understood somatically through the immediacy of response.

For example, Elizabeth, though well trained in the ways of cognitive interrogation and the hunt for meanings and underlying resonances within painting, she nevertheless considers that the heightened response of aesthetic experience is achieved “*mostly [through] thinking with the body*” (Elizabeth, 620). For Elizabeth, aesthetic experience is not to be mistaken for art criticism. That is, in considering the terms effortful or passive viewer participation, she maintains that:

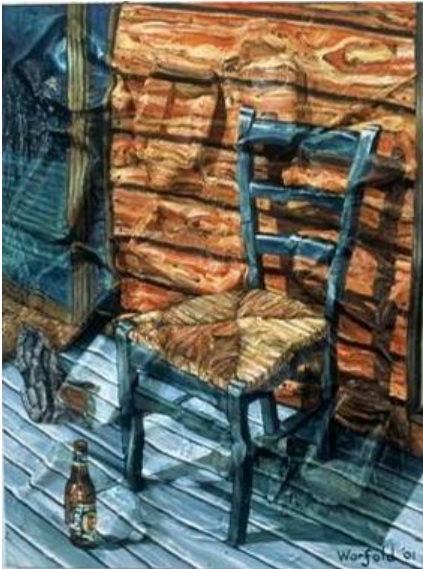
The terms don't really mean much here in this context. You're participating completely with the work with every fibre of you body and every molecule of your skin... It's all happening ... but it doesn't feel like effort. You are totally incorporated into the painting and nothing else exists or matters during that time (609-615) ... one can think with one's body (709).

Here, the immediacy of somatic response tended to overshadow cognitive concerns to the extent that the experience seemed unmediated. This is not to propose that the cognitive aspects implicit in understanding, associating, problem solving, identification and personal meaning-making were not present or considered instrumental as underpinning the event. Beneath what initially could be misunderstood as passive contemplation, effortful mediation was taking place.

For example, Chris, while acknowledging the immediacy of experience, believes that both passive contemplation and effortful viewer participation are indeed present within aesthetic experience. One simply upstages the other. He suggests that:

There is an interaction between who we are and what we experience (Chris, 173). Again, what you are actually doing when you've looking at the work (or other relaxing activities) requires an awful lot of mental activity. Our brain is working overtime to make sense of these things. And I think that the notion of

storytelling is where it really comes in. I mean, we all love stories, we love to tell ourselves stories and when we are relaxing, watching a particular thing, whether it be a painting or visual theatre or whatever, we become quite comfortable in it. This is where the idea of passivity comes into it, but the fact is that we are quite active throughout the process (368-377).



Chris Worfold. *Night Chair* (2001).
Oil and mixed media on board.

He continues:

*It is a very active thing. It just doesn't happen to you if you hang around, posed like St Theresa waiting for the arrow [a reference to Bernini's sculpture, *The Ecstasy of St Theresa*]. But then again, that's not to say that to receive the experience you have to set yourself up into a position where you can be in the right way to receive it ... It is a process (378-383).*

Caroline's response is understood through an innate knowing and her belief that the paintings' experiences hold for her regarding what she refers to as the harmonies of life itself (Caroline, 1261). That is, the experience is unencumbered and mediation and analysis play a lesser part. "To be honest ..." Caroline states:

... in the past I haven't probably studied and analysed painting anyway near the amount I have done while during this research. Sometimes it's just that something, that makes me stop and I'll be sucked in, time disappears ... (1484-1486).



Caroline Penny. *Spooky's Beach, Angourie, NSW* (2002). Oil on canvas.

However, through reflection she returns over and over again to relive the experience and can reconstruct and enjoy her responses at leisure. Occasionally, but not always, within her experience, mediation can be found through a type of unconscious sequencing where:

Initially it would be just looking at what I was looking at, seeing that initially, and then as I wandered around it with my eye, then other thing would be triggered through that, from ideas about understanding techniques to associating and establishing personal relevance (1362-1365).

The response above is determined by what she is looking at (1498) and whether she immediately feels a kinship with the work (what Chris referred to as a 'connection'). At other times discursive influences can help to heighten an appreciation or understanding of a work which might otherwise elude her (1489-1510).

Also, evident within my reflections of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* are signs of conscious mediative activity. Yet, like the observations of the other participants, its role within the aesthetic experience is unclear and is held in check by what I assume to be the unexplainable nature of the experience. This notion is analogous to Chris's reflections which contend that the experience grows and changes over time (Chris, 59) and that the discursive aspects of the experience are buried within the immediacy of response. If analytical processing or something else is going on, Chris believes that 'something else' does not consciously present itself within the experience's feelingful immediacy (60-61). I concurred, noting in the experience of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*:

The painting's experience is constantly changing in my head, it says many things, immediately and through quiet mediation. It keeps opening. It has no

one face, nor does my experience of it. It and you keep changing throughout the dialogue. It is an adventure where you can't really take a conceptual, propositional road map along. Old roads (and ways of knowing) might not really exist, and new ones might point off in all directions. You can not expect or anticipate (John, 669-674).

Summary

The concept of knowing within aesthetic experience was assumed to reside within the heightened understanding the participants construed through the sensuous modalities of knowing. Understanding and awareness were established through feeling rather than through the processes of analysis; that it was known and understood somatically through the immediacy of response.

Cognition was held to occur through thinking with the body. The immediacy of somatic response tended to overshadow cognitive concerns to a point where the experience seemed unmediated and effortless. However, cognitive aspects implicit in understanding, associating, problem solving, identification both literal and symbolic and personal meaning-making were believed present at the unconscious or tacit level. What initially could be misunderstood as passive contemplation was in actuality embedded in active mediation. One form of understanding simply informed and up staged the other.

In sum, the role of conceptualisation within the aesthetic experience, while unclear and held in check by an assumed unexplainable experiential nature, sees the discursive aspects becoming subsumed within the immediacy of response. If analytical processing or something else is going on and it is presumed by all participants that it is, it does not consciously present itself within the reported experiences' feelingful immediacies.

(c) A feeling of non sequencing of experience

The ever-changing dialogue which comprises affective exchange and aspects of meaning making within heightened aesthetic response seems to defy easy attempts to identify any kind of systematic processing or logical sequencing within the experience. For instance, the occasional, unsystematised sequencing process described earlier by Caroline is the only reference to acknowledging an ordering of experiential information by the research participants during aesthetic response.

Indeed, the majority of collected data (including Caroline's) points toward a sporadic and non-routine sequencing of reaction to stimuli. Here, the paintings are constantly playing with you visually (John, 611; Caroline, 1399) and one can become totally lost (Caroline, 1499) within the instantaneous, from here to there, shifting of attention. Concerning the immediacy of experience, Chris concluded that "*what you decide to [initially] place emphasis on, I don't know, I'm not sure what comes first*" (Chris, 32-33).



Chris Worfold. *Sail into an Ocean Leave a Sea* (2000). Oil and acrylic adhesive on board.

The generalised character of a somewhat chaotic, non sequencing of experience within heightened aesthetic response, and one which seemed representative of research participants' reflections, was summarised by Elizabeth. Here, she observed that the experience was:

[n]ot necessarily sequential. It's all over the shop. Everything all exploding at once, hyper-manic thoughts and reactions racing. And dancing and bouncing around everywhere, all competing for priority in one's head/body. There are a multitude of possible orders, directions -- chaosmosis (Elizabeth, 569-572).

Elizabeth concluded:

I think that sequence might occur in the sense that as a disciplined viewer of art [as are all the research participants within this dissertation], after I've calmed down, experienced the high, I might direct myself to attend to all the particular formal features of the painting that I might regret later if I don't now as I may never have the chance again. But mostly it's all mixed in (573-577).

Summary

This 'mixed in' encountering within response displayed by participants concerning aesthetic experience disassociates itself from any idea of logical or schematic ordering of attention. Our participation follows no routine or rational sequence. We are taken and absorbed at random by whatever is perceptually or affectively more dominant at that point in time and as orchestrated by the contingencies inherent in individual agency. The totality of experience advances several possible interactive points at once; that which the physical painting presents in terms of formal aspects and emotional tone and that which is induced within our own subjective response. It can not be experienced as a predetermined 'walk through' or as distinct observations along a single and straight trajectory. Rather, the response is more akin to a constant shifting of focuses, a sporadic witnessing of multiple and erratic points along the undeterminable path of ricochet.

(d) Divergent points of entry

While there is general agreement within the participants' observations that the aesthetic experience is overwhelmingly characterised by its immediacy, the entry points into this immediacy (e.g. like the non-sequencing of the experience noted above) vary. The participants seem carried unrehearsed into the phenomena, the "... welter of sights, sounds, feelings, physical strains, expectations, and minute, undeveloped reactions" (Langer, 1953, p. 263) of actualising experience. This state of experiencing seems set in a state of consciousness which has not yet been organised through the 'selection of impressions' constructed through the organisation of personal past and future experiences in memory (Langer, 1953). In other words, the experience appears to be apprehended in its initial totality which is unrestrained and non-discursive in aspect. What draws the viewer in first -- designal appreciation, emotive tone, associations and/or combinations -- tends to be influenced by contextual predispositions particular to the viewer and may "*change and grow over time*" (Chris, 59).

Entry points into response vary. For instance, it can register as a startling surprise -- a flash point -- which can metaphorically 'blow you away.' It can begin with an immediate and comforting feeling of integration, of an innate sense of harmonious understanding, a linkage. It can also come through a process of personal

familiarity and practical investigation. Like Archimedes; an informed yet nevertheless thrilling ‘Eureka!’

In observing the latter point of entry, unlike the other participants who professed an immediate and unconditional identify with the works, Chris considered that much of his aesthetic experiences with paintings may not come for some time if ever. He believes that his experience is dependent upon its suitability as a focal point within present or future interests. Chris claims these are part and parcel of the individual’s evolving journey and the deeper understanding of one’s self. For Chris, a considerable attraction of the work is its instrumental link with his practice as a painter. Here, a work which is not particularly valued today in one’s present pursuits or interests may indeed assume aesthetic experience candidature in the future by virtue of its associations with as yet unforetold interests. Regarding both the Schnabel and Van Gogh paintings, Chris acknowledges that:

When I was in high school I didn’t even respond to them. I knew they were there but my appreciation of them was a slow train coming. It didn’t happen quickly and so it was like a long term exposure and then suddenly realising that there was something there (Chris, 102-105).

He continues:

I don’t usually have that response [a flash]. It’s like falling in love at first sight -- well, I’ve always been one for falling in love at second sight. The flash point might come on later visitations. For instance, like the Schnabel’s paintings, I have been looking at these since the early nineties and I have looked at his stuff consistently ever since (109-112) ... The more we look the more we see (465).

Caroline’s reflections correspond to Chris’s in that she does not see the requirement of a flash point or ‘boom!’ sensation within the immediacy of aesthetic experience, although she does admit that they do frequently occur for her. Indeed, while a flash point immediacy is the primary mode of entry point for Caroline, she does believe that the experience can also be initiated by a growing familiarity with an artist’s work or through a collection (Caroline, 1565-1570). Acknowledgement and instigation can also be evolving and progressive. As Caroline reflects:

I don’t think there has to be a boom, or a flash. I think that you can walk past something and you might just see something out of the corner of your eye, and it won’t immediately say anything and you go on through the show yet there’s

something niggling away and you think what is that something that keeps me remembering it and then I'm compelled to go back and I'll stand there in front of the painting and study it (1558-1563).

In an earlier passage, Caroline suggests:

There are pieces of art I think that can play with you for ages on and you're always drawn to them (1472-1473).



Caroline Penny. Sunflowers and Gladioli (2002).
Oil on canvas.

Although being immediately attuned to the emotional tone of the painting, a progressional aspect of entry is also found in my reflections of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, in that:

It didn't tingle or excite, more like making me step back a bit from it, and slowly approach it (John, 412-413) ... I never felt that I had lost control, I simply promoted the amplification of the experience until it took over (415-416) ... I was attracted to the piece and allowed the experience to happen (417-418).

Notions of predisposition, expectation and anticipation also present themselves as avenues into the experience. For instance, in my recollections on *Marble Table* I recall feeling an immediate intimacy with the painting which was originally established through observing and studying the work in books and catalogues (630-632). This follows Elizabeth's reflection that:

We are seldom stopped by something that doesn't resonate for us (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1450-1451) ... I had wanted to see it [Lavender Mist] badly since I was about twenty-eight ... and I was already

totally overwhelmed (in a positive way) by my experience of New York, so in a sense I was expecting to be overwhelmed (Elizabeth, 127-131).

Alternatively, entry into the aesthetic experience can simply be:

... a kind of mind set that you consciously or even unconsciously decide to go along with and yield to the moment because sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't happen (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1418-1420) *... sometimes it just all just seems to fall into place and you are in the right place at the right time and you totally drink it in* (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1421-1422).

Finally, viewer initiation can be by “total surprise” (Caroline, 1463). It can be an instance where:

... this can happen in just a little art show where there is mostly rubbish on the walls and then there is just this one little bit of a painting and it will just stop you in your tracks and you think, Gosh, that is just fantastically right (1463-1467).

Feelings of surprise -- of being taken unexpectedly off one's feet -- may be the primary introduction into aesthetic experiences. All participants declared this aspect as an entry point into the experience to some degree. Furthermore, whether we choose to interrogate the introductory impact of perceptual overload, feelings of integration or seductive visual puzzlements for contextual implications or not is a matter of personal choice. It would not for these participants, it seems, alter the immediacy of response. We interact experientially with the weather, as well as the forecast.

However, to the notion of being unconditionally surprised, Elizabeth attaches a proviso:

I do feel that there is a kind of instinctual thing (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1446) *... I think that we do get stopped instinctively by the things that have personal meaning for us ... but you might not be aware of it at the time* (1454- 1456).

Summary

Analyses of the participants' data indicate no particular systematic ordering of experience during aesthetic encounter. Rather, there is a multitude of possible rudimentary cognitive ordering procedures which are sporadic and individually

applied. It is, as one reflected, 'all over the shop.' While the initial perception of the design qualities of the painting may lead us into the work, the resultant ordering of what is attended seems to be a matter of personal choice or in response to the major impetus or intent of the painting.

Furthermore, there is no one way, no specific entry point into the immediacy of aesthetic experience. The sudden introduction within the experience seems influenced by contextual predispositions particular to the viewer. Within the case of this dissertation, a general familiarity with the painters and the paintings was already established prior to authentic experiencing. The flash points of entry were not common among the participants.

A flash point of entry seems most likely to be initiated by growing familiarity with the work on both a sensuous and cognitive level. This form of entry entails a progressional aspect, a kind of experience that one voluntarily yields to anticipation and expectation whether the heightened experience eventuates or not. Alternatively, being taken by surprise was also a common introduction. Whether these surprise introductions were interrogated later for signs of contextual implications or not depended on the discretion of the viewer, as their discovery would not, it seems, alter the immediacy of response.

(e) Aspects of the Sublime

Within the participants' responses there are correspondences relating to a highly charged emotional state analogous to those described by Burke (1987 [1757]) and Lyotard (1984) as the sublime. These states are held to be generated by the initial inability of both viewer perception and imagination to immediately deal logically with the qualities of vastness, infinity, chaos and power which are exhibited through the paintings. The descriptions of the non-instrumental immediacy of the response represented by the research participants indicate intermittent initial shock, wonder and inarticulation -- qualities consistent with the outlined ideas surrounding the sublime. The extension of Burke's (1987 [1757]) concepts of the physicality of the object controlling the experience and a certain pleasure-like response to a presumed foreboding and awe regarding abstractions such as infinity or vastness are witnessed below:

It [Death's Head Abstraction # 2] spoke to me visually of quiet, monumental, intuitive feeling -- of the unknowable end/fact/condition and conclusion of

Man [sic] -- mortality (John, 366-367) ... It spoke through touching inside me the aches and unsatisfactory attempts of Man [sic] to logically and rationally define mortality, endings, closure, the quiet nothingness ... (370-372).

Furthermore, Chris confronted what he believed to be the unanswerable vastness in *The Conversion of Saint Paolo Malfi*:

What the Hell is that? Is that sky? ... The space, you really go back into that ... It's like sky, heaven. The red is like velvet ... the folds. The texture ... (Chris, 476-480).

Indeed, Chris's response to the painting echoes Stolnitz's (1960) essentialist notion of confronting a magnitude and power which seems to " ... spill over any frame that we try to impose ..." (Stolnitz, 1960, pp. 49). As Chris relates: "I connected the work with the sky, so in my mind it was limitless" (490).

Chris embraces the immediacy, the non-rational, endless and incalculable vastness. From an essentialist perspective, he has left behind all those "obstinate questionings / Of sense and outward things, / Falling from us, vanishings ..." (Wordsworth, W., previously cited).

Analogously, Elizabeth construed the vast colour field she confronted in *Lavender mist* as "infinity of tones" (Elizabeth, 86) and " ... something limitless, boundless, oceanic" (170). Caroline also repeatedly relates the idea of perfection, as in the atmospheric qualities of *Argenteuil* or the emotive tones she finds inherent in *Emmie and her Child*. For Caroline, they become sublime related exemplars of "peace... beauty... completeness..." (Caroline, 1257-1258).

In contrast, Lyotard's (1984) existential sublime, which proposes longings at a deep subjective level, is also suggested through Caroline's numerous associations with *Argenteuil*. Here, she strains at its representing intangible memory of a space and time beyond grasp; a sense, an essence of moments and a childhood full of wistful innocence and musings. To these longings, which at a deep subjective level cannot be resolved by perception, can also be added my own allusions to mortality and infinity, as observed through the reflections of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*.

Furthermore, punctuating the research participants' reflections were passages which corresponded with Lyotard's (1984) notion of an internalisation of an assortment of contextualised visual associations. That is, the pleasurable subjective efforts to bring about particular associations, interpretations and the elation of response to innovative and experimental materials and techniques. Examples of these

preoccupations can be found in Elizabeth's fascination with Pollock's action painting; Chris's expressed exuberance towards Schnabel's use of extensive scale and unorthodox materials and paint applications; and my own interests in Persson's employment of torn canvas sections and x-ray associated imagery.

Summary

Aspects of the sublime, exhibiting both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist theoretical underpinnings, were observable through the participants' reflections. These characteristics were presented through a fascination for, yet an inability to, adequately conceptualise matters concerning such ideas as vastness, infinitude and mortality, as suggested by Burke (1987 [1757]). Conversely, and consistent with Lyotard's (1984) suggestion, there were also inclinations toward heightened appreciation regarding new or unorthodox manipulation of materials and techniques. This could be seen as attempts to create cathartic associations, hoping to mirror that which is unrepresentable (abstractions of thought). Also, some participants displayed deep subjective longings in association with the paintings (Lyotard (1984).

2. Associative aspects innate in form

The second notable manifestation occurred during the immediacy and totality of the research participants' aesthetic experiences. Design appreciation, rather than being simply exalted for its non-representational, non-associative and non-worldly aspects (i.e. ascribed to the contemplation of formal relationships, line, colour and acknowledgement of space in essentialist restrictions) can read equally as experientially affective devices. This notion is evident in Elizabeth's initial concern that the:

... traditionally spatial, specular discourse of art reception is inadequate for the ... reception [of painting] ... because it limits perception of the world and the knowing of one's place in the world to the illusion that this perception only occurs through vision and is totally stable and entirely graspable (Elizabeth, 497-501).

Echoing these thoughts, we find within the appreciation of the manipulation of structure and surface treatment a place which welcomes sensuous interpretation and worldliness. The perceptual aspects inherent in the physicality and design appreciation of *Lavender Mist* advance states reminiscent of:

... a field of dazzling colour [which is] dancing, scintillating (Elizabeth, 4)
... 'Lavender Mist' is an orgiastic field of dancing colour and mist and scent,
a massively multi-layered, overloaded experience of the world and beauty
(94-96).

Elizabeth continues with experiencing associative qualities inherent in
perceiving *Lavender Mist*:

*Commentators have compared the experience of 'Lavender Mist' to being
akin to being lost in an almighty snowstorm. I have never experienced a severe
snowstorm but have been immersed in great fogs and mists and can feel the
synergies between these experiences in nature and my participation in
Pollock's painting (180-184).*

For Caroline, the emotive quality drawn from the structure of a seemingly
uncompleted painted edge of canvas (observed in *Emmie and Her Child*) is
empowered by the addition of an affective response and projected associations.
Caroline experiences the simple surface treatment and is drawn to the idea that:

*The way the painting isn't completed to the edge indicates to me that I am
watching a 'moment in time' -- a blink and the child will wake up properly.
The mother will remember the washing to be hung up or the dinner to be
prepared and this instant will disappear like smoke in the air. And what will
be left is only the recollection of it and the craving to have that moment back
again (Caroline, 693-697).*

Aspects inherent in surface treatment and designal elements also become one
with affective response in Chris's experiencing of the swirling linear construction and
intensity of colour experienced in *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville*. It also appears in
the physical, cosmic-like movements of paint in *The Conversion of St Paolo Malfi*.
Regarding the former painting and much of Van Gogh's work in general, Chris
acknowledges that:

*[w]hen we are looking at images we are looking at spatial colour/tone. We
are thinking, what does this and that mean, but we are also just enjoying the
visual stimulation of the thing (Chris, 590-592).*

Summary

The perceptual nature of the aesthetic experience indicates the alignment of concrete elements (such as colour and line) and qualities (such as balance, harmony and grace) also acted as devices which promoted immediacy of affective response. These surface structures and organisational elements themselves became elemental triggers for emotional and contextual associations. It was emotive rather than rational in perception and explanation.

3. Metaphor replacing measurement

They said, “You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are.”

The man replied, “Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar.

Stevens, W. Excerpt from the poem *The Man with the Blue Guitar* (1954).

Within the reflections and interviews, the participants displayed a marked similitude for distinguishing and describing observed significant compositional elements and designal features through metaphorical response. That is, the responses are emotive rather than technicist explanations and consonant with what Abbs (1994) described as employing a language of excited consciousness.

For example, Chris is concerned with the feelingfulness of the line quality within *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville*. He responds to Van Gogh’s curvilinear markings for their metaphorical qualities, rather than solely for their physical, analysable and concrete nature as elements of design. For Chris, the linear aspects of the painting are experienced in their immediacy as visual metaphor, as:

... arabesque lines which are synonymous with feelings of joy, freedom and growth (Chris, 457).

While obviously aware on an analytical level of the various and complex designal methods employed within their chosen examples of paintings, the research participants’ notations and experiences seem to indicate that, like Chris’s earlier comments on the tacit rules of perspective drawing, the mechanics, the reading of the analytical ‘blue prints’ of creative assembly become part and parcel with affective response. That is, the appreciation of significant form seems to again relate to the

feelingfulness of the painting. While reflecting on the large division of composition which accommodates Monet's massive sky in *Argenteuil*, Caroline experiences:

A huge sky that dominates half the painting, opens up the area within to freedom, space and a chance to run to possibilities (Caroline, Lines 1003-1005) ... *It feels just enormous and dominating, and yet a very gentle, calming and reverent feeling as I stood in front of it* (1019-1020).

Caroline relates this feeling with a line from E.M. Forster's *Passage to India*.

Here:

The sky settles everything -- not only climates and seasons, but when the earth shall be beautiful ... The sky can do this because it is so strong and so enormous (Forster.1986 [1924], p. 30).

This feeling resonates within Caroline's own work. It is a portrayal of sensation that attempts (as Caroline earlier reflected) an opening ' ... up [of] *the area within to freedom, space and a chance to run to possibilities.*' Here, it can be induced through non-discursive visual metaphor, a kind of identification through synergies, as the below painting might suggest.



Caroline Penny. *Across the flat* (1999). Oil on canvas.

Similarly, in terms of *Lavender Mist*, Elizabeth's reflection is not primarily one of critical or analytical dissection of its structure, but rather can be seen largely as a reaction in metaphorical terms. That is, the structural components of the abstract expressionist colour field painting are revealed through feelingful response and become:

... virtually alive and breathing with coloured scribble, splattered lines moving this way and that, now thickening, now trailing off to a slender skein (Elizabeth, 97-99) ... the overall tone, the optical mix of the different hues used, is a pale lavender, made airy and active ... ravishing and atmospheric (104-105).

The measurement of significant form and totality of experience here is metaphorically rendered through Elizabeth's construction of the resonance between active response to *Lavender Mist* and the reflective reading of the metaphorical visions of the poet Paul Celan. Below, she introduces this cooperative metaphorical idea and advances it with examples and explanations also granting this segment as having signification to characteristic 5 (i.e. Personal associations characteristic).

Elizabeth's passage is set down in its entirety because of its poetic and qualitative abilities to articulate such a cooperative action. For the sake of reader clarity, I have italicised the passages of Celan's poetry which she had incorporated within her reflection. Elizabeth's passage begins:

Reading of Pollock in association with the poetry of Paul Celan

[Excerpt from Elizabeth's journal]

At the same time I was in New York for the first time I was in the process of discovering the poetry of Paul Celan, whose work I had briefly encountered earlier in the context of its connections with the paintings of German artist Anselm Kiefer. At last having access to the amazing bookshops of New York I was able to find bilingual (English-German) editions of this Romanian Jewish poet of the Holocaust who wrote in German from the late 1940s until his suicide in 1970. Admittedly I was co- encountering 'Lavender Mist' and much of the poetry of Celan so it is perhaps inevitable that I associate them together, but simultaneously I felt as if I was discovering some resonances between the two, especially on the level of the explosion of light in the work of both and the sense of the atom being split and shards of particles being splattered in all directions into spacetime where it is meaningless to attempt to distinguish between

past, present and future.

Collector
of beacons, at night,
your pack full,
at your fingertip the guiding beam,
for him, the one
landing
word-beast.
Master
Of beacons.

For me, Pollock was the collector and master of beacons in the dark night through which he leads us, lighting the way, emitting the guiding beam amidst the confusion of the abandonment of the representation of the world of appearances and the confusion that is the explosion of matter. He was also the wielder of the

Chalk-crocus at
the coming of the light; your
indivisible
mellowed in the warrant,
From-here-and-there-too,

High explosives
are smiling at you,
existence the nick
helps the snowflake
come out of itself...

Pollock is painting with a flower and chalk at daybreak, breaking down old notions of the separation between here and there, now and then.

Viewing the work of Pollock, being in it, is akin to being smiled at by high explosives and all the contradictions that such a notion involves, where existence is helping a snowflake issue out of itself; it is almost as if the very formation of matter is being imaged. Further,

*Hatching of grubs, hatching of stars, with every
keel*

I search for you,

Fathomless.

Again Celan captures the sense of matter issuing forth from nothingness with the receiver for a while totally disorientated in such a new representation of the creative act (and this statement could equally apply to the experience of viewing Pollock too).

Further examples include:

The sky dies

ahead of

our shards;

heaven

hurls itself

into the harpoon;

fragments of future findings, silver,

in

The cranial cockpit

tunnels of vision

blown into the fog of speech

and

you, island-meadow,

you yourself

fogged-in with

hope.

where all also connote the paintings of Pollock to me in terms of effect appearing to precede cause—the presence of the shards of broken existence coming before the occurrence of death itself. They also reflect

Pollock in the way that eternity and its opposite appear to be the same thing—heaven harpooning itself. The cranial cockpit is the place from where operations are guided—again as above, where Pollock is the master of beacons—but the resulting vision and predominant emotion is foggy and ephemeral and feels like clear obscurity (186-278).

As proposed above, Elizabeth's response and inductive measurement of *Lavender Mist* comes through an awareness which involves terminologies more akin to poetry than to deductive logic. That is, she measures the painting's signification through a resonance and a subjective alignment to a sympathetic aesthetic field. She marks the painting's objective status through the synergies of the poet's metaphor, rather than through quantitative description. Similarly, within my own reflections, surface treatment within *The Marble Table* is not analytically described, but is metaphorically rendered and reduced to:

That marble area, like looking into a tidal pool or when the areas of stark stars separate from a sea of cloudy night ... like little shining bright things at the bottom of a nocturnal, still pool (John, 601-603).

The observation of significant form within *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* also registers as metaphorical description rather than being isolated for autonomous contemplation. Here, the immediacy of the painting's large size and minimal composition transpires as being:

Restful, solid and reassuring in its simplicity. The large blocks of dulled red stimulated my eye. They were either symbolic door panels slightly ajar, exposing the central image, or a vast and empty plane, a void where Persson had constructed his centrally positioned skull totem (352-356).

This metaphorical response to the immediacy and design appreciation of significant form continues in such passages as:

For me, experiencing the immediacy, totality and design appreciation of 'Death's Head Abstraction # 2' was much like observing a visual, wordless landscape of natural and human inevitabilities (695-697).

This landscape could not be solely articulated through simply acknowledging and demarcating the painting's underlying compositional framework. Rather, it was demarcated through an internalisation of the sights, scents and sounds that correlate to

a subjective 'knowing' of its sensorial make up. The bold geometric abstraction of form and personal symbolic landscape became a scene not unfamiliar in feeling to the one illuminated in Roethke's poem *The Far Field*. In the poem, Roethke presents an 'image' of a place painted through the rapport of metaphor and remembered mental snapshots. Like *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, it is more a symbolic representation that maps personal discovery, a place where:

At the field's end, in the corner missed by the mower,
Where the turf drops off into grass-hidden culvert,
Haunt of the cat-bird, nesting place of the field mouse,
Not too far away from the ever-changing flower dump,
Among the tin cans, tires, rusted pipes, broken machinery, --
One learned of the eternal ...

I learned not to fear infinity,
The far field, the windy cliffs of forever,
The dying of time in the white light of tomorrow,
The wheel turning away from itself,
The sprawl of the wave,
The on-coming water.

Roethke, T. Excerpt from the poem *The Far Field* (1968).

Like Roethke, by his discovery of the far field, I inductively, through discovering the landscape of *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, could 'learn of the eternal.' Both painting and poem are terrains that can not be thoroughly understood or appreciated by pin-pointing an objective location on a surveyor's map (even if that was possible). The painting, like the poem, becomes more a symbolic representation. Its aesthetic response is read and articulated through feeling -- and feeling, as the data concurs, is best served and discerned through the approximations of metaphor.

Summary

Within their experiences, the participants exhibited a predisposition and enthusiasm for associating and describing the physicality of the paintings in metaphorical rather than analytical terms. This further embedded the immediacy and totality of aesthetic

experience with an imaginative and emotive rather than an objectified response. As noted earlier, the participants were aware on an analytical level through their training of the various and complex design methods employed within their chosen examples of paintings. However, their notations and experiences seemed to indicate that, like Chris's earlier comments on the tacit rules of perspective drawing, the mechanics, the reading of the analytical 'blue prints' of creative assembly become part and parcel of an affective response. The appreciation of significant form seems to again relate to the feelingfulness of the painting. Discursive information and terminology concerning the elements and principles of design are tacitly held within the viewer. However, the preferred definitional responses are metaphorical ones -- ones which imaginatively and sensuously resonates the non-discursive aspects of the experience.

4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the artist's eye

All research participants conveyed special interest in technical virtuosity. That is, the manner in which paint was applied, whether by virtuosity of brush work or action painting. The responses seemed to be aligned with the methods the selected painters employed in order to accomplish their visual effects. That is, the innovative, novel or unorthodox techniques observable in the paintings which demonstrated how the artists' work created the desired emotive component. As noted by Chris in an overview of painting in general:

Paint, and especially oil paint, is magical stuff; the way it moves and slides like silk, the way it smells so ancient and yet so new, the way it holds its luminous texture and its colour (Chris, 612-613) ... Since the year 2000, maybe later, colour has been a big issue and also the materiality of the paint, the physical process of the paint ... [it is] a really engaging sort of thing (9-11).

Specifically regarding Schnabel's *The Conversion of St Paolo* and Van Gogh's *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville*, Chris expresses sheer delight in painterly application. A main characteristic for aesthetic experience in both these paintings is, in part, "*the physicality of painting, the processes ...*" (258). It is, according to his experiencing *The Conversion of St Paolo*:

The experience of seeing virtuosity and freedom combined. It is marvellous and simply like the air just before it rains; it is just air but it changes all your expectations (497-498).

Chris's heightened wonder in the physicality of the process is furthered by passages such as:

[On Schnabel] *Love that paint ... it's so loose; finger painting yes, chucked painted soaked rags, poured resin, how complex (477-478).*

Regarding Van Gogh, Chris sees:

[t]hat linear mark, especially in his later works, that is often equalled to a joyous painterly response (33-35) ... Absolutely. Van Gogh engages me more because of the line that's in there (33) ... and then there's that whole thing about colour, that immediate application of paint, that immediate response that he is making and (for me) understanding and knowing how he made it (70-72).



Chris Worfold. *Forked Tree* (2006)..
Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

However, it is not always a positive, personal acceptance of the manner in which technique is applied in Schnabel's paintings that can stir the aesthetic experience for Chris. Puzzling and questionable applications can also generate extreme interest in the work, as Schnabel seems to be continually pushing the window of what actually constitutes acceptable technique and effect. To these, Chris observes a delight in being perplexed by the contemporary's output, admitting that:

... [i]n the new work there will always be the stuff that stumps me, that initially makes me say that's not art, what are you doing? It's just terrible ... and then I come around to it, I understand it -- because it questions what painting practice is (293-295).

Virtuosity concerning the application of materials and techniques is also an important factor in general aesthetic experience for Caroline. This constant remains her focal point regardless of whether she recalls paintings of a romantic nature or

more contemporary ones which are intended to jar and confront (Caroline, 1437-1438). She finds that:

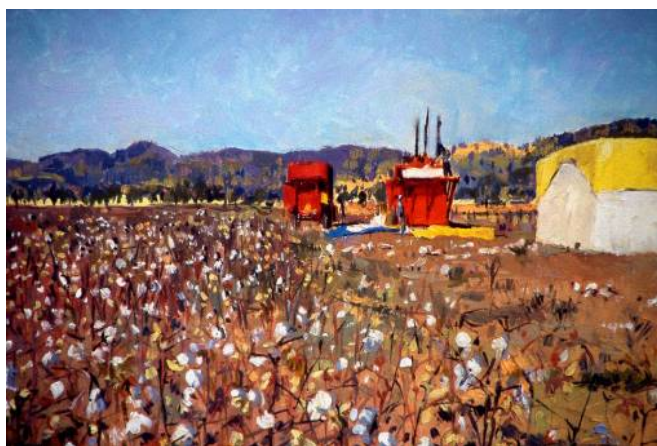
As a painter myself, I just love the craft of painting. Something that is painted well, whether I like the imagery or not, will always stop me in my tracks because I think, 'My God, how the hell did they mix that, or how did they put it down in that way which so perfectly describes the image.' This is true whether the depiction is of a simple piece of cloth or the most detailed of landscape (1440-1444).

Addressing the heightened experience Caroline felt while viewing (and later reflections on) the painting *Emmie and Her Child* and *Argenteuil*, she succinctly acknowledges the part technical virtuosity plays:

I can look at Cassatt's work and just envy it in part just because it is so beautifully painted (1439-1440).

Or,

In Monet it's the time of day, the sense of place which is captured (Caroline, 1072). The artist makes it look so simple. That definitely is another aspect of wonder that I am often left with when I discover something that just stops me in my tracks. It always looks so amazingly effortless and simple to do -- I know from experience when facing a view myself that this is not the case (1078-1081).



Caroline Penny. *Pressing the Cotton* (1998). Oil on canvas.

In *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, I was drawn to the practical mastery within: ... *the specific-ness of the depicted skull in its immediate black background, the animal hide-like umbilical cord-like stripe which joined the top image with the bottom one. The surety of the realistic skull contrasted with the vaporous*

cloud of x-rayed skull at the bottom (John, 358-361) ... On closer inspection, I was delighted that the artist had reaffirmed my feelings for the temporality of Man through his usage of images which had been torn or ripped from some other endeavour. The finite bordered in shreds (378- 380).



John Tarlton. *Greetings from Gallipoli* (2005).
Watercolour/gouache/collage.

Perhaps all this could be seen as heightened reflective ‘shop talk’ by the selection of participants. That is, interest and investigation which could inspire *practical* understanding for future personal artistic goals. However, the importance within aesthetic experience of the physical manipulation of paint was also expressed by the art theorist/educator (Elizabeth) as well. Her interest in the physicality of painting techniques related (in part) directly to the observed emotive effect of the paintings, rather than as ends in themselves. Here, it is important to emphasise that this dissertation concerns personal response to aesthetic experience, not detached and discursive art criticism. As Elizabeth observed in a discussion with Caroline:

Although I am not a painter in the way you are, I probably wouldn't care as much as you do about the way they mixed their colours (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1445-1446).

Yet Elizabeth’s experience of *Lavender Mist* does acknowledge an acute awareness and regard for paint application techniques and for the physicality of direct material application (as her earlier cited reflections in the previous section revealed). These concerns are illustrated in such observations as:

You can see that Pollock has put his hands into the paint and placed them at the top right. This seems to be an instinctive gesture eerily reminiscent of cave painters who did the same and seems to be saying 'I was here!' (Elizabeth, 100-103).

Or, in addition to referring to Pollock's surface treatment which presented "interfused lights and darks" (157), Elizabeth also responds to practical application such as:

... [t]he indexical mark [that] can be read across and through the ascensional axis, working all the time to lower and desubliminate the perceptual field ... (159-160).

Indeed, Elizabeth is 'entranced' by Pollock's virtuosity and mastery of action painting. She reflects on his renunciation of the paintbrush and ability to portray " ... *an unseen moment of the creative process*" (42-43), through vigorous actions of unorthodox and innovative paint application. Elizabeth relishes Pollock's dismissal of the finely controlled brush point for abandonment into:

... a wild, crazy bodily dance that took place at the edge of his huge works... flinging, swaying, splashing and dripping paint that flew from his frenzied body... enacting a dance of creation (48-50). *What emerged was a sand painting in oil and enamel that was not a picture of a 'thing' but rather a record of the psychographic energy-charged movements Pollock had made in the moment of now. His dripped line had a new elasticity that completely obscured its beginning and its end* (50-55) ... *the patterns caused by the separation and marbling of one enamel wet in another, the tiny black striations in the dusky pink, to produce an infinity of tone* (84-86).

Novelty and the 'artist's eye' (appreciating the painter's perspective)

Another observation of the aesthetic experience subsumed within technical virtuosity arose while analysing the reflective data. This aspect centred on all research participants' fascination with how the selected painters had viewed their worlds. That is, the personal and idiosyncratic, the novelty displayed by the selected painters. This notion was associated with the personal artist's response to process, product and points of view. It was enjoyed and considered a unique characteristic within the experiences of the selected paintings.

Examples of such enjoyment are noted throughout the collected data. Indeed, all participants' heightened responses shared this fascination of what they believed to be the uniqueness of 'the artist's eye.' These observations point to the interpretation of the artist's intention as being a significant component within heightened response. For example, a passage from one of Caroline's interviews concerning *Argenteuil* acknowledges her interest in Monet's idiosyncratic perspective and point of view. She considers that:

It's within Monet's vision. It's within the whole image itself (1183). It's like through his brilliant eyes he's analysed the scene, taken it all in and then very quickly balanced the whole painting out (1187-1189). Monet and his genius has been able to capture the essence of the view of Argenteuil and give it his 'life' and 'spirit,' while reacting with what he was presented with (1200-1201). Monet is able to do this time and time again, whether it's through colour, reflection of light, subject matter or brushwork -- He describes the extra subtleties that make his compositions unique and very personal (1220-1222). The artist literally plays with the image in a million different ways, from decisions of light to when and what to understate, etc. -- It is the definite rhythm of Monet's work (1320-1323).

Caroline continues:

... maybe it's in Monet's eyes, perhaps. You have the benefit of looking at it through someone else's eyes, and their eyes are fresh to your eyes and they have looked at different things and in different ways and pinpointed things that have interested them about the view -- so that when I sit before a view the things that I might pick out to represent the landscape are not necessarily the ones Monet picked out (Caroline, 1412-1417).

In a similar way, reflecting on *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville*, Chris sees the unique personal signature of Van Gogh's linear mark. For Chris, these marks:

... express an emotional life (Chris, 457). If you could look at the world through the way in which he draws ... [you could see that] ... his gesture is a record of a state of mind, like the quality of hand writing (458).

Indeed, the novel quality of Van Gogh's pictorial response intrigues Chris. Viewing an alternative aspect or unique dimensional slant to reality, which Van Gogh displays, heightens Chris's own eye. He states:

For me, Van Gogh's work functions as a model for the world. I can look at the clouds in 'Thatched Collages in Cordeville' and then look at the clouds outside and one changes the perception of the other. I can look at the cottages in the painting and then look at my own house and the perception and understanding of both things alter (449-452) ... [s]o Van Gogh's work seems to do far more than simply act as a picture, it functions as a screen or a reminder to see the best, to focus on it and to pull out colour (455-456).



Chris Worfold. *Southern Cross* (2001). Oil and mixed media on board.

Unlike most of Elizabeth's aesthetic experiences, the sensuous response and recollections of *Lavender Mist* is impossible to separate out from her propositional knowledge about the artist. She experienced “... quite moving, an identifiable trace of the man himself” (Elizabeth, 103-104). Elizabeth recalls that:

...even as I responded to the work, breathing sped up, aroused, taken out of time, unable to arrest my gaze upon the work, simultaneously my knowledge of the conditions under which the work had been produced seeped into my consciousness at some level. The solitariness of Pollock's experience was a very haunting element here, the way he had no real language with which to talk about it (119-124).

Examples of a heightened awareness of the artist's intentions and unique signature are embedded throughout Elizabeth's aesthetic experience. Elizabeth's response to the work continuously intermingles with Pollock's life and vision. She is aware of his influences and his success in producing paintings that:

... created new images that spoke directly to the issues Einstein considered concerning our perception of space, time and light (15-17), ... [his] ...non-adherence to traditional notions of top and bottom, right and left (27-28), [his] ... creation of a 'thing' that existed in the context of homogeneous space and

linear time ... seizing the moment of the 'now' through encoding a record of what he did in paint (28-35).

Elizabeth's experience of *Lavender Mist* is in part her fascination with the artist and how Pollock pioneered the ephemeral in art -- an art which could be extracted and created from such fleeting things as mist, fog, ice and sound. She sees the artist's work as establishing the possibilities inherent in " ... *opening the corporeal in painting and our discourse about it*" (426-427).

The novelty, the uniqueness of the artist's point of view was also apparent in my reflections of Braque and Perssons. I appreciated what I presumed to be a shared:

... personal need for order and formal coherence ... their presumed requirement and particular abilities at placing things in association, arranging objects so see the spaces they create and the negative spaces created around them ... and when their associations induce a psychological narrative, then that is even better (John, 575-577).



John Tarlton. (*with lemon...*) (2005).
Watercolour/gouache/collage.

I am also unaware of any painter who has successfully made the still life motif more his own than Braque. These he executes with an eye honed by absolute familiarity with the objects depicted, an ability to extract their essential '*being-ness*' and the fluidity of an undeniably unique technique and palette. My reaction to

Braque's uniqueness and originality, his personal vision, is attested to in lines taken from my poem *On Braque*. Some excerpts follow:

On ochre elbows
the tabletop still life
blooms.
symmetry.
The stringless eye of the guitar,
the rhythms of ovals
apples oranges female navels
snapped right from the stem

(Put it this way,
one must paint the centre.
The artist starts here
a source for seeing inside out)

Upside down
upon the flat checked cloth
fleur de lis
ricochet
into rhythms of mandarins,
apples outline like bullseyes ...

[Another passage continues]:

With a fly's eye the cubist turns
inward,
interior themes to the same
dreamy flute.
Braque moves into the canvas
opening windows.

A space the brush creates
the loosely stretched canvas

a door to be opened inward
to a patterned room of juniper.

To paint and not depict,
a mark to show
the smooth and rough of it,
the pale grain of melons,
the rapport of wood and fruit.

(Braque then splits the table
with a vertical axe,
commanding the stand to dance) ...

Tarlton, J. Excerpt from the poem *On Braque* (1978).

Regarding *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, it was Persson's unique vision which I found intensely refreshing. There was something original and defying about it; its stoic and minimal composition, its monotone palette, its meditative and solemn presence amidst a gallery full of overactive, highly colour-charged and meandering sameness which represented the majority of contemporary Australian abstractions otherwise filling the gallery. There was also something very personal in Persson's construction methods which separated *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* from the rest.

The use of torn strips of canvas (on which the distinct imagery was painted) seemed to raise, strengthen and highlight [the painting's] point/presence toward another dimension, one far removed from the physical reality of the painting (488-489).

The message of impermanence and the inevitability of consciousness was conjoined with the painting by being constructed from various strips of possible different and discarded paintings or studies.

Summary

Acknowledged throughout the participants' reflections was a heightened awareness of technical virtuosity, the manipulation of materials and techniques, and the artist's particular vision which informed unique treatment of surfaces. This was referred to by the participants in several instances as 'the artist's eye.' Here, an awareness of

technical mastery and aesthetic inner vision might be related to the researchers' propositional knowledge of the field as well as its tacit application during their experiences. It may also relate to the researchers' acknowledgement of the practicing tricks of the trade needed to manifest their feelingful response. That is, a heightened awareness of the technical aspects which activated and became one with the emotive experience. This characteristic of aesthetic experience seems to be founded on individual contextual influences and personal preferences or participants' ontogeneses. For example, Elizabeth's concentration of Pollock's drip methodology in its antecedent positioning to later aspects of body and feminist art and the influences on Chris's practical preoccupation with movements of paint and linear markings inherent in his selected paintings.

5. Personal associations

Memories, not necessarily conscious but retentions that have been organically incorporated in the very structure of the self, feed present observations. They are the nutriment that gives body to what is seen.
Dewey, J. Excerpt from *Art as Experience*, (p.89-90), (1980 [1934]).

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.
De Saint-Exupery, A. Excerpt from *The Little Prince*, (p. 68), (2002 [1945]).

Another characteristic of the aesthetic experiences shared by the participants, again to varying degrees, was to link personal past or present particular memories or experiences to the works in question. That is, the aesthetic experience manifested positive psychological associations; that exposure to the paintings triggered cognitive recall of personal histories which were reaffirming or meaningful to the subjects. This indicated that, in some ways, the aesthetic experiences shared by the participants were context specific and involved culturally-held dispositions as well as individual agency and surrender to sensations. This characteristic was found not only in terms of subject matter but also personal preferences to styles and formal relationships of design elements. In addition, to these predominately subject-specific associations can be found universally experienced emotive themes such as domicile, love, birth and death.

Caroline's response to Cassatt's *Emmie and Her Child* illustrates such personal preoccupations and undertones. Initially responding to "*the muddling of it all together*" (Caroline, 1362) within the immediacy of aesthetic experience, Caroline is drawn towards personal associations triggered through response. These can range in focus from "*... a little glimpse of colour, that maybe I have even mixed before on my own palette, or the view itself may take me back to something that I remember doing from way back*" (1365- 1367). For instance, Caroline feels at once personally connected to *Emmie and Her Child* by sharing in Cassatt's portrayal of a mother and young child. As a mother with young children herself, Caroline pleasantly empathises with the setting and time. On a personal level, she shares in an association of:

That incredible moment in time, in this case, between mother and child (1069- 1070). It's just such a moment, mother holding child, like the child has just woken up from an afternoon nap and is still in that half dreamy wake, all warm and soft from bed and smelling hot and delicious. It makes the woman in me want to just quietly hold and share in the essence (601-604). In those incredible times with my children [like those described above], all the screaming 'heebe jeebies' disappear -- the hard work, no sleep, no energy, repetitiveness of day's endless routines -- are worth every second, just for that moment of sitting and disappearing with your child into a different place ... a place where everything is possible and good, where all is forgiven ... (630-634).

In addition to a reaffirming association to her present life, personal past histories come to the fore, as do notions of family:

It takes me back to my own childhood and the feelings of being held, cuddled, warm and protected by my parents; as children falling asleep in the back of the car and having our father carry us up gently to bed (Caroline, Lines 609-611). I can try to imagine the scent of the mother in the painting as I reminisce on my own childhood memories of my own mother's smell (618-619). Looking at the image definitely reminds me of my mother and all the love that she has poured out on me and my sisters over the years. That ache of love, that absolute raw compassion, animal instinct, to cater, foster, protect and nurture. (773-776) ... I suppose it has given me a vague understanding of just how precious life is and how unimportant so much of our everyday worries and concerns are ... that people in your life count (807-810).

Personal reminiscences permeate Caroline's response to Monet's *Argenteuil*. "With *Argenteuil*," says Caroline, "memories (filtered through me) are brought back to life through observing the work" (1332-1333). Again, the painting takes her back to a pleasant time of childhood and her family's numerous travels in the French countryside (892-893). She reflects on these associations which are interwoven into her aesthetic experience:

It certainly reminds me of holidays with my family, of growing up with a love affair with France which will never leave me. It's croissants, chocolate milk out of small bottles and ice cream everyday ... it's distant church bells tolling, French bread and the background noises and music so irresistibly French ... it's old French men in the shade in small villages clicking bowls, the women dressed in black and holding woven shopping baskets ... it's all the cheeses and breads and smells of coffee ... it's fruit right from the trees and animals--pigs, chickens, dogs roaming the villages... it's all those wonderful memories for me. But it's also more ... it's the space in the sky, the beautiful shapes that their architecture has as it divides itself between earth and sky ... the smell of wild garlic by the river banks and cooled grass in the shade (901-916).

Caroline continues:

I know what it feels like to walk down that road (918). As I walk down the path in this painting that gentle change in light and warmth across my whole body would occur as I pass through the cracks of the dappled light beautifully falling across the pathway. I can hear the footsteps of my flip-flops as I walk along the uneven dirt roadway ... the noise of a distant dog barking ... the very gentle and calm rustle of the warm air through the poplar trees. It makes me ache to be there, so many memories of pleasant and familiar French days (923-929).



Caroline Penny. *Among the Azaleas* (2000).
Oil on canvas.

Elizabeth furthers the notion of personal associations as a characteristic of the aesthetic experience. Her response and reflections of *Lavender Mist* are intertwined with having seen the painting on her first visit to the United States and to her exposure to the cultural wealth she found in New York City. As she observed:

... my personal associations of being in New York City impacted upon my experience with 'Lavender Mist' ... and how appropriate to experience a sublime example of American painting in New York! (Elizabeth, 533-535).

For instance, the experience mingles with personal associations of exploring such galleries as the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For Elizabeth, the response of *Lavender Mist*, in part, relates to being overwhelmed by extraordinary bookshops, street scenes and the art and cultural life force which almost electrically charged the air. Here, it is found and reflected in cooperation with obtaining and experiencing Celan's poetry (already cited in relation to metaphorical response). The experience also resonates with Elizabeth's seminal fascination with feminist installation and body art and her later studies of Pollock's antecedent position within these genres. Elizabeth believes that her ontogeny and personal associations with the aesthetic experience of *Lavender Mist* are undeniably related. As she reflects:

They would have to be ... with my background of looking at art seriously, my at the time proximity to another great painting by Pollock, my history of trying to understand the shift from European modernism to the American modernist at that time in my life. A sense of it all coming together for me at a time and

place and the pieces of the puzzle fitting together. The totality and formal elements of the painting would impact brilliantly on many other people as well, I am sure, but they could only impact this way upon me because of who I am and who I become through the experience (524-535).

Chris suggests that the specific characteristics of the aesthetic experience are always in a constant state of change. It is a personally evolving process (Chris, 8). In his youth, aspects of the dramatic or narrative elements drew his attention to a painting. Contemporarily, the triggering devices within this process seem consistently in response to issues concerning colour, the materiality of paint and the manifestation of corresponding fluctuations regarding image and abstraction (10-13). He claims to be unaware of any mediated personal associative context within the immediacy and feelingful aspects of his reflected aesthetic experiences. For him, the aesthetic experience or what a painting *means* transcends its subject matter or personal associations. This notion is shared in varying degrees by the group.

However, personal associations albeit it conscious or not may inevitably be bred from familiarity. The paintings Chris selected relate to artists he has long studied and admired. Through this familiarity, a relationship, a tacit *like-ness* relating to personal associations regarding preferences in technique or unconscious affinities with subject matter selection may have developed. In addition, any personal associations which are triggered by the encounter are not superfluous, though they might (for Chris) assume a secondary role (55). As Chris explains:

Look, I think understanding the way the whole thing works one would be naive not to think that [personal associations] are there (122-123). The real question for me is whether the whole process is happening consciously; a conscious process of making those connections and links is what's exciting, or whether it is an unconscious process, because it is definitely happening. I mean, that image of the thatched cottage [in the Van Gogh painting] has resonances to the cottage we stayed at in Cornwall several years ago. There is a link between those two things (124-128) ... There is an interaction between who we are and what we experience (173).



Chris Worfold. *Sunflowers on the Dining Room Table* (2001). Oil and mixed media on board.

He continues:

There is also a deeper understanding within myself in the sense that the older I get the farther I can see into life and things like that. When I look into the Van Gogh I see and understand a lot more than I used to, say, just about the notions surrounding the concepts of a dwelling, home, place. And similar to the images within the Schnabel, to a lesser extent [because] they do not have the figurative element, they nevertheless are very bombastic in their line, very much Baroque, like a Baroque painting of a cathedral (156-161).

Furthermore, if personal associations and preference in subject matter *can* be considered ‘hooks’ into aesthetic experience, Chris believes that:

There is a range of certain subject matter that I am interested in and if it sits in that range of focus then it will register, it will make it possible for me to get excited about it. But to this, it must not be forgotten, there are other things for me, the physicality of the painting, the processes (which may consciously have no bearing on personal associations or subject matter), but I don’t consciously know the list of them all before I engage with the painting, I mean all those things that establishes a green light and starts the engagement with an art work. For other people I can imagine the stimuli are quite different (256-262).

Unlike Chris, my own reflections offer a stronger case for the inclusion of personal associations as a dominant characteristic in aesthetic experience. Within the immediacy of *Death’s Head Abstraction # 2*, I was aware that it had:

... spoke through touching inside me the aches and unsatisfactory attempts to logically define or come to terms with such things as mortality, issues concerning personal closures, the nothingness within eternity ... of the shape-shifting sand patterns of my human interior and exterior landscape, of the

metamorphosis into the state of un-knowing. It gently coerced out of me the idea of my own impermanence (John, 366-375).

By observing the painting, it was like placing my ear to the door of the unknown and the seemingly unknowable. These concepts defied logical conclusion. It was best to remain silent and absorb what was being intuitively given to me because I had no rational way of dealing with the feeling. Recently, while engaged in research, I came across a statement by Sibelman (1995) that related to my inarticulate silence during my confrontation with *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*. Here, I found a type of verisimilitude in Sibelman's (1995) reflection. That being:

The key resides in the act of listening, for if one truly listens, one can hear everything -- even the silences and their significations. (Sibelman, 1995, cited in Conlan, 2000. p. 121).

By unknowingly following Sibelman's proposal, I personally associated with the ineffable: the feeling radiating from and pointing to the meaning behind the painting. In other words, I *listened* to, not argued with, suggestions which resulted in my ability to attain:

... a kind of knowing in the stillness which the painting represented to me. It was the feeling (or a kind of what-ness) of eternity, of a state of non-cognition. I associated with this painting the same sort of feelings I had experienced on Valencia Island, Ireland while travelling there with my first wife decades ago ...The island was not much more than a sparsely inhabited rock of a place on the cold North Atlantic rim. But the unbelievable quietness of the place, the timelessness of its terrain, the ever-shifting grey blanket of clouds, the agelessness of the rock fences, the sparse outcroppings of weeds and rocky dirt paths, the wind's muffled, haunting whistle through the solitary telephone line ...I felt that when I went to sleep I could sleep (dreamlessly) forever -- that my being-ness was obliterated. In fact, when I did sleep there, I always awoke without any real idea of what time or day it was. It all seemed to pass by without identifying itself. We spoke very little, as there seemed no need to speak (463-472).

While the aesthetic encounter with *Death's Head Abstraction # 2* was an involuntary and predominately unplanned introduction, the still life paintings of Braque, and specifically the ones of interior tabletop motifs, are full of personal associations. *The Marble Table* is no exception. It reminds me not only of overseas

travel, the locations and the people I met, but also of a personal reaffirmation towards the compositions of intimate domestic objects and the perception of both positive and negative spaces which they create. It is a subtle visual indebtedness, but one to which I am now acutely aware.

Exhibited below, a personal anecdote directly from my reflective journal and a visual comparison of a photograph of Braque with one of my current works may disclose and prove helpful in ascertaining the subtle associations. They are displayed as follows:

(The Photograph)

I have an enlargement of a photograph of Braque (circa 1911) sitting on a chair as he plays a small accordion in the midst of all sorts of objects. These objects are either neatly sitting around or on tables, on the floor or are fastened to the back wall. Each object on the back wall is distinct in the photograph, has its own autonomy, as well as working as a component in a group (wall) collage. All these objects (especially the assemblage of them on the back wall) are wondrous to me for the juxtapositioning of forms in space ... pipes in a rack, musical instruments, pitchers, jugs, African masks, sculpture, postcards and knick-knacks...

This enlarged photograph has been in my possession for over thirty-five years. It is the only thing that I have kept throughout my life of travelling and various temporary digs and situations. I guess that it fit nicely into the bottom of a suitcase, or something. It has never had a frame around it and I have never really hung it up for any period of time. I see it popping up in various places where I have shifted it to and fro. But its appeal must be like family is for other people because, for better or worse, it has been my (mostly ignored) companion throughout the major portion of my creative life to date. Only now I have found it behind my easel with an assortment of other things and I am looking at it ...

I am again suddenly aware of the impact that this depicted littered wall space behind Braque has had on the compositional sense within my own work. That is, the isolation of objects on a flat plane and the fascination with interplays of the positive and negative spaces their proximities suggest (541-563). I realise an organisational aspect which I have almost unconsciously incorporated into my own work for all these years. Maybe if I could not contemporarily justify the traditional

still life motif within my own work, I have nevertheless extracted an element of his personal need for order and formal coherence into my own artistic temperament. Braque has always been my starting point (570-575) ... Whereas Braque hung his objects on the wall and took them down to be placed in his still lifes, I have decided to simply paint the wall (580- 582).



My photograph of Georges Braque (circa 1911).



John Tarlton. *Something quick for the kids* (2005). Watercolour/gouache/collage

Furthermore, I personally associate with the objects depicted and the calming, meditative environments they create. The obvious familiarity and love Braque had for the assorted and recurring objects he used as subject matter in the still lifes personally relate to my own fascination with domestic objects as focal points for contemplation. That is:

... they remind me of the tranquil times of my life, the various temporary digs that I set up (as comfortably as I could) as an arts student and the quiet coffees and conversations (around cluttered tables) with remembered friends (800-803).



John Tarlton. *A letter to Nora* (1990).
Charcoal and coloured pencil.



John Tarlton. *Considering the simple vase*
(1990). Charcoal and coloured pencil

Or,

... the placement of objects in association to one another, to be used as interpretative devices for visual narratives (John, 565- 566). I love placing things in associations, arranging objects (even temporarily or in non artistic situations) to see how they visually relate, how they talk to each other -- and to me (577-578).

This internal conversation and tacit familiarity inherent in the silent ‘knowingness’ of things about us are suggested through an excerpt from the poem, *On Braque* (Tarlton, 1978). It concerns such states of familiarity which the aging painter may have felt in his environment. The poem reads:

The Weeding Machine

(The garden has warned him,
the starling and robin whisper)

Braque walks undisturbed,
a frail branch moving among the Autumn.

Certain paintings can only be done
with old eyes,
the quiet conversation of oil paint.

Braque has been preparing,

a canvas primed bright white.
He will be in the company
of intimate friends,
the fruit dish, pipe and tablecloth--
a spot of French sun on
the soft eulogy of a bending peach.
Tarlton, J. Excerpt from the poem *On Braque* (1978).

Summary

To varying degrees, the participants shared a characteristic of personal past or present links and memories to the experiences phenomenologically examined. The aesthetic experience manifested positive psychological associations; that exposure to the paintings triggered cognitive recall of personal histories which were reaffirming to the subjects. This was apparent in terms of subject matter, preferences to artistic styles, formal design relationships and associations to philosophical stances and universal themes such as love, death, domicile and birth. These recollections contained both identifiable factual referents, concerning recall of the actual environments where the works were viewed and emotive and philosophical states triggered by their representations. Moreover, the participants manifested personal associations were sourced in personal ways and from different kinds of personal experiences which they held as being sympathetic in essence to the paintings' overall intent. These associations were actualised within the immediacy of the aesthetic encounter or in further reflection and mediation.

6. A sense of mystery

But old tricks
teach us
to be wary.
The word
betrays
because it does not disclose
a whole process.

Wakowski, D. Excerpt from the poem *The Buddha Turns Base Metals, Flowers & Butterflies Into Gold on his Birthday* (1973).

Within the general agreement regarding immediacy and totality, the synthesising of design appreciation of form with associations, metaphorical response, aspects of virtuosity and vision and personal association within aesthetic experience, the researchers also acknowledged a sensation of mystery or an ineffable quality to their encounters. Logical explanations or critical reflection regarding representational imagery or abstraction could not totally encompass or resolve the response. This situation has already been noted by Chris and is continued in his reflected analogy of the attraction we have to certain people. This being that:

[t]here are things and people for instance, that you have recognition of and there is this immediate connection, something going on there. It could be biological or spiritual or any number of variables within the equation. But we can never be sure of what initiates the connection. It is a connection to something unexplainable, inexplicable, at least to the conscious mind... Good painting holds that kind of mystery (Chris, 220-23). Puzzling aspects of the painting may turn out to be nothing, just part of the mystery -- that there is no real answer. And perhaps that is what I look for in a painting, that there is no end point, no final meaning, that it rests in a certain un-certain-ness, of ambiguity (275-277).

Chris continues:

Earlier on I wanted those answers that had resolutions but now ... its like a technique within painting, when you get to a certain point with the technique it becomes as much of a trap as anything else (Chris, 277-280). I'm constantly looking for that 'conclusion' I guess, but then again, once I've found it, the journey's over (388-389).

Or, regarding the immediacy of the experience, Caroline acknowledges that:

... I don't really know what grabs me. If I try to analyse it I still don't really know what it is. It's more a sort of inner calm, a sort of something that just goes 'bing!' or makes you begin to breathe deeply (Caroline, 1340-1342) ... Perhaps it a mixture of craftsmanship, content and the associations stirred by the painting. Much of this one can analyse and acknowledge, but at the core, there always remains a mystery, more like an inner calm, a triggering, an internal knowing that everything is there and just right (1346-1350).



Caroline Penny. Ibis and Cootes (2001). Oil on canvas.

This point is also taken up by Elizabeth:

... I do feel that there is a kind of instinctual thing where you stop by the painting and you don't know why you stopped by it (you may figure out some of the reason down the track) but you are firstly just pulled in by something for all the right reasons (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1446-1449) ... a resonance perhaps ... it's attracting you but you are not aware of those reasons (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1455).

For example, in *Lavender Mist*, Elizabeth construes a connection with an overriding spirituality through the painting's ephemeral nature; its abilities to evoke transitions and transformations of structure and feeling. While Elizabeth believes that a spiritual link is undeniably present, in her final analysis, there are no rational, quantifiable or symbolic flags which can be struck. Explicating a cosmic apparition becomes an extremely difficult task and is abandoned for sensuous knowing (Elizabeth, 421-422). That is, what is to be known through its ineffable nature resides within the primordial experience, within the immediacy of experiential encounter. As a passage from Levertov's (1967) poem *A Common Ground* might argue, what would be needed goes beyond the human capacity to utter, it requires:

Not 'common speech'
a dead level
but the uncommon speech of paradise,
tongue in which oracles
speak to beggars and pilgrims:

not illusion but what Whitman called
'the path
between reality and the soul',
a language
excelling itself to be itself,

speech akin to the light
with which at day's end and day's
renewal, mountains
sing to each other across the cold valleys.

Levertov, D. Excerpt from the poem *A Common Ground* (1967).

In standing before *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, I also found myself suddenly in a situation where my logical and descriptive voice could only effectively mumble. It was far from being able to define the meanings and sensations I felt. Here:

The bleakness was almost oppressive and overpowering both to my imagination and to my reasoning. I believed that I was suddenly, concretely aware of something that I could not actually explain ... Like a knowing of absolute silence, of finality, of the impermanence of the human coil. I felt as if I was in a presence (John, 384-386) ... like the never ending repetition of waves which say nothing to us but can be felt so deeply, so primordially (380-382).

And:

I became very quiet, outside and within myself. I did not want to speak, did not want to artificially adorn the moment with words which would desert me anyway (413-414) ... A kind of inner peace ... I was part of something that was unknowable. I was linked to something, the human condition perhaps, more tightly. I felt a kinship with the universe (or maybe its dust) and it seemed pointless to talk. The silence informed me of all I needed to know (440-443).

I could only find some sort of metaphorical synergy in a passage from Larkin's (1959) poem *Next, please*. Here:

We think each one will heave to and unload
All good into our lives, all we are owed
For waiting so devoutly and so long.
But we are wrong:

Only one ship is seeking us, a black-
Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
No waters breed or break.

Larkin, P. Excerpt from the poem *Next, please*, (1959).

Summary

Apparent throughout much of the phenomenological gatherings was the notion that the aesthetic experiences of the selected paintings contained a sense of mystery and an ineffable quality which logical explanation or critical reflection could not adequately define. Much of what was emotively felt or intrinsically recognised were immediate connections whose sources stemmed from a presumed un-tappable unconscious, whether believed to be universal or personally idiosyncratic. The explication resided within the primordial experiences of sensations which, for the most part, could only be felt, not deductively proven or discursively explicated. While later propositional input was seen as helpful in reinforcing the experience, it was not considered imperative. Whatever problematic conceptual voids which existed were filled with synergies or a simple surrendering of consciousness to a presumed multi-faceted perceptual immediacy.

7. Transformative aspects

The findings also indicated a transformative characteristic being integrated into aesthetic experience. This transformative nature of the experience manifested itself in terms of; (a) the subject's self image (b) in the perception of the painting as surpassing its actual physicality, its nature as an object in space and time and

becoming a vehicle for personal transcendence, and (c) The notion that the aesthetic experience has an on-going power.

(a) Subject self-image

The findings from the interview transcripts and reflective journals indicated that the initial heightened and positive experiences of the paintings selected by the participants were acknowledged to be instrumental in changing their perception of self. That is, the participants proposed that the heightened experiential encounters promoted an advanced state of consciousness that promoted new ways of seeing and knowing. These transformative states further established the desire for self actualisation and the desire for positive life changes. For example, as I responded to my aesthetic experiences generally, and the two selected paintings specifically, we see that:

It [the aesthetic experience] becomes part of me, part of my personal referencing, which I attend to from time to time. Its experience influences the way I see the world immediately afterwards and like a vapour enters my backlog of experiences which influence me in times to come. I can go back to the experience for inspiration, not only for art purposes, but for day to day interactions too (John, 678-682).

Nowhere is this self actualisation aspect of aesthetic experience more apparent than in Chris's reflections. The heightened response to the works of Van Gogh and Schnabel (as exemplified in *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville* and *The Conversion of St Paolo Malfi*) have been direct and major influences for personal actions. For Chris, the transformative nature of aesthetic experience has impacted upon his life "in a big way (Chris, 203)." He explains:

I mean, these painters and paintings influence my life in direct ways and in a lot of indirect ways too. Certainly in choices I make, say, in where I live, in acreage outside of town. It would be naive of me to disconnect the conscious connection to Van Gogh's life -- just being outside, on the fringes of it. And certainly the things I've built, the studio for instance, have been influenced by the size and scale of Schnabel's paintings. So the physical scale of the Schnabel's paintings and the content of Van Gogh's paintings have really influenced and directly changed what I have done, and the massive energies I have spent in my life (203-211).

Chris continues:

For instance, it took all my energies and time for twelve months to build a studio and house on the property; now I couldn't have done that if I hadn't seen these paintings, their size and the ramifications of that. Now that's a physical thing that came about through a Hell of a lot of energy and dedication to make it so. Why was it made so? Because of the influences of the Schnabel paintings (211-215).

Through the aesthetic experiences of these and similar paintings, Chris's conception of what life is about (e.g. relating to such notions as place, home or the nature and implications of 'a dwelling') (158-159) and his place within these concepts are internalised and acted upon. Van Gogh's paintings are constant reminders or screens for Chris to see the best and focus upon it (455-456). Furthermore, the transformative nature of personal response to *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville* is revealed through such passages as:

Van Gogh's work, more than any artists' work, functions as a model for the [my] world. That is, I can look at the clouds in the painting and look at the clouds outside and one changes the perception of the other. I can look at the cottages in the painting and then look at my own house and perception and understanding/appreciating of both things alter (Chris, 449-452).

The transformative nature within Chris's aesthetic experience of Schnabel's *The Conversion of St Paolo Malfi* also manifested itself through correspondent desires. Here, Chris expresses these desires:

I wanted to paint on a large scale. I wanted to live large, in big places with big spaces. I wanted to be able to create with abandon and have people love it like the way I loved those [Schnabel's] paintings. I wanted to live in this state of mystery without having people complain 'but what does he mean?' Freedom and love without justification (491-494).



Chris Worfold. *Man in Rain* (2006).
Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

Transformational feelings are also stressed by Elizabeth. She responds to *Lavender Mist* as if being in a state where:

You're participating completely in the work with every fibre of your body and every molecule of your skin, listening for the colour and the rhythm and the texture and the dance of it all ... You are totally incorporated into the painting and nothing else exists or matters during that time (Elizabeth, 609-615).

Elizabeth also feels what she refers to as a personal wholeness and describes the feeling as that of being all-knowing and all-sensing (564). She recalls that:

... it felt as if everything I had seen before and been moved by had logically and naturally led me to where I now found myself -- in front of this awesome work that seemed to be the natural culmination of so much artistic striving up to this point (133-136).

Here, Elizabeth experiences a “*particular soothing and compensatory sense of indissociable connection of the individual to eternity -- something limitless, boundless, oceanic*” (169-170) which she also describes as sublime and hallucinatory (164). As she reflects:

This painting seems to reach out, grab you and pull you toward it and I think this corporeal aspect of Pollock's painting and my corporeal experiencing of it, responding bodily to it fed my then burgeoning fascination with installation art ... (175-178).

The experience of *Lavender Mist* was seen as a motivating factor in promoting Elizabeth's attempt to understand the shift from European modernism to American modernism at that time in her life (525). She also feels the ephemeral and feminine quality of the work experienced was a seminal force in her later fascination and exploration of body, performance and feminist art forms (424).

For Elizabeth, the transformational aspects can also be found within the mysterious aspects of the aesthetic experience itself. As she reflects, transformational feelings are generated:

Perhaps because it helps you to understand something and move on to the next level of knowing '2 or 3 things about art', an element in an ongoing and unfolding mystery (591-593).

To this Elizabeth adds:

It keeps you motivated and hungry for more looking. Transcendence at the time and also somewhat ongoing to the extent that you know that you can always go to 'art' for comfort, exhilaration, stimulation, to feel alive, you know that it will feed and sustain you in some way, (but you really don't know how (593-597).

The transformative aspects of aesthetic experiences were also a dominant characteristic within my responses. That is, the paintings took me to other places and influenced my outlook. Here:

I forgot the reality that this [Death's Head Abstraction # 2] was an object, a painting on pieces of canvas and wooden stretchers. It assumed its own presence. I felt as if I could crack its surface open and enter its inner sanctum. I felt that I could enter into its deaf knowing and be at peace (John, 421-424).

The transformative nature of the experience continued. It connoted the quietude and absolute-ness I had experienced on Valencia Island, and the immediate sensations, wherein:

I felt things around me more crystal, more clear. I grew more reflective. I looked at books and things in the bookshop more attentively. I was sensitised to the environment somehow. The birds, the colour of the grass, the lay of the land, the cut of the City Cat [river ferry] on the surface of the river. I did not want to eat or drink. I did not want to talk. I felt inwardly informed; I knew something new, an insight that, as I could not explain it properly, I saw no need to share ... I was content, a kind of inner peace. I knew I was part of

something unknowable, linked to something, the human condition perhaps, more tightly (433-443).

I had been transported to and experienced a realm landscaped “ ... in *depersonalisation, something resonating the life source /life span type of thing. It was cleansing*” (475).

Again, after the experience:

Everything and everyone seemed brighter and so did my outlook on life. I felt empowered, eager to engage in life and in my own work again. I think it mostly focussed my olfactory sensations to my environment more than anything else. In addition, I did feel somehow more intelligent, self-assured with life in general, more ready to reflect on all sorts of things. I was in-tune, aware and interested again (500-504).

The experience generated feelings of:

... a kind of calm, inward peace and awareness. The feeling like I suddenly knew something that I hadn't recognised before (or had forgotten about), awe, silence, more alert to the environment, not necessarily happy, more of a feeling of being at peace, more alive, resolved and part of things (518-521). I was delighted that something new had entered my life/experience, something that had not been there before. It invigorated me. It stimulated me to look for more such like experiences. I think that it helped me prepare for such experiences in the future (525-527).



John Tarlton. ... with cake ascending (2005).
Watercolour/gouache/collage.

Like Chris and me, Caroline ascribes to aesthetic experience the ability to inspire her practice as a painter. Again, the experiences are seen as exemplars or stimulants for the making of her own art, rather than as something to emulate or copy. In other words, the experiences exist as reinforcements for her pro-activity within the art community and her craft. They are assertive in that the experiences proclaim “ ... *that it is all still out there and I come out of it feeling wonderful*” (Caroline, 289-290). For example, Caroline reflects:

Experiencing ‘Argenteuil’ makes me want to paint, to sit with my old fishing box and portable easel and just take in the afternoon, looking at all the gentleness in the world around me (947-949).

Caroline also furthers the already noted exuberance proposed within the transformational aspects of aesthetic experience. She believes in the experiences of the paintings to act as vehicles which can project her beyond a prior state of knowing. That is, to alter her livedworld:

Absolutely. Prior to viewing I can feel flattened, exhausted, fed up or angry and then when I leave the experience I begin to think everything is possible ... I’m buzzing and I’ve got all this energy again. I have been totally fed and watered by the experience (Caroline, 187-191). Its love really, you’re falling in love. Everything is glossier, more wonderful after the experience (202-203). It is an upbeat thing that I get (291).

To this, while reflecting on her experience with *Argenteuil*, she adds:

I want to be there and yet don’t need to be physically there because I feel as if I am there -- that my senses have moved into the image. I can imagine sitting in the little sail boat, becalmed by the breeze, waiting for a slight gust to make my hair move and the sails to slowly fill with air as we edge over the glassy water (1040-1043).

She also reflects:

*It’s like entering a complete new world ... I seem to walk with a more lightness of step (530-531). It makes me, rounds me as a person. ‘Argenteuil’ [and *Emmie and Her Child*] fills me up, heightens my senses, makes my pulse quicken (952-954). It is a satisfying and complete feeling of being right with the world and the beauty in the simplest moments of everyday life. It makes me want to shout out loud and joyously with a complete feeling of freedom, a release, that there are lots of possibilities and achievements possible (1015-*

1016). *I shut my eyes and immediately re-create the image in my mind's eye. It's so complete as an image* (1224-1225).

Summary

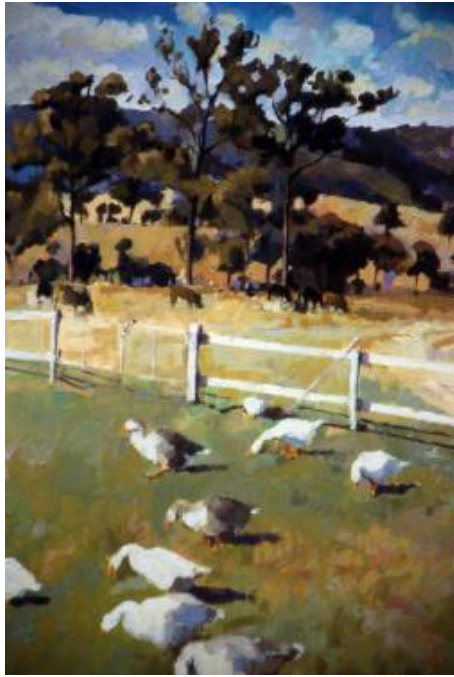
In terms of perceptions of self, the participants held the heightened experiential encounters promoted an advanced state of consciousness which was transformative in so far as it energised new ways of seeing and knowing. These transformative states further promoted the desire for self actualisation and for positive life changes. These changes were felt in direct and indirect ways, influencing lifestyle, professional choices and philosophical positions. The experiencing of the paintings produced feelings of personal wholeness, meditative sensations which altered present emotional states, acted as stimulants and initiators for purposive action and as positive reinforcing agents for practical and pragmatic activities.

(b) The view that paintings transcend their physical objective status

Without subjective interpretations (as exemplified by Caroline above), the actual, objective presences of the paintings reflected on in this dissertation could be quantifiably described as:

Loosely stretched rectangle pieces of canvas or other surfaces which accommodate surfaces of low relief paint applications whose proximities to each other resemble images or states of abstractions.

This is an objective description. However, for Caroline, the same assembly of materials is seen as a vehicle for transcendence. *"It speaks of age, history, tradition, family life, respect, values, love, ways of life that have been around for centuries and will continue for centuries to come"* (Caroline, 938-940). This manifestation transforms the object in perception, in actual space and time, into a window for viewing images and thoughts unique within imagination and personal contexts. It becomes a representation of personal and positive memories; a subjectively viewed object which has the ability to *"... bring me back to Europe, home, childhood, holidays, family and solid base of life"* (1133-1134).

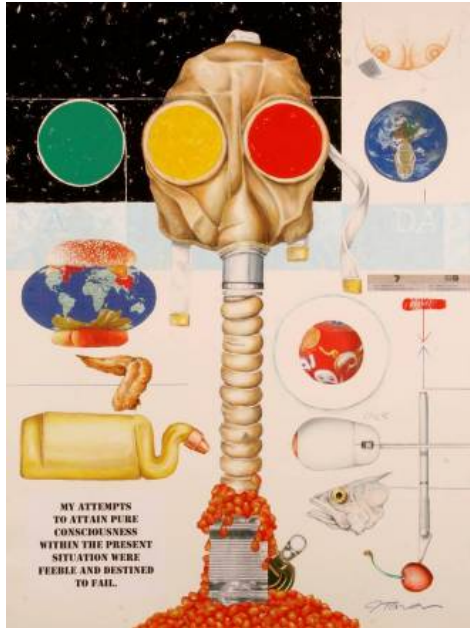


Caroline Penny. *Brownie's Corner of the Hunter Valley* (1994).
Oil on canvas.

In addition, the same rectangle of canvas helps Caroline motivate her own creative drive. It can alter her perception of the present, change her mood and (positively) physically and emotionally slow her down (1263). It is both a stimulant for action and an object capable of producing calm and reflective states. Indeed, once the experience of the image is ingrained, the actual object/painting need not be required in order to act in the above capacities. The painting now resides not only in its physical sense but also in an intangible form; an idea or concept within inspiration and personal celebration which the subject can initiate at any time.

The transformative ability of a painting to go beyond its perceived physical presence as an object is echoed throughout the research participants' reflective journals and interviews. As I recalled Persson's *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*:

The true meaning-ness of the painting is the presence which goes past, transcends the painted surface (John, 250-251). I felt as if I could crack its surface and enter its inner sanctum (423-424). I was immediately aware of its symbolic presence, that it was saying something which seemed to divorce itself from the objectified nuts and bolts of physical construction. It transcended its make-up. The message it was carrying existed in its own, beyond the materials. Indeed, my experience with the piece initially had nothing to do with its actuality in the real world (483-487).



John Tarlton. *My attempts...* (2005).
Watercolour/gouache/collage.

The status of *Marble Table* as a physical object in space is also transformed and an alternate perceptual dimension of the painting is established. Here:

It's like the physical painting, the thing on the wall, goes (619). The physicality is a simple introduction to 'enter.' It's like two things really -- the objectified art object and the other world which it presents in your head. To go there, recognition of the physical side of the actual painting is left ... It's the portrayal, where it takes you, rather than the solid piece of painted 'furniture.' The physical painting is like the admired design of the bottle, whereas the 'other,' its message and life world, is the desired drink inside (623-628).

The attraction of the transformative nature of the objective painting itself also fascinates Chris. Within his selected paintings, he finds the physicality of the paint and:

... the shift as that moves in and out of image, how the image can move into abstraction and then back again ... those sorts of fluctuation. That's what kind of attracts me to those sorts of images ... because they both operate on that level (Chris, 11-14).

Moreover, as he observes,

You may be looking at something but you would be actually looking deeper and re-creating it, manifesting it in different ways (410-412).

In order to internalise the painting's other presence, its intrinsic intentions, he looks further at and into the worlds of heightened realities the paintings reveal.

Artists like Van Gogh reveal this to us. He gives us a map and keys to this hidden world (460).

Alternatively, a fascination with the different presences a painting can represent is also apparent in Chris's interest concerning the shifting natures of the painting as an object in itself, as distinct from its imagery. This can be seen in his response to the excessively large and over-riding Herculean physicality and the effortful material distribution and application which personify Schnabel's work. These notions resonate in his own work, where textures and supports can encompass anything from clothes, garage doors or mattresses. These objects-as-physical amalgamations within the act and actuality of painting represent real things from, and of, the world. Chris considers them 'hybrids,' maintaining their own integrity as objects and also being incorporated into the general intentionality of the painting. Here, "*The form has not changed; the image has changed the idea of the form*" (597-598).



Chris Worfold. *The Willing Line* (2003).
Oil, acrylic, acrylic adhesive and fabric.

The ability of a painting to have a life outside its physical presence as an object on a wall becomes fundamental to the aesthetic experience. Chris conceives painting as "*a model for the world ... it represents what I want to see, what I do see and what I haven't seen yet*" (615-616). To accomplish such requirements of representations, a painting must assume several guises.

These guises, these other faces and subjective realities outside the physical object on the wall are also consonant with Elizabeth's aesthetic experience of *Lavender Mist*. For Elizabeth, *Lavender Mist* is not simply the physical painting, a single representation of what the artist saw transposed to canvas. Rather, it becomes an encoded record of what Pollock *did* in paint (Elizabeth, 34-35), the seizing of the moment of the *now* (30). She enthuses on the innovative and experiential effect which the artist has achieved. It is:

... not a picture of a 'thing' but rather a record of the psychographic energy-charged movements Pollock had made in the moment of the now (51-53) ... to translate actual physical motion (40) ... less concerned with portraying any image than with illustrating an unseen moment in the creative process (43-43).

Again, the heightened response to this painting is more than attention directed toward the mere physical presence of the object. While Elizabeth states that she found it impossible not to be moved by the sheer physicality of the painting in terms of such physical attributes as monumentality of scale (142-143), she also sees *Lavender Mist* as attaining a life beyond its objective status. It is:

... something like a force field, it is way more than the sum of all its parts.
[Like] *'Blue Poles' and its impact upon Australia is more than a large expressive expensive canvas punctuated by dark blue, roughly diagonal lines.*
[Like] *'Guernica' is moral argument, an entire philosophy against war*
[so too] *'Lavender Mist' is an orgiastic field of dancing colour and mist and scent, a massively multi-layered, overloaded experience of the world and beauty (601-606).*

Summary

The perception of the painting can surpass its actual physicality, its nature as an object in space and time, and become a vehicle for viewer transcendence. That is, the painting can transcend its objective status and be perceived as an imaginative window for subjectively viewing depicted imagery as well as giving form to thoughts unique within imagination and personal contexts. It becomes a representation of personal and positive memories and a motivation for creative drive. Furthermore, once the experience of the image is ingrained, the actual object/painting need not be required in order to act in the above capacities. The painting resides in its physical sense and in intangible forms an idea or concept within inspiration and personal celebration which

the subject can initiate at any time. A painting can possess heightened realities below the surface of exhibited paint and canvas. It can become a model for the world, a representation of subjective reality and a valuable illustration of the creative process--all of which goes far beyond the mere sum of its objective parts.

(c) On-going power of experience

The 'experience of the world and beauty' to which Elizabeth referred to earlier is not one of mere transient, sensorial flirtation. It continues to inform. That is, all participants claimed that the aesthetic experience has an on-going positive influence in both the practical and appreciative aspects of their lives. This on-going power of the aesthetic experience also resonates within most of the characteristics observed within the Findings section.

Also, it seems that the sway of the experience can change and grow over time (Chris, 59-60; Elizabeth, 628; Caroline, 1389-1391; John, 679- 682) in order to accommodate future influences and situations. This becomes evident in the fact that the initial aesthetic experiences of all the paintings selected for investigation within this dissertation (with the exception of my relatively recent encounter with *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*) range from over a decade ago to more than thirty-five years.

In other words, the aesthetic experience can have a substantial and beneficial longevity. Its intangible effect becomes a process, a proactive agent for personal growth and understanding. The on-going power of aesthetic experience becomes evident throughout the collected responses, as the below samplings indicate. In Caroline's case, the experience becomes (in reflection) " ... *a moment to have and hold on to throughout old age and re-live over and over again*" (Caroline, 606-607). In clarifying this position, Caroline continues:

If we are talking about the two paintings in front of me [photographs of the originals], the Cassatt is very relevant to me now ... being a mother and all that. But if I looked at it as a grandmother it would have all the same elements, but maybe it would have more knowledge to give in that different context ... and certainly with the Monet, who doesn't want to be walking down that path right now. I just want to be there, totally and utterly. I want to stand in that afternoon and in that painting in my mind now as I have in the past and hopefully in the future (1389-1395).

Caroline sees the experiences of the paintings as on-going phenomena:
They never really run out of things to tell me. They are pieces of art that can play with you, I think, for ages and you are always drawn back to them
(1472-1473).



Caroline Penny. *Taking the horses home* (1999).
Oil on canvas.

As observed above, the experience does not finish when she leaves behind the actual painting. Caroline reiterates:

No, definitely not finished with it. Because I think that paintings you love you really want to own. I want to own them. I want to keep them. I want to stay close to them. To say otherwise would be to presume that the paintings' experiences have a life span for appreciation and I don't think that is the case. They are too precious to me for that (1529-1532). *I'm still fascinated by them* (1592- 1593).

While the aesthetic experience of *Death's Head Abstraction #2* is still quite a recent encounter for me it has nevertheless not diminished in my memory. I periodically draw upon it in reflection in order to illustrate some abstraction concerning infinity or cosmic inevitabilities. But it is the aesthetic experience of Braque's paintings that best denote the aesthetic experience as an on-going phenomenon.

Like Caroline's thoughts on her reflected paintings, I too am drawn back to the still life paintings of Braque, as exemplified by *Marble Table*. Like the rest of the participants, I feel the on-going, affirmative powers of the aesthetic experience which, in the case of Braque, have been a part of my professional and personal life for over thirty-five years. The influence of the aesthetic experience on me has not faded, as reflected in such journal entries as:

There's an immediate attachment to it. It becomes part of me, part of my personal referencing (John, 677-679).

Or, as I later continued:

I can recall the experience within my practice as an artist and appreciator of things around me. They help me put familiar and satisfying structure into my work and into my interactions with my environment. They are familiar and dependable. Through the years 'Marble Table' (and other works of Braque) has consistently presented to me an inward feeling of peace and an outward feeling of direction. If I stumble over a reproduction of it in an art book or magazine, whatever I had planned is briefly interrupted. I am immediately slowed down and give it several moments for reflection. Seeing it gives me a warm sensation, makes me involuntarily smile, like unexpectedly coming across someone you love on a busy street. I want to slow down and talk awhile (805-814).



John Tarlton. *The Old Singer* (1989).
Charcoal and coloured pencil.

Caroline and I are closely aligned by sharing the view that the on-going power of aesthetic experience manifests itself as unconditional and unfaltering consistent. Elizabeth also shares a similar point of view with Caroline and me in her on-going fascination for the original work in both initial and reflective aesthetic experience. However, Elizabeth considers that possible subsequent encounters of the artwork may promote variations of feeling from those experienced with its first viewing by virtue of time, place and personal agency specificities. Yet she maintains, even with the re-

focusing influences of contingencies, a conviction that the on-going power of her connection with *Lavender Mist* would make any future viewing of it fulfilling. As Elizabeth proposes:

Although I have never had the possibility to re-see 'Lavender Mist' in the flesh ... I do know that any reviewing of the painting would generate another intense experience -- not the same experience but something solid at the very least (Elizabeth, 626-629).

Like Caroline and I, Elizabeth expresses the idea that the on-going power of the aesthetic experience she felt with *Lavender Mist* does not diminish with time. As she observes from a vantage point thirteen years post experience:

... the memory of the intensity of that connection and blurring of boundaries between myself and the painting doesn't really fade. I can call it up at will and belief in that kind of merging between observers and artworks has informed all the subsequent work I have done in the arena of art criticism, teaching art history etc (629-632).

While Chris concurs with the on-going power of the aesthetic experience, he nevertheless contends that this on-going power can have a 'use by' date. That is, the aesthetic experience is contingent on its ability to service the needs and requirements of the viewer, both in terms of artistic practice and personal appreciation. He sees the aesthetic experiences of paintings as maintaining their unique position in relation to the growth and changing predispositions of the viewer. In other words, the on-going power of aesthetic experience is also correspondent to the pragmatic and practical requirements of what Chris refers to as 'the on-going journey' (Chris, 281). While paintings which once had great influence will always remain somewhat important or interesting (in varying degrees), their on-going power of influence and appreciation may wain. They must be able to withstand continuous interaction and interrogation (307). As Chris reflects, the experience must " ... keep giving, it has to be this journey and once the journey's ended so is the experience of the painting" (314-315). For example, Chris recalls past aesthetic experiences which no longer have the power to engage:

Looking back at the works I found exciting when I was younger -- I can see the reasons why I was excited about them -- but now I don't find them stimulating because I have moved on (329-331). Caravaggio, for example. I just loved this stuff when I was younger. I couldn't get enough of it because it

does have that narrative, that drama and all those things you look for when you are young. But it was also because they were beautiful paintings. However, when I saw a number of them when I was overseas they looked like reproductions of themselves, so flat and thin. Also, once I understood to a certain extent the way to paint like that, there was a kind of end point. For me there was no more mystery there and in a sense that is what I want from a painting. They had met my expectations of them and that was the end of it (335-345).

Chris continues:

It is a process, but it all comes back to those notions of the stories that you are comfortable with. Maybe that goes full circle into what we are discussing all along and that is the idea of the journey. And when that journey ends, when you already know the story and the story has become so familiar to you that it finally becomes boring (383-386). Once a painting stops giving me something to learn, when I'm just looking at it and appreciating it and not actually learning anything anymore, then my interest dies off quite rapidly ... It's not that's it's not still a great painting, its just that I no longer pay attention to it anymore (79-82).

But for Chris the end point of the on-going power of the aesthetic experience does not necessarily fade out completely. As he observes:

I think that the work will always remain. But you're never really inclined to give it the attention and time that you once gave it in the past. Like a teaching tool, you pull it out from time to time say 'isn't that great,' but you just don't look at it anymore, you know, you don't look anymore at the way it works (395-397).

Chris's aesthetic experiences of *The Conversion of St Paolo Malfi* and *Thatched Cottages in Cordeville* are presently ongoing because of their qualities in holding their mystery and informative properties. This aligns with Csikszentmihalyi's and Robinson's (1990) concept of openness: the seemingly endless insights discoverable through ongoing facilitation. These works (and others by the same artists) have been influential in Chris's life for well over a decade. Yet their positions as objects for indefinite long term robust aesthetic experiences are not assured and may eventually go the way of the Caravaggio's. As Chris notes:

These images have on-going stories to tell -- although I'm familiar with them, I'm not exactly sure where it all ends, so I'm constantly looking ... (387-388).

Finally, the inevitable occurs:

...to a certain extent, the Schnabel paintings, because of my time spent engaging with them [beginning in the early 1990s], are actually less engaging to me now than they were. It's not to say that they might not open up for me again, but they are starting to close rather than to open (282-285).

Summary

Resonating through the transformational characteristic is the notion that the aesthetic experience has the capacity to continue to inform. That is, there is a shared belief that the aesthetic experience has an on-going positive influence in both the practical and appreciative aspects of the participants' lives. It can have a substantial and beneficial life in that its intangible effect becomes a process, a proactive agent for personal growth and understanding. The experience itself can change and grow over time to accommodate future situations or influences. In most cases, it continues well after the initial viewing has passed and becomes an integral part of the personal referencing for both artistic and pragmatic concerns. This characteristic evaluation is shared by three of the four participant-researchers.

However, while the longevity, the on-going power of aesthetic experience, may be seen by the majority of participants as possibly indefinite, there exists a dissenting notion. This notion contends that the on-going power can have a 'use by' date. That is, the aesthetic experience is contingent on its ability to service the needs and requirements of the viewer, both in terms of artistic practice and appreciation. Here, aesthetic experiences maintain their unique positions in relation to the growth and changing predispositions of the viewer. Hence, the on-going power of aesthetic experience may also be correspondent to pragmatic and practical requirements. In the final analysis, they must be able to withstand continuous interaction and interrogation, to keep giving as required by the viewer. In this proposition, while paintings which once had great influence will always remain somewhat important or interesting (in varying degrees), their on-going power of influence and appreciation may wain.

Within the reflections of the participants, transformative characteristics of aesthetic experience were observed. These characteristics surfaced in notions relating

to subject self image, in the belief that the perception of the painting surpassed its actual physicality, its nature as an object in space and time, and became a vehicle for viewer transcendence. Also was also apparent in the idea that the experience had an on-going power to inform and transform the participants' lives.

8. Ordinary experience and aesthetic experience

*A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile
the moment a single man contemplates it,
bearing within him the image of a cathedral.*

De Saint-Exupery, A. Excerpt from *Flight to Arras* (p. 134), (1942).

(a) Aspects of heightened perception and focus

All participants identified within their heightened positive aesthetic responses feelings which they believed were unique, focussed and correspondent with subject initiated, object-directed attentiveness. Rather than identifying these experiences as autonomous and as unique manifestations of response (as in essentialist proposals), the majority of participants' views indicated a belief that the aesthetic experience had its antecedence within ordinary experience. That is, a sensitising and heightening of ordinary experience which effectively held in check disruptive influences and that the experience's duration was unencumbered by conflicting emotional or physical directions.

Participants' pragmatic concerns were also considered advantageous in varying degrees for heightened responses. Elizabeth, while reflecting on the possible differences of aesthetic experience from ordinary experience, considered the former:

Not that much different, in a way, far more intense, a full-blown technicolour version of the ordinary that makes ordinariness so much better (Elizabeth, 556-557).

She further explains:

It [aesthetic experience] is a kind of amplification of the ordinary. You have to be receptive to the experience in the first instance, to allow it to emerge out of the ordinary ... I can be driving along the freeway in polluted, horrible traffic and see the most amazing, exhilarating thread of cloud in a low sky and be totally overwhelmed by the precise opposite of ordinariness and be

absolutely taken out of my own skin and that is such a liberating situation. It is an attitude that is open to being in the supremely right place at the right time and yes, it is staggeringly different from the ordinary and also not so, because it can emerge from the middle of the ordinary -- a flash of delightfully witty graffiti on a dull street on a grey Monday (540-550). There is something about taking the ordinary and making it sort of magical (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1584).

Chris concurs:

The more we look the more we see. The more we see the more beautiful even the mundane appears (Chris, 465).



Chris Worfold. *Mother-in-law's Tongue* (2001).
Oil and mixed media on board.

Chris continues on the idea that the aesthetic experience is predicated within ordinary experience. He finds that:

Routine experience has all these possibilities; the aesthetic experience simply distils and emphasises certain elements. When we are focussed on practical tasks and logical worries few visual experiences can interrupt the dullness of our own numbing thoughts. Our focus is our perception (459-461). [For example] [s]unsets and sunrises show off all the colours and complements of the spectrum and are majestic aesthetic experiences perhaps beyond all others. But few if any would dedicate every dawn and dusk to view these even though each one is unique. Instead it is only the occasional 'incredible' afternoon light that stops us in awe (462-464).

Furthermore, he contends that:

You would be looking at something but you would actually be looking deeper and re-creating it, manifesting it in different ways (410-412). We have to give as much time to this [focus of perception] as we do to practical things. I think that we are trained to work in a very rational way and that makes sense, but in terms of enjoyment, that actually comes from a very nice balance between both of them. I think that the aesthetic experience must be there, available to people at all times, by looking intensely to diffuse their focus to the whole, in the greater totality ... and in the miniscule (414-419).

He relates this ability to fortify the ordinary experience into a state of heightened awareness through the example of appreciation he finds within Van Gogh. Here:

Artists like Van Gogh reveal this to us [that routine experience can convert to aesthetic experience at any time given a different focus]. Van Gogh demonstrates this, all his subjects being of the otherwise banal things and surrounds of his everyday life ... Aesthetic experience and everyday experience interact constantly. There is a dialogue. In certain artist's work that dialogue becomes a Hymn, an open harmonious expression of a truth available to all but seen by few (469-475).

There is a shared belief that heightened perception and focus intensifies ordinary experience. It is the 'sense' description [suggested by Caroline] added to the drama and particularity of the ordinary (Caroline, 1075). As Caroline relates:

For me this painting [Argenteuil] has all that. It has that [otherwise ordinary] moment caught. It has that exact afternoon there to re-live over and over. It brings that instant back to life -- trees, air, temperature, atmosphere, sounds, the earth beneath one's feet. It has it all. This all applies when I look at the painting and when I think about it, it applies to the Mary Cassatt painting as well. She's done exactly the same. She's caught that magic and, if you like, bottled it for life -- to re-live over and over again that incredible extra-ordinary moment in time between mother and child (1063-1070).

For Caroline, pragmatic thoughts within the aesthetic experience are minimised naturally as her attitude changes with the shifting and heightening of focus (1607-1608). She finds variation between aesthetic experience and ordinary experience through a personal evaluation of time. As she recalls:

Reality is always moving (1313). Looking at everyday happenings often is done on the back of other things occurring simultaneously. For instance, I may see a stunning sunset, but if Samuel is screaming for food and Lydia needs attention [Caroline's young children] that natural sunset may be viewed as part of the whole process, beautiful, but too busy. Whereas the notion of time as it relates to aesthetic experience seems to allow spaces for contemplation. It's in the luxury of being able to return to the image (or reflection of it) at different times of the day and night to re-visit it. It's bottled time, like a fantastic perfume (1272-1279).



Caroline Penny. *Pathway to Peace* (1993).
Oil on canvas.

The sensation of time slowing down and the changing focus of perception are also represented in my reflections concerning the differences and similarities of aesthetic experience with that of ordinary experience. Here:

The response within a heightened aesthetic experience is all about attention (John, 645). My attention is directed solely at the painting. If there are external distractions they are overlooked or entered into briefly, dismissed and then I return to the work. The experience speaks of nothing but itself. It may have political/social messages to tell me but it tells me them through the piece itself. The experience is one of inner dialogue and a stimulant for reflection and engaging imagination (646-650).

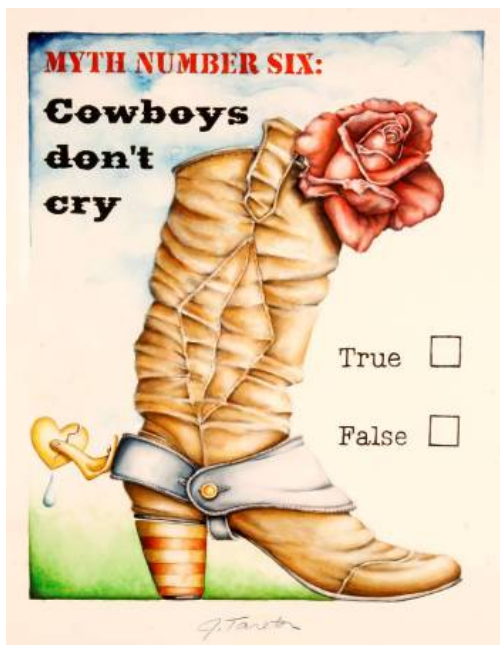
The differentiation between aesthetic experience and ordinary experience is further outlined:

[Aesthetic experience] is different from ordinary experience because it is more reflective, its dialogue seems re-directed to me personally. A beautiful car is a beautiful car. I may appraise its lines but for me it will always be a

car, never quite indistinguishable from its functional intent. Whereas the heightened experience of a painting goes beyond any functional purpose. Heightened experience involves me going deep into myself, to explore, appreciate and learn -- it is a vehicle and activity which allows me to simply stare and let my emotions, critical self and personal history mingle with the work (a car can't do that for me) (652- 659).

Continuing along these lines, I found that:

It is definitely about the focusing of attention and is different from ordinary experience in that I don't feel the need to rationally analyse or justify my time spent before a wonderful work of art. The experience is its own reason for being there. A difference of experiencing is that the ordinary says just what it says, its dimensions are predictable or fathomable. That is, a peach is tasted expecting the familiar taste of a peach, etc. That taste is either as nice or not as nice as you had anticipated. In aesthetic experience there is no expectation implied by the experience and it is relatively clean (or at least tidied) of presuppositions. This is not so in ordinary experience where pragmatic results of instrumental action/reaction are expected (659-667).



John Tarlton. *Myth Number Six*: (2004)
Watercolour and gouache.

In addition, the differentiation of aesthetic experience from ordinary or pragmatic experience has also been established through the on-going power characteristic earlier observed. Generally speaking, the idea here is that the aesthetic experience can become an intangible means for long term pro-activity among the

participants, whereas unexplored ordinary experience has predominately an end point of influence. That is, the experience is finished when its instrumental purposes have been achieved.

Consistent with what has been proposed above, there is also apparent (in the participants' reflections) a feeling of autonomy regarding aesthetic experience in memory itself. That is, the vividness of the experience in recall remains unified, is set apart and brought forward in recollection in a type of present-tense bond or a timelessness of past. This can be seen by the vivid articulation, clarity and familiarity the participants' displayed when recalling actual experiential encounters, some witnessed decades past. This manifestation is in line with Langer's (1953) contention that deeply impressed incidents seem to almost "... rise out of the past all alone, sometimes with such extraordinary detail that it suggests an experience just passed, scarcely modified at all ... although the remembered event may be of old standing, it seems 'as though it had been yesterday'" (Langer, 1953, p. 264). This type of recollection is distinct from memories drawn from ordinary experience which tend to rely on peripheral facts or other associations in order to manifest the incident as a composite experience within recall.

Summary

Identified within the participants' reflections was the notion that aesthetic experience had its antecedence in ordinary experience. That is, aesthetic experience was considered a perceptual sensitising, heightening and amplification of attention within the ordinary. In one reflection, it was termed a 'sense' description added to the drama and particularity of the ordinary moment. The aesthetic experience was differentiated from ordinary, pragmatic experience in its focussed attention and abilities to encourage internal dialogue within the viewer at a more profound level. It promoted effortful, deep looking and personal inquiry well past the requirement for pragmatic attention.

As observed, aesthetic experience was considered a form of attention rather than a distinct class of experience; a focusing of attention in response to the sensuous, designal and meaning making qualities of the art object. It became a slowing down and re-creation (in recall) of the timeless moment where the experience seemed to be relatively free from extraneous, disruptive elements not particular to the experiencing or the recollection of the response. This heightened, sensitised state of consciousness

could be found within the attuned experiencing of all manner of objects and events within the environment.

(b) Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness

The idea of a unified and complete ‘wholeness’ of experience is a central concept of pragmatist-inspired proposals of Dewey (1980 [1934]), apologists such as Beardsley (1981) and earlier essentialist thought. Three of the four participants concurred.

Elizabeth maintained a strong belief in the consummate qualities of aesthetic experience. She describes, in certain instances of the experience, the sensation that:

You just sort of feel that you have reached enlightenment and you really understand in terms of the painting how its working and you kind of feel that you don't need to interrogate it because it is just happening and you're there. Sometimes you get varying degrees of the feeling with other works, but it's like all the right things come together at the right time within this one (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1513-1517).

She continues:

... [i]t does feel like an integrated, harmonious experience you have with it even though you have the opportunity to re-visit it. My experience is that the aesthetic experience has been of a very complete sort, at the time (Elizabeth in conversation with Caroline, Caroline, 1533-1536).

Caroline's view corresponds to Elizabeth's and furthers the notion of a complete ‘wholeness’ to the experience. In reflecting on her responses to *Argenteuil* she finds:

It's a satisfying and complete feeling of being right with the world and the beauty in the simplest moments of everyday life. It makes me, rounds me as a person. It fills me up, heightens my senses, makes my pulse quicken with the enjoyment of looking at the simple turned into absolute perfection (Caroline, 952-955).



Caroline Penny. *View from Mcpherson's Point, Brisbane* (2005). Oil on canvas.

My journal entries also present an idea of a completeness and satiation during and at the experience's closure (one must finally disengage with the painting). Its totality as an experience was sufficient to act as a unified base for influencing and informing the holistic manner in which I positively related to my immediate post experience environments (John, 520).

In addition, experiential wholeness presented itself through the feelings of immediate attachment (678), immediate intimacy with the piece and with an almost *deja vu* like quality to the encounter. As I recalled:

There was an immediate intimacy when I looked at it [Death's Head Abstraction # 2]. It was as if, I don't know, that I was already acquainted with the painting before I saw it (630-631).

Within aesthetic experiences generally, I reflected that:

I would look and look until it all made sense (141) ... or if it immediately made sense (intuitively felt), I would just stand before it and enjoy (142).

The wholeness of the experiential encounter, the understanding of its significations, becomes organised into a totality, a unified reference which interfaces with future practical and personal experience (John, 678). Within this wholeness of experience comes the feelings of "*Calm, inward peace and awareness*" (518). Yet, there is, nevertheless, an aspect which points to a possible fragmented nature within my experience and aligns with Chris's idea that the aesthetic experience constantly alters and grows with the passing of time (Chris, 59). As I recalled:

The painting's experience [Death's Head Abstraction # 2] is constantly changing in my head. It says many things immediately or through quiet mediation. It keeps opening. It has no one face, nor does the experience of it (John, 669-671).

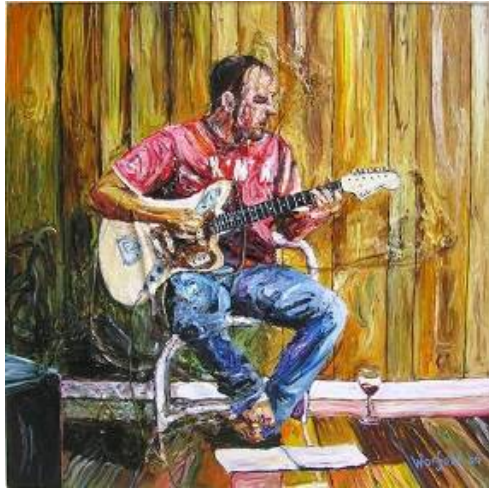
Finally, this notion that the encounter is constantly 'opening up' introduces Chris's belief in an aesthetic experience which is non-unified and sporadic in nature. As such, his proposal contrasts with those views held by Caroline, Elizabeth and (to certain extents) my own regarding experiential wholeness.

That is, Chris sees the experience as fragmentary, rather than anything that resembles a complete and unified feeling or response. Here, mere appreciation becomes redundant. He links the aesthetic experience to the idea of a process and a journey of continuing pragmatic and imaginative discovery. These properties must have the ability to grow and change over time and never lose the ability to instruct and inform. In other words, the experience becomes a kind of tool. After the immediacy of encounter, Chris describes the experience:

It's hard not to talk in metaphor or analogy and it's not narrative. Maybe it's like picking up the Bible, you don't necessarily pick up where you left off, you open it here or there and start getting into it again and sooner or later, like a seasoned preacher, you begin to know where you are and what comes next and where things are within the whole meta-narrative (Chris, 92- 96).

He continues:

For me the whole painting and its experience doesn't come at once, it comes in stages. If it did come all at once [and the feeling was complete], then that would be a pretty good example to me that the aesthetic experience isn't satisfying ... [because] ... it's about being able to go back, to return to the painting (240- 244).



Chris Worfold. *Songwriter* (2006).
Oil, fabric and acrylic adhesive on board.

For Chris, the aesthetic experience must always entail more than the feeling of simple, passive enlightenment or idle contemplation. It is not a pocket watch to be ethereally reflected upon or admired (though admiration does come into play), but rather one to be taken apart and examined.

Summary

The notion of a unified and complete wholeness to the aesthetic experience was not endorsed by all participants. However, three of the four participants believed that the idea of experiential wholeness found expression in the feelings of being enlightened, of all things coming together at the right time and the right place. Other expressions of experiential wholeness concerned the ideas of integration and harmonious interaction. It was presumed to be a fulfilment of temporal experience which could re-invent itself in later reflection and immediate attachment, intimacy and familiarity. This, in turn, became a unifying referent for future interactions within the environment. These aspects of totality were illustrated by recollections of calm, inward peace and personal revitalisation.

Yet, the concept of fragmentation, of experience non-unified and sporadic, was also demonstrated. Here, it was proposed that the full implication inherent in an aesthetic experience does not come all at once. It is linked with the requirements of the viewer's onward personal journey and must be able to grow and change as required. This necessitates that the experience be open, unresolved and able to progressively and perpetually unfold new discoveries and aesthetic puzzlements in line with instrumental preoccupations of the viewer.

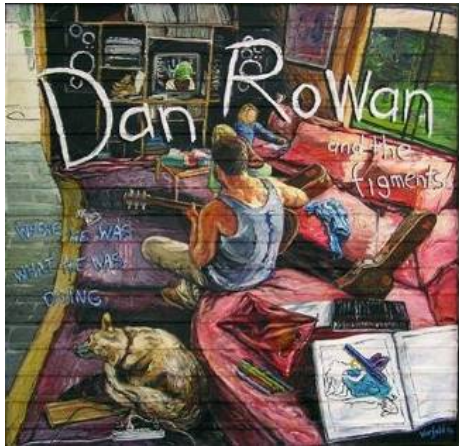
9. Mind and body

There is little evidence within the reflections of the research participants which would forward an adherence to the traditional essentialist stance of separating the aesthetic experience from praxis, individual or social/cultural importations. In addition, there is no case for assuming that the aesthetic experience separates the body from the mind, the apprehension of the senses from robust and proactive cognition and meaning making. Rather, the reflections indicate a blending, a cooperative action of the two.

For instance, Elizabeth earlier observed that her experience of *Lavender Mist* was essentially sensual. Nevertheless she could not separate that experience from propositional domain knowledge of the artist's personal and historical placement within the context of the art world or her own personal attachments, preoccupations and ontogeny from the experience. She maintains that aesthetic experience and art making and art appreciation in general is mostly thinking with the body and that this corporeal knowing and perception is simply another domain within cognition (Elizabeth, 618- 620). Similar notions can be observed throughout most of the reflections of the other participants. Here, perception is cognition.

For example, Chris believes that both mind and body work together in aesthetic experience. He responds somatically (like Elizabeth) to the immediacy and wonder which is “ ...*very much a feeling thing*” (Chris, 44) and at the same time initiates analytical and cognitive problem solving schema which he believes inform the experience from a subconscious level (Chris, 43). As he observes this synthesis of mentation and sensuous perception:

For me now it is both. Perhaps when I was younger I might have thought that you could have that split [mind and body], but I don't think they were ever really separate ... I think that what happens to us physically and what happens to us mentally are linked (Chris, 352-355) ... that our brains are working overtime [and not at the conscious level] in making sense of these [immediately sensuous] things (370-371).



Chris Worfold. *Where He Was, What He Was Doing* (2004). Oil on sheet metal.

In *Death's Head Abstraction # 2*, my first reactions were those derived from sensuous perception and a feelingfulness which required only acceptance of what was being presented (John, 481). As I recalled, “*I wasn't asked for anything but to reflect and contemplate*” (476-477) and was rewarded by the feeling of being at peace (520).

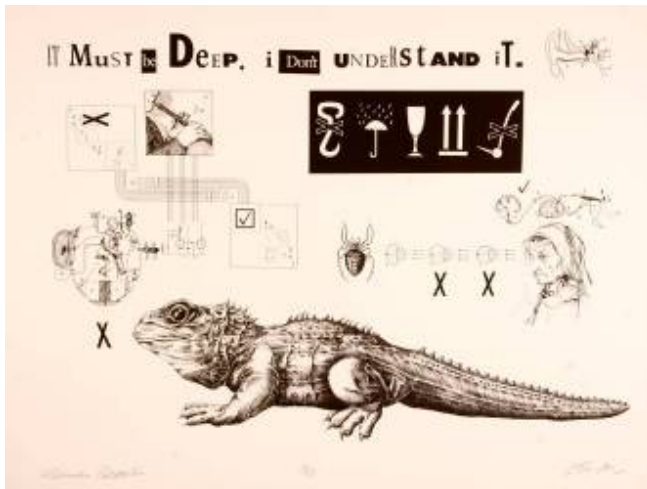
Correspondingly, with *Marble Table*, I felt what I described as an effortless “... *oneness with the subject*” (605). Again, I ascribed to the experience no need for logical or rational analysis. “*I [did] not need to decipher, I could just float my eyes within it ...*” (614-615). This, I believe, is simply appreciation for its own sake (690). Yet these essentialist traits are conjoined with a requirement in which:

I have always looked hard and long. I had to be sure. It had to be provable to my inner person (140-141). I would look and look until it all made sense (141).

This ‘making sense’ implies meaning making which, in turn, requires interpretation of symbolic and literal representations. It develops through the use of cognitive strategies such as association, comparison and contrast, clustering and the search for understanding through appropriate cues and clues. In reality then, the cognitive face behind perception is the engine below consciousness which allowed me to be effortlessly ‘at one with the subject.’

Indeed, much of the familiarity with Braque’s work (and painting in general) is through discursive means involved with study and analysis. This is true not only for appreciation purposes, but also for the assimilation of such responses into my development as an arts practitioner. These aspects of the aesthetic experience point to

the requirement of noesis as well as sensuous response and the antecedent influences derived from contextual and social/individual sourced frames of reference.



John Tarlton. *Post-modern Post-mortem* (1990). Serigraph.

Like Elizabeth to *Lavender Mist*, Caroline leans towards a predominantly corporeal response in the aesthetic experiences of *Argenteuil* and *Emmie and her Child*. Her experiences have little regard for an analytical side (Caroline, 1484) and she does not consciously rationalise her responses. Nevertheless, Caroline's reflections do illustrate the inclusion of aspects of mind through cognitive recall of personal anecdotes and associations with the works which assist in making the experience heightened and particular for her. As she reflects:

It's probably a mixture of the technique, content and then the associations that those give off. The muddling of it together, because I initially think it would be just looking at what I was looking at, seeing that initially and then as I wondered around it with my eye, then other things would be triggered through it (Caroline, 1361-1364).

On critical reflection, Caroline acknowledges that the desire for meaning making and consequent cognitive interrogation of the art work is concomitant with desires instigated through sensuous response. That is, they both blend within experience. This is illustrated in the following passage:

... if I've been standing in front of something and it makes me stop and stare, I almost want to eat it. I [also] want to look at every little square inch of it to work out what it is that is just so incredibly wonderful -- or incredible shocking or fascinating or whatever it is (1354-1357).



Caroline Penny. Under the veranda, Leatherhead (1993).
Oil on canvas.

Summary

By observing the sampling of the participants' reflections above, the dualism of mind and body can not be advanced. In addition, the responses do not apologise for either essentialist or relativist positions. The reflections seem to promote a synthesis of the two and the proposition that the emotive, feelingful aspects of perception are considered a form of cognition. That is, it suggests that mentation and the immediacy of sensuous response become one in a heightened aesthetic encounter (considered here within the limitations and specificities of this dissertation). The corporeal knowing and perception of the sensuous modality of understanding within the immediacy of aesthetic experience is seen to be simply another domain within cognition. The making sense of that which is presented in perception implies interpretation of symbolic and literal representations. It involves cognitive strategies which inform the experience on an unconscious level.

The above characteristics and sub-characteristics represent a presentation based on phenomenological exploration. Together, these characteristics and sub-characteristics offer a way of understanding the positive aesthetic experience with painting of the informants and perhaps, through verisimilitude, others beyond.

The creative synthesis of the explicated characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting concludes the findings chapters of this dissertation. The significances of these findings, in terms of outcomes, key contributions and implications are now advanced in Chapter Ten.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

This chapter summarises the purpose, outcomes, contributions and implication of this inquiry into the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience. It commences with a rehearsal of its purpose and a summary of its findings. This includes the nine major characteristics with their associated five dependent sub-characteristics as previewed in Chapter Eight and elaborated in Chapter Nine. Next, the key contributions and implications of the dissertation are advanced. This includes the claim that understanding aesthetic experience requires productive reconciliation between the intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist positions. Only through acknowledging the positions' contributions of both perspectives and reconciling their paradigmatic differences can a comprehensive account of the aesthetic experience be advanced. Next, implications for pedagogy and curriculum are raised. Finally, possible future directions of research are proposed.

PURPOSE

This dissertation explored the phenomenological investigations of two artist/educators, one professional full time artist and one art theorist/educator in explicating characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in relation to painting. The purpose of this inquiry was to further understand the characteristics of the aesthetic experience in order to contribute to ongoing debate about this experience: to encourage further discourse on an enduring, yet under-researched, in phenomenological terms (Abbs, 1994), phenomena. Its purpose was also to advance the conceptualisation of this experience and to facilitate more informed art appreciation practices in future educational and life-long learning activities.

The investigation was set against a background of discussion centred on two generalised opposing theoretical positions, intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist, that have provided distinct explanations of the aesthetic modality of knowing, the field of aesthetics and the aesthetic experience. The issue here was whether heightened response originated within perception of universalist characteristics unique to the object in experience (i.e. the intrinsic/essentialist position) or whether the response was orchestrated by relativist preconditioning (i.e.

the subjective/contextualist position). In addition, certain aspects of conciliatory positions were reviewed. A review of literature ascertained the major discursive positions that underpinned the dialogue surrounding the notion of aesthetic experience and acted comparatively with the research participants' reflections, additionally reconciling the intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist positions.

The engagement with these participants was directed towards addressing the research question "What are the bases for the perception and description of the phenomena of aesthetic experience in painting?" Their responses were engaged through a phenomenological study that provided data on the accounts, reflections and verifications of the interpretation of these accounts.

The selection of painting to act as the representative art form for observing heightened aesthetic response was based on personal relevance for the researcher and the notion that painting was arguably one of the most easily recognised, accepted and manageable exemplars for observing and representing accounts of the phenomenon.

The emphasis placed on immediacy and non-mediated encounters which characterise the research participants' responses are indicative only to this investigation and are not offered as generalisations. It should also be noted that any potential conclusions that critique established scholarly propositions are not intended to minimise their significant contributions in the field of understanding aesthetic experience.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Data responses were derived from both discursive and non-discursive reflections. Through analysis, nine major characteristics and five sub-characteristics were identified and elaborated in Chapter Eight and Nine. The explicated characteristics and discriminating qualities of aesthetic experience were:

Explicated characteristics and discriminating qualities of aesthetic experience

Characteristic	Discriminating qualities
1. Immediacy and totality of experience	Experience comes all at once; Response to wholeness rather than reduced through parts; Acknowledged in feelingful states and associations; No critical, conscious examination or discourse; Experience more intuitive than mediated; Designal form blends with affective states; Other sensuous modalities initiated by form; Feelingful rather than analytical response.
(Dependent sub-characteristics)	
(a) Minimal regard for pre-knowing	The feelingfulness of experience did not require propositional knowledge.
(b) Effortless cognition	Understanding and awareness established through feeling rather than process of analysis; belief that cognition was somatic; cognition through sensuous immediacy.
(c) Non-sequencing of experience	No particular systematic ordering of experience.
(d) Divergent points of entry	No particular point of entry into experience; dependent on contextual predispositions of viewer.
(e) Aspects of the sublime	Inability to comprehend the magnitude and power of representation and the associations of deep subjective longings (conciliatory position).
2. Associative aspects innate in form	Elements and qualities of form trigger emotional and contextual associations; Emotive, non-rational response to form.
3. Metaphorical response replacing measurement	Imaginative rather than objectified response; Elements and principles of design acknowledged metaphorically; non-discursive.
4. Technical virtuosity, novelty and the 'artist's eye'	Heightened awareness of technical aspects; awareness of innovative manipulation of materials, techniques and the artist's perceived intention internalised into emotive personal and contextual response.
5. Personal associations	Experience manifests personal, positive psychological associations; Experience triggers recall of positive personal history; Reaffirmation through subject matter, artistic styles, formal design relationships; associations to philosophical stance and universal themes such as love, death, existence, etc.
6. Sense of mystery	Ineffable quality to experience; non-rational.
7. Transformative aspects	
(a) In subject self-image	Promotion of heightened states of consciousness; promotion of desire for self-actualisation.
(b) In promoting the view that paintings transcend their physical objective status	Paintings become vehicles for personal transcendence; paintings become representations of subjective realities and creative processes; paintings maintain an intangible form within future viewer reflections.
(c) On-going power of experience	The experience has a long term positive effect and becomes an internal personal referencing for artistic and pragmatic situations; may be correspondent to pragmatic and practical requirements of the viewer.
8. Aesthetic experience and ordinary experience	
(a) Aspects of heightened perception and focus	Antecedence in ordinary experience; a perceptual sensitising and amplification of ordinary experience.
(b) Aspects surrounding the idea of experiential wholeness	Both notions of a unifying and consummate wholeness of experience and a non-unified and sporadic fragmentation of experience identified.
9. Mind and body	Cognitive strategies employed on unconscious level within immediate, corporeal knowing; inductive rather than deductive; emotive, feelingful aspects of perception are considered a form of cognition; mentation and the immediacy of sensuous response become one in a heightened aesthetic encounter; no dualism acknowledged.

KEY THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The theoretical contributions arising from this investigation are ninefold. These contributions concern: (1) The explication of characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting; (2) A conciliatory positioning; (3) The contribution of immediacy; (4) Qualities and meaning; (5) Self-justifying experience with underlying contextual importations; (6) The relevance of modernist painting in a postmodern climate; (7) Intensified experience; (8) A conciliatory sublime; and (9) Dominance of the experiential. These contributions are observed below.

1. Explication of characteristics of aesthetic experience

The first and principal contribution of this investigation is the identification of a set of nine characteristics that explicate the aesthetic experience, as presented above. It is through the development of this set of characteristics that provide the platform for further contributions.

In advancing these proposed characteristics, many are consistent with those attempts at explicating aesthetic experience characteristics as advanced by the scholars presented in Chapter Six and the characteristics earlier ascribed to intrinsic/essentialist, subjective/contextualist and conciliatory epistemologies. The consistent and generalisable similarities found within the past explications and the present research aggregates reinforces and extends the characteristics of aesthetic experience in painting. It also contributes to the validity and merit of continued interest in the collection of taxonomies for theoretical and pedagogical dissemination, as initiated by the contributors of Chapter Six and advocated by Abbs (1994), among others.

2. A conciliatory positioning

The characteristics explicated here extended significant parallels, contradictions and conciliations regarding intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist theoretical propositions. While some findings leant toward one epistemology or the other, overall, they indicated that a more conciliatory pathway is required. This implies, as Fenner (2003b) earlier suggested, a type of 'hybrid' consolidation of both concerns.

This research contributes to the position that heightened pleasurable response to painting remains fundamentally a subjective concern for the viewer and the attainment of pleasurable response may incorporate any and all such relational or

essentialist manifestations which the viewer believes or deems necessary. In other words, the experience, rather than theoretical cannon, drives heightened aesthetic response.

These implications also support aspects concerning a conciliatory amalgamation of both essentialist and contextualist characteristics suggested originally by Dewey (1980 [1934]) and later propositions inherent in pragmatist aesthetics, post formal aesthetics and aesthesia (among others). In so doing, this research contributes to a justification of their principle tenet of placing unqualified pleasurable life enhancement as the goal of the immediate and heightened experiential encounter.

3. The contribution of immediacy

The immediacy of the aesthetic experience needs to be brought more centrally into the consideration of that experience due to the preponderances of contemporary relativist imperatives. The aesthetic experiences were characterised and guided by feelingful, rather than overtly mediated, responses. In most cases, the participants responded through an aesthetic sensuous apprehension of the paintings which was (a) primordially felt, (b) did not require deductive justifications and (c) somewhat elusive to discursive expositions. Discursive and analytical foregrounding (while advantageous in certain instances) was not deemed strictly prerequisite.

The contribution here is that it was the participants' immediacies and initial sensual consciousnesses that triggered and stimulated initial awe, curiosity and the desire for further investigation and interpretation, not contextualist interrogations for meaning. Again, within the hegemony of relativist argument, this observed phenomenon is not so clearly accepted in existing accounts.

This contribution is revealed through analysis of the participants' reflections concerning associative aspects and metaphorical response, transformational aspect of self and the objectified painting and the on-going power of aesthetic experience (among others).

An implication suggested here is an alignment with aspects of intrinsic positions which see the positive aesthetic experience as being primarily intuitive. In this way, the research acknowledges and reinvigorates Langer's (1953; 1957a) linking response to symbolic representations of feelings which are objectified within the perception of the object itself and subsequently driven into the aesthetic experience by

the specificity of discreet subjective realities. There is a reaction, grasped in direct apprehension, of subjective response to the feeling states perceived as belonging to the objective painting. Again, the implications of participants' responses also seem to echo Langer's (1953) contention that the exhilaration (pleasure) of aesthetic emotions felt was comprised largely of imaginative stimulation and seemingly apprehended intellectual gratification without having actually employed systematic logic or deduction -- a point somewhat linked with Beardsley's (1981) earlier propositions.

4. Qualities and meanings

A contribution of this research is its observation of a conciliatory position which advances the idea of a synergetic relationship between essentialist qualities and contextualist meaning. That is, while the reflections of the research participants indicated a general non-political and non-agentic nature, those experiences were not simply esoteric. The reflected experiences were not bereft of examples pertaining to personal morals, socio-economical observations and arts practice ramifications. The implication here substantiates and aligns with Dewey (1980 [1934]) and neo-pragmatist aesthetic thought which impress the notion of aesthetic experience with self-actualisation and pro-activity within all spheres of the participants' lives. Indeed, as contributable to this research, personal evaluations and predispositions were found to be imbedded *within* the participants' assumed perceptual responses to designal qualities (i.e. its significant or designal form). The implications of this contextual importation opens up the traditional limited definition of percipience to one where the grasp of both qualities and meanings amalgamate to intensify the experience, as earlier suggested by Parsons (2002). Here, the 'grasp' became more generalised and took in not only the formal internal relations of the elements of the painting but also extraneous apprehensions contextually specific to the viewer. These contextualist inputs were seen to be manifested within an internalisation of presented aesthetic qualities.

This implication of an amalgamation of contextualist input within the perceived qualities of the object also refutes any requirement of a traditional attitude of sympathetic disinterestedness during aesthetic experience, as professed by the essentialist claims of Kant (1952 [1790]) and Stolnitz (1960) (among others).

5. Self-justifying experience with underlying contextual importations

Another contribution of this research is the forwarding of the idea that aesthetic experience is justified in its own right and does not require any external reason or reward. Aspects of this intrinsic/essentialist implication can also be tracked back to Langer (1953), the conciliatory accounts of Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Eisner (1972) (among others). In addition, there is also resonance with earlier essentialist-derived views of Kant (1952 [1790]), Schopenhauer (1966 [1819]) and Stolnitz (1960) regarding the presumed ‘purposelessness’ enjoyment of such aesthetic contemplation. However, a strict adherence to the essentialist inspired prerequisite of delight in the object-independent of interest was contextually hijacked by tacitly held personal agency and external input.

This contribution expands a conciliatory position of the aesthetic experience to emphasise feeling and meaning. Experience can now be seen as self-justifying not through or because of the employment of disinterestedness or exclusively sourced importations, but through the correlation of divergent referents, both sensorial and psychological. The implication here is consistent with what Dewey (1980 [1934]) and others earlier proposed. That is, the experiences of the participants were iterative and nurturing for the individuals because of what was sensuously presented within the immediacy of the experiences *and* because of the possible influences of the importation of non-exclusive references. It is analogous to the notion of optimal experience (or flow) (Csikszentmihalyi (1990). That is, autotelic experience (i.e. imbedded with subjective interest) as sought encounters entered into for the sake of the experience itself.

6. The relevance of modernist painting in a hostile postmodern climate

The sixth contribution is in promoting an exoneration of modernist paintings within the contemporary milieu to act as powerful and relevant exemplars for fostering aesthetic experience. Within the specificity of this research, the participants’ selection of representative paintings and subsequent reflections also contributes to a refutation of visual culture contention that the unique art object is no longer a dominant or viable vehicle for signification regarding individual self-awareness. This is seen in the professed on-going power of experience and self-actualising potentialities inherent in the paintings selected (and their status as unique art establishment exemplars).

The selection of paintings questions popular visual culture's assumed inescapable lure of immediate and temporal visual gratification. That is, the assumed supremacy of ubiquitous and ever-changing object-as-commodity and transient titillation proposed within the popular visual culture phenomena (Jameson 1991) did not negate or undermine the selection (or sustainability) of an autonomous and recognised familial class of object (traditional painting) to act as a contemporary referent for examining aesthetic experience.

In addition, critical, societal interrogation of motive, the association of predictability, pre-mediation and superficial gratification inherent in aspects of visual culture did not play a significant part within participants' reflections.

Also absent was the general postmodern and visual culture concept of the image exerting only temporary, fragmented and sporadic influence over the participants. This is implied through the characteristics of ongoing power, experiential wholeness (within three of the four participants) and the acknowledgment of probable employment of cognitive strategies believed to be engaged at a subconscious level within the immediacy of experience.

The selection of modernist-inspired paintings and the subsequent findings of this research promote the validity of recognised historic and contemporary works of art to act as exemplars for fostering aesthetic experience. In so doing, it supports aspects of the earlier essentialist proposals forwarded by Beardsley (1981) and Osborne (1970), among others.

7. Intensified experience

The seventh contribution forwarded by this research concerns a debunking of the intrinsic/essentialist proposal that aesthetic experience is an autonomous and distinct classification of experience. This is substantiated by the recognition that while all participants believed the experience seemed unique, it was agreed to be premised on the heightening and intensification of ordinary encounters.

The implication here is that aesthetic experience, rather than being a distinct class of experience, was more likely considered to be a *form* or extension of experience. This implication suggests that the form of experience associated with aesthetic experience is identified by the simple degree of *attention* (focussed concentration) that is voluntarily exercised (Carroll, 1999; Dickie, 1965). This type of heightened attention is ordinarily not deployed within the instrumental pursuits

associated with perception in ordinary experience. Additionally, the implied cognitive strategies required for “noticing, detecting and discriminating” (Carroll, 1999) attention negates the traditional intrinsic/essentialist notions regarding aesthetic experience as uniquely activated through the presumed non-mediated characteristic of disinterestedness.

8. The conciliatory sublime

The eighth contribution advanced is the promotion of a conciliatory notion of the sublime that acknowledges intrinsic/essentialist positions with those of subjective/contextualist stances.

In certain instances, correspondences with essentialist propositions as earlier proposed by Stolnitz (1960) and Burke (1987 [1757]) were observed. For example, the participants acknowledged ineffable awe and wonder before what they considered inadequacies in their perceptual and imaginative capacities to cope with the scale, power, imagery and scope pictorially presented. Knowing strategies failed within the immediacy and totality of response. All spoke of infinitude, limitlessness and the exhilaration of not being able to conceptually contain that which they were witnessing. There are instances cited advancing the Burkean (1987 [1757]) associations of the sublime with solitude and obscurity of human agency dominate participant/painting interaction. In addition, there was a belief that the paintings became vehicles for personal transcendence and that the paintings had a life beyond their objectified status. Again, these notions resonate with Burke’s (1987 [1757]) metaphysical contention that the sublime was manifested through the physicality of the object. However, there was little indication that acknowledged shock or awe were the result of psychological states incumbent on associations with danger, pain or ‘delightful horror.’

Conciliatorily, the sublime was also experienced through effortful internalisation of an assortment of contextualised visual associations. As proposed by Lyotard (1984), these associations acknowledged cathartic allusions to personal strivings, communion and spiritual linkages. In addition, states of exaltation were reported when confronted with new and radical employments of materials and techniques: affective states were heightened by observing and acknowledging innovative and startling manipulations of plastic (i.e. responding to shaping or modelling) formal elements. Summarily, both essentialist (e.g. modernist) and

contextualist (e.g. postmodernist) epistemological views relating to the notion of the sublime were observed. This suggests a blended and eclectic influence of the two.

9. Dominance of the experiential

The final contribution advances and reaffirms the idea that no one theory can adequately claim exclusive definitional power in relation to the aesthetic experience. The suggestion here is that the characteristics of pleasurable aesthetic experience have certain correspondences with both intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist positions. What may be construed as universal attributes have (arguably) at their core subjective human agency. What is believed to be unmediated sensuous response is actually imbedded with cognitive strategies working just below the conscious level.

The implication here is a reinforcement of the idea that we understand and appreciate a work of art through several ways of knowing, as advanced by Eisner, (1998b). Some of these ways defy manifestation through rational and deductive logic. To perceive, to experientially apprehend, is a mode of cognition intertwined with many other modalities (Abbs, 1994). The data also implies a correspondence with Dewey (1980 [1934]) in that to place restrictions on the avenues of response, to deny any contribution because that response cannot be measurably quantified, limits the totality of experience.

As an extension of the above, the overall implication is for an advancement of eclectic selection: the acknowledgement of the contributions of *aspects* of theory, rather than blanket acceptance and adherence to any canonical prescriptions. Theory informs experiential encounter. It does not drive it.

KEY PEDAGOGICAL AND CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

To present a robust and thorough discourse on pedagogical and curriculum ramifications inherent in the presented findings would require its own study and goes well beyond the space limitations of the present dissertation.

However, some general, contestable and inchoate implications can be raised. These implications are presented and tracked through the following sections: (1) Experiential knowing; (2) Corresponding strategies for experiential knowing; (3) The questioning of curriculum: a critique; and (4) Drawbacks within the implications.

1. Experiential knowing

While a mediated grasp of the qualities and meanings of the experiences were considered beneficial, the findings implied background propositional or analytical knowledge was not prerequisite for aesthetic experience. Involuntary and intuitive immediacy, rather than informed percipience or schematic interrogation, were foremost in participant response. The implications of this research extend the below propositions.

There is a requirement of strategies based on the ‘now.’ That is, what is needed is an attempt to foster *receptivity* for living in the moment. To address such receptivity necessitates the establishment of environments where “... one becomes a participant in and an observer of the ongoing process of organismic experience, rather than being in control of it” (Rogers, 1969, p. 285). Simply put, we attempt to be responsive, to enter experience without agendas.

For this to occur, environments must be attuned to Langer’s (1967) idea that art is seen as an objectification of feeling. That appreciation comes from the mind’s ability to draw sustenance from the surrounding world, whereby our metaphysical symbols arise from that reality which confronts us (Langer, 1957b). It is nurtured and sensitised by tapping into the core of all human feeling and emotion.

It evolves through time, tradition, habit and intimate knowing of the livedworld (Langer, 1957b). It is correspondent to what Abbs (2003) sees as the representation and embodiment of the entire spectrum and depth of the human spirit-- a deep historical, spiritual and ecological connection-- to address and liberate the imagination (Abbs, 2003).

Therefore, what is implied here is that environments conducive to intuitive, intrinsic and implicit enjoyment comes before the discursive symbolisms of judgment and criticism, as Rogers (1969) also seems suggests. In some respects, the sensitivity to such worlds of feelings is an innate gift which requires no telic propositional instruction (Langer, 1957b). Therefore, a self-initiated process of sensitising one’s self to all aspects of the human condition seems prerequisite. This is in order to formulate intuition and familiarise our senses toward responding to all manner of expressive forms, both artistic and natural (Langer, 1967).

2. Corresponding strategies for experiential knowing

Instigation or attainment of heightened, sublime-like experiential encounter (through immediacy) would seem to require lateral or radical experiential pedagogical interactions. It is suggested that such existential participation requires authentic settings with authentic exemplars and other mutually supportive conditions such as experiential encounters in associated aesthetic fields and safe, non-threatening social interaction. It also requires representations of art to be discussed and interpreted both inside and *outside* of the school environment (Freedman, 2003).

Corresponding possible strategies would be experimentation with holistic approaches which were humanist by design, communities of inquiry, contemplative down time for Socratic inquiry, preliminary introductions and familiarisation with the 'how to' of reflective experiential and aesthetic knowing, philosophy, individual and group self awareness encounters and other like-experiences. Outcomes would be learner based.

What is required is open-ended and reflected approaches; ones which promote purposeful sensuous curiosity involved with active engagement and not contingent on the procurement of a list of factual responses (Abbs, 1992). That is, under pertinent and non-prescriptive guidance, one would feel one's own way.

3. The questioning of curriculum: a critique

Implications of this research would suggest that the immediacy and reflective nature which characterises positive aesthetic experience in painting may not be adequately served by contemporary prescribed demands of standardised curriculum preoccupations and accountability. It is implied that:

(a) The proposed immediacy of aesthetic experience sits outside the contemporary 'blended deliveries' which entail didactic lecture, product/unit orientation and on-line activities, though these same activities may initiate an awareness, interest and inform and intensify the on-going power of aesthetic experience after the event.

(b) There seems no contingency within nationally-endorsed training packages or competency-based modular delivery and assessment to accommodate such humanist-inspired requirements. Indeed, even the concept of prescribed 'creativity standards' is an oxymoron for art education (Emery, 2006). This is because the pursuit of aesthetic experience involves life-long and unencumbered inductive

evaluation. Accountability rests solely within individual reflection and satisfaction. It defies outside assessment.

(c) The classroom may prove advantageous as one of many environments for setting in place possible foundations and understandings for future aesthetic experiences (along with galleries, museums, cultural events and naturally occurring conducive environments). That is, while the need for creating avenues such as self reflection and experiential knowing are important, they may well not be the only viable strategies.

(d) Groundings in cognitive approaches and their various strategies for understanding how we know what we know, sociocultural implications inherent in experiencing, aspects of workplace learning, mediative and emotive effects of visual culture, investigations into philosophy, culture, associated arts and the study of various spiritual and mystic theories may all prove beneficial. In addition, all of these support the inclusion of both deductive and inductive modes of knowing. What is suggested here is that a personal liberal backgrounding in such fields might better equip individuals to be receptive, intellectually informed and emotionally ready to capitalise on the experiential moment when apprehended.

4. Drawbacks within the implications

That being said, even working within the conducive qualitative frameworks and approaches mentioned above, there would be no guarantee of success. One could only help set the stage. The unfolding of the story would rest on the animated and subject-induced attention/concentration of the actors (Carroll, 1999). To borrow from an old adage appropriate to the idea of circumstance and variables, any pedagogical ‘leading’ to water (for possible aesthetic experience) does not necessarily mean that the individual will perceptually ‘drink’.

If we are to believe that realisations of positive life-enhancing aesthetic experiences are possible for all (Dewey (1980 [1934])), their attainment within both the art and general public still remains rare and allusive. More research is needed.

REALITIES AND FURTHER RESEARCH

As observed, the characteristics explicated within the specificity of this research exhibit significant parallels, contradictions and conciliations with the foregrounded intrinsic/essentialist and subjective/contextualist theoretical propositions.

In reality, however, a final and acceptable analytical indexation may be impossible (Abbs, 1994). That is, a conclusive taxonomy of the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting (or generally) may remain unresolved within the endogenous messiness of psychology and subjectivity.

Yet there are many consistent resonances which remain in play, both historically and in the phenomenological gatherings of this research, that validate the need for continued investigations. This would imply that:

(a) More phenomenological investigations into heightened aesthetic experiences in order to effectively and continuously gauge the validity and relevance of traditional or expanding contemporary theories are needed.

(b) There needs to be evaluation through the explications of various stakeholders' experiences. As suggested, such experiential checks-and-balances would have far reaching implications for curriculum development, assessment and delivery strategies. In addition, the recording of characteristics within actual attitudinal modifications and moments of transcendence and motivation within strategic groups of people (say, ethnic or socio-political) could be utilised as component strategies to promote positive associations and foster like response in like (or other) target groups.

(c) While a finite analytical taxonomy of characteristics of positive aesthetic experience may prove unattainable, a continued expansion of observed characteristics can only add to the body of knowledge which may effectively inform the promotion of art appreciation and life enhancement in general (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Dewey, 1980 [1934]; Eisner, 1978; Shusterman, 2000a, among others). Further research and understanding can bring us closer to attaining the professed substantial rewards such experiences offer; rewards intended to benefit not only a marginal art community but also contribute to the hopes and aspirations of humanity in general (Dewey, 1980 [1934]). This alone would indicate and validate the need for future research in the field.

(d) As suggested, in order to assist in such a task, rigorous phenomenological investigations are required throughout all strata, from various students', art administrators' and teachers' responses, to ones focusing on experiential encounters with art drawn from gender, age and socio-economical specificities.

(e) In terms of pedagogy, to have systematic and continuing data on the resonances of 'how' positive encounters with art affect us is the first step in fortifying

our 'how to' ability to encourage the interaction. The promotion and enjoyment, in terms of what and how we display our cultural objects and aesthetic exemplars, for specific or general audience appreciation, could then be targeted more successfully.

(f) Synergetic discursive supplementation, to expand the concept of appreciation into a robust mediated experience, could be assisted in its design by using the collected clues and cues contained within in the phenomenological responses. Future research to establish pools of such orienteering data may also help within the classroom by acting as informing referents for strategies more attuned to focussing interest and motivation. That is, by linking what was identified phenomenologically by the students to the selection of synergic learning outcomes and delivery strategies, more aggressive student involvement may be established. In other words, the more we see personal relevance in outcomes, the more likely we are to enthusiastically engage in the learning processes to achieve them.

With these thoughts in mind, further on-going explication of the characteristics of positive aesthetic experience in painting (and the explication of characteristics from any aesthetic field which promotes the possibilities of life enhancement through interaction with art-related phenomena) remains a vast and relatively untapped area for qualitative investigation. By contributing further to the body of knowledge in this field, the potential rewards for the researcher, both extrinsically and intrinsically, are great.

While the on-going explication of such characteristics demands considerable academic rigour and long term commitment, the journey can begin, as it did for me, simply by standing before a painting that you love.

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APPENDICES

1. Copy of Information Sheet

Title of PhD Research: *Neglected Knowing: The Aesthetic Experience*
INFORMATION SHEET

Who is conducting the research (Research team)

Dr. Stephen Billett (Chief Research and Primary Supervisor)
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John Tarlton (Student researcher)
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tarltonjb@ozemail.com.au
Phone 3899 0895

Why is the research being conducted (Reason for the research)

The research is being conducted as part of the above student researcher's requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Griffith University, Faculty of Education, School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education.

(Background)

Generally speaking, aesthetic experience can be viewed as those moments in which we participate with phenomena (painting, in this case) where a vivid, heightened and concentrated perception of its sensuous qualities and contextual associations are established within the viewer. Some contend that the characteristics of such an experience include feelings of distancing from one's surroundings and a state of wholeness. Others characterise the aesthetic experience as creating sensations of *déjà vu* or transcendence. Theoretically, traditional essentialist stances see the aesthetic experience as emanating from the object itself. That is, the visual qualities of the object set off our responses. Postmodernist aesthetics contend that the experience is a result of context, that we read and understand a work of art through our individual and group social, political, and cultural vocabularies.

(Aim)

The aim of this research is to explore the phenomenological responses of four content experts in fine art painting in an attempt to observe characteristics of aesthetic experience as they see and experience them. Underlying these responses will be questions concerning essentialist or contextualist points of views. By conducting the research, a contribution to the general body of knowledge and research concerning aesthetic experience may be achieved. These characteristics could then be introduced (together with other recognised observations of the characteristics of aesthetic experience) into formulating possible pedagogic approaches to foster more robust art appreciation among student populations. The question which underpins all investigations is:

What are the perceptions and descriptions of the phenomena of aesthetic experience and how can these experiences be observed and explicated?

What you will be asked to do (Project description)

As one of the research participants, you will be required to keep a reflective, autobiographical journal concerning personal experiences and reflections regarding what constitute the aesthetic experience. This will include both discursive and non discursive entries. The keeping of the journal will be for a period of three months.

In addition, you will be required to select a contemporary or historical painting with which you have

had an aesthetic experience (reflections to be included in journal).

Written responses and tape recorded interviews (approximately one hour duration) of those personal responses to the paintings will be conducted.

Two further, recorded interviews and additional written reflective responses to aspects of aesthetic experience will be entered into. In addition, personal responses to two sets of questions concerning the aesthetic experience will be undertaken.

After each data gathering exercise has been analysed by the researcher, all participants will assemble and participate as a group (community of inquiry) in informal surroundings in order to compare, contrast, amend and verify the accuracy of the accounts. Approximate duration of each group activity is two hours.

Initial considerations for selection of paintings

The initial conceptual consideration for this dissertation will take into account Wertz's (1956) contention that any attempt to formulate a definition of what constitutes art [and its experiences] through the establishment of prerequisite properties (e.g. form, emotion, cognitive, intuitive presences and so on) is inadequate to the challenge of addressing the openness inherent in contemporary art practices (Wertz, 1956).

It will also take into account Wertz's (1956) and Eisner's (2001) contentions that art must be seen as an ongoing, open concept where the introduction of new cases and conditions require the continuous expansion or alteration of the art concept itself (Wertz, 1956; Eisner, 2001). That is, creative manipulation of new technologies, media and purposes or the alteration of traditional modes of representation (as they present themselves) must be recognised within that which is deemed art. Following Wertz's (1956) and Eisner's (2001) leads, the expansion of what then might constitute a 'painting' for a research participant (whether it be traditional oil on canvas, more unorthodox embellishments of collage, montage, low relief sculpture, imagery generated by computer or objects from visual culture not traditionally associated with fine art painting) will be left to your own discretion.

The basis on which participants will be selected or screened (Screening/exclusion/inclusion)

Your selection for this research is by researcher invitation. Guidelines for selection included your experience and mutual interest in exploring the characteristics of aesthetic experience, content expertise in the field of painting and the ability to articulate those experiences.

The expected benefits of the research

There is no direct benefit for you other than in contributing to the body of knowledge concerning the aesthetic experience in painting.

Risks to you

There are no physical, social, legal, psychological or other risks associated with this research. Your participation is voluntary and you may terminate your association with the research at any time.

Your confidentiality

You have agreed to be identified with this research project and its dissemination for the purpose of dissertation submission. In addition, refer **privacy statement** below.

(Feedback) Your active participation in all research stages is anticipated. During the research period accuracy of data will be checked by the participant after each collection process before further data collecting processes are initiated. Progressive and periodic participant authorisation (as well as review of final dissertation manuscript) will be actioned.

Your participation is voluntary

You will be free to withdraw your participation in the research at any time.

Further questions

Please feel free to contact the researcher with any further questions in relation to the proposed research. Any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical conduct of this project can be lodged in the first instance with an independent contact person. That person being:

The Manager
Research Ethics,
Office for Research,
Bray Centre,
Nathan Campus, Griffith University
(phone) 3875- 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Privacy statement

VERSION TWO- ANTICIPATED DISCLOSURE

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal

information. As outlined elsewhere in this information sheet, your identified personal information may be reported to Griffith University for submission of the doctoral manuscript. Other than this disclosure, the information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3875 5585.

2. Copy of Expression of Consent

EXPRESSION OF CONSENT

Title of PhD Research: *Neglected Knowing: The Aesthetic Experience*

Research team

Dr. Stephen Billett (Research and Primary Supervisor)
Dip.T, BA, MEd St., PhD
Associate Professor
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School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education
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Dr. Glenda Nalder (Supervisor)
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Griffith University

John Tarlton (Student researcher)
BA, BTrain, MA, MEd
tarltonjb@ozemail.com.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular that:

I understand that my involvement in this research will include:

The keeping of a autobiographical reflective journal concerning the phenomena of aesthetic experience (for a time period of three months);

The selection and reflection on a painting which in the past has elicited an aesthetic experience;

Participate in three tape recorded interviews and two sets of written questions concerning the aesthetic experience;

Participation in a community of inquiry concerning the aesthetic experience (two hour durations);

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

I understand that there are no physical, social, legal, psychological or other risks involved;

I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;

I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;

I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3875 5585 (or [research-ethics@ Griffith.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@Griffith.edu.au)) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

I agree to participate and be identified in the project.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Please return this expression of consent to the student researcher as listed below:

John Tarlton
74 Camelia Street, Cannon Hill, Brisbane, Qld. 4170

3. GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

20-Jun-2005

Dear Mr Tarlton

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "Neglected Knowing: The Aesthetic Experience" (GU Ref No: VTA/08/05/HREC).

The additional information was considered by Office for Research.

This is to confirm that this response has addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: 3875 5585
fax: 3875 7994
email: g.allen@griffith.edu.au
web:

Cc:

PRIVILEGED, PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

(1) This email and any files transmitted with it are intended solely for the use of the addressee(s) and may contain information which is confidential or privileged. If you receive this email and you are not the addressee(s) [or responsible for delivery of the email to the addressee(s)], please disregard the contents of the email, delete the email and notify the author immediately.

4. ABBREVIATED QUALIFICATIONS OF SCHOLARS PRESENTED IN CHAPTER SIX

Monroe Beardsley, the author of *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, which is considered an important and influential work in philosophical aesthetics.

Harold Osborne, an influential writer on aesthetics and founder and past editor of the *British Journal of Aesthetics*. His book, *The Art of Appreciation*, is considered an excellent resource for defining the concept of appreciation within the field of aesthetics (Smith, 1971).

Mahaly Csikszentmihalyi (in association with **Rick Robinson**), Professor of psychology and management, Drucker School of Management and Director of the Quality of Life Research Center, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, California. (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson are the authors of *The Art of Seeing* (1990), in which they researched the interpretations of the aesthetic responses of fifty-two museum professionals).

Gerald Knieter, Professor of Music at California State University at Northridge and influential writer on aesthetics.

David Hargreaves, Educator and Professor at the University of Surrey, Roehampton.

Rod Taylor, Art educator and Director of Drumcroon Art Educational Centre. (Both Taylor and Hargreaves worked together in the formative stages of the Critical Studies in Art Education (CSAE) initiative in Britain. A primary investigative aim of CSAE, through case study approaches, was to develop and foster student understanding and involvement with art appreciation).