

Artist, Art-Educator and Reflective Inquiry:  
A phenomenological research that investigates  
creative and pedagogical experiences

Vincenza Caldareri

A Thesis

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of

Art Education

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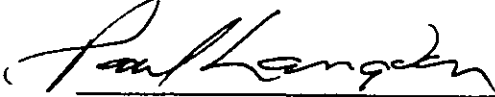
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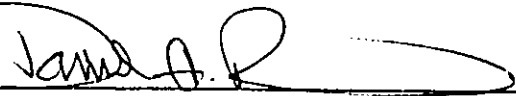
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## ABSTRACT

Artist, Art-Educator and Reflective Inquiry:  
a phenomenological research that investigates creative and pedagogical  
experiences

Vincenza Caldareri

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This thesis is based on the assumption that there are significant relationships between my art making process and my art teaching practice. While I am able to implicitly incorporate my feelings and intuition as subjective experiences within my holistic sense of my "self", I am using the systematic and disciplined process of reflective inquiry to make the relationships explicit - that is, to document them, describe them, and make them consciously available for communication and analysis by me and by readers of the thesis. Through self-reflection, I explore how my inner, private meanings are manifested in my outer, public practices as an artist and as a teacher, and see how they can be a resource for other art educators.

In presenting my research I adopted David Kolb's model of experiential learning as a frame that I applied to my experiences as an artist and as a teacher. This model, described as a "four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes - concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation" (Kolb 1984, p. 40), helped me to understand and structure my inquiry.

Through description of my art-making practices and reflective introspection, I integrated practical and theoretical orientations within myself as an artist. In the art classroom, I adopted participant observation and action research strategies for my research. The data from the studio was in the form of a journal/diary, along with the actual art products. I have included photographs to show to the reader some of the images I produced. My data from the classroom was in the form of audio tapes, a videoc tape, log/reflection/diary, and photographs of student's art-work. I then used methods of qualitative research to analyse the data and to discern the relationships that emerged from both collections of data.

For me teaching is a life-long process of learning, just as in the creative process there must be a constant evolution. In order for the art-educator to evolve, he/she has to practice creative activity.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

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#### Autobiographical Grounding of the Research

As an undergraduate student in University, I studied fine arts. I also took art education courses. I believed that by going into teaching as a profession, I could not only maintain a link with the creative aspects inherent in the subject of art while earning a living, but also help fulfil my own needs and interests in the subject of art while stimulating inventiveness and creativity in my students.

I soon found out that teaching students art was a discipline that took a great deal of time, patience and energy. For many years, contrary to my aspirations to draw or to paint, I did not produce any images myself. Rather, my creative outlet was designing and executing classes that stimulated the students' creativity.

A few years ago I came across an article in School Arts Magazine (1987) that surveyed the relationship between the artist and the art educator. I recall that, at the time, the survey confirmed my notion that the self-perception of the

art teacher as artist allowed him/her to be a better animator or facilitator<sup>1</sup> in the art classroom. At that same time, the art program at the school where I teach was extended to include an optional course in art for seniors, in addition to regular required secondary I and II classes. The students in that senior option class were so motivated to learn, to experience, to create about, with and through art, that I was "re-energised" to get back to my own visual art work. After all, it was the subject of art with its creative and expressive components that had drawn me into the profession of teaching art.

Although I tried to allot time in my schedule for creative activity, I found it very difficult to incorporate art-making as a regular activity. I went to the university to inquire about a program I could register in that would allow me to take studio courses once again.

I enrolled in the Masters of Arts program in Art Education at Concordia University as a part time student. My first studio course permitted me to once again express and communicate my ideas and concerns in a visual way. Since I continued to work as a teacher, I soon realised that my involvement in my own creative process began to affect my teaching. I became more and more aware of the highly imaginative and/or emotional aspects of artistic expression which

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<sup>1</sup> An animator or facilitator in this context, and in this research, is a person who helps the student to grow and develop a visual language and an awareness of emotions in a visual way. In addition, the animator acts as the medium for effecting change in the student by intervening in specific ways. As an animator in the art classroom, I act as the connecting link between the student and art; between the art object and the viewer; between the subject i.e. art, and object i.e. the art product, made by the student. To be a better animator as the teacher implies an improvement in the quality of educating.

convey deep feelings, thoughts and visions in the form of images, and how these cultivate and support aspects of teaching. As I enrolled in additional courses in art education I began to examine my experiences as teacher and as artist. I became convinced that there were significant relationships between the two processes.

I gradually sensed that it was necessary to practice creativity in order to understand my students' work better. Doing that, I sensed that transferring and talking about real creative experiences with my students instead of teaching art strictly from a theoretical point of view, made my teaching more valid educationally. I deduced that the process I went through in creating an art work gave me direct insight into what my students went through as they also created their own art work.

Well into my own study program at university, as part of a pilot project for one of my research methods courses, I did a case study which focused on the concept of artist/art-educator. In that study I used content - and comparative - analysis, as well as time sampling (Stokrocki 1986) to examine the process I used in creating a work of art in order to see if and how this process influenced my art-education practice. A time sampling of two successive creative processes revealed how my mood and disposition influenced the decisions I made in the development of my works of art. A time sampling of two different art class sessions with some of my secondary I students revealed specific student-

centred characteristics in my teaching practice. In that study I also used participant observation and self-reflective methods of research, field notes, video, and transcripts of my teaching process. I used journal entries about the technical and material means of my creative process, including documentation of the sensory data, feelings, intuitions, and imagination involved therein.

Some generalisations<sup>2</sup> came out of the pilot research project. In outlining a description of my process as I created an image (that is, the thoughts, ideas, feelings and content as well as my choice of materials, design elements and art principles), I realised that the visual components I developed in the process were a structural metaphor for my teaching practice within a social context, that is, my class within the school.

In the painting below (see fig. #1), the image of an inner "nucleus" within an outer landscape contains excitement, fury, and agitation, interwoven in intricate "sweeps", rich and abundant. Outside the nucleus, the setting of the landscape is tranquil yet eerie; calm yet agitated; smooth yet bumpy; acceptable and manageable yet "fiery"; a sense of an "explosion" is confined in order for the relationship between the nucleus and the landscape to be bearable, acceptable, and manageable.

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<sup>2</sup> Generalisations in this case were the observable similarities in the elements discovered within each domain, (i.e. the studio practice and the teaching practice) which were used to understand both processes.



(fig. #1)

My interpretations of this work, as I wrote them in my journal corresponded to my intense feelings about how I saw my art class within the school context. The nucleus represents my class and the landscape represents the school. Within the class there is a perception of dynamic activity, stress, emotional involvement and even competition. Outside, the landscape is perceived as a container that forms the boundaries for the nucleus. In the school where I teach, "academics" were classified as the "important" subjects, the subjects that "count". (For many years, art courses did not "count" in the student grade point average.) In my view a lot of very valid educational activity - i.e. learning, creating and interacting was going on between the students and

me, and between the students and their art work. I interpreted the images as a process by which the intense activity in the class was not recognised as "valid" by the school administrators to include the art course in the students' grade point average. The painting did not describe an external reality but rather, as an assembly of personal visual elements, my unique vision of reality. The painting arranges elements according to a personal point of view, preserving and (hopefully) giving a content with recognisable meaning.

Other artifacts and additional data that I collected from preliminary inquiries in my research methods course contributed to some understanding of the complexities involved in my art making and my teaching. Both required an understanding of the perceptual organisations<sup>3</sup> involved in describing and analysing my intentions, motives, and effectiveness as artist and as teacher. I identified both as processes that influenced each other. I later found that my framework for understanding teaching, students and the aim and content of teaching from converging perceptual patterns was attainable through reflective inquiry. These findings were exploratory and dealt with the totality of my "self", in as much as I am an artist and an art teacher. Through my added role as researcher, (to that of artist and my role as art educator), reflecting on the practices, I began to question and more clearly identify these roles.

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<sup>3</sup> "Perceptual organisations refers to an instructor's framework for understanding his/her teaching, students, and the aim and content of teaching from converging perceptual patterns." (Schmidt, 1979, as quoted by Stokrocki 1986, p. 83)

As I continued to gather data and analyse what I was doing both in the studio and in the classroom I found that my own art making process allowed me to see how closely it related to my teaching practice. Because of that study, I gradually and more concretely sensed that it was necessary for me to practice creative activity in order to understand my students' work better. I also sensed that I was better able to transfer and talk about real creative experiences with my students and could empathise with them in their creative process. More and more I came to realise that I was not teaching art purely from a theoretical point of view, but from the experience of creating art myself.

An article by Parker J. Palmer "Good Teaching: A Matter of Living the Mystery", (Teaching Excellence Vol. 3, No. 3, 1991-1992), provided for me a connection that helped me to determine this autobiographical relationship.

In his article , Palmer declares that

Good teaching is an act of generosity, a whim of the wanton muse, a craft that *may* grow with practice, and always a risky business. ( p. 1)

Palmer shares some reflections on the mystery of good classroom teaching by naming some challenges and suggesting some responses, "without treating it as a problem to be solved". He identifies an *Autobiographical Connection*:

... it is important to get students inside a subject, it is equally important to get the subject inside the student. Objectivism, with its commitment to holding

subjectivity at bay, employs a pedagogy that purposely bypasses the learner's life story. Objectivism regards autobiography as biased and parochial and hopes to replace it with "universal truth" as told through a particular discipline. (p. 1)

For me, subjectivity incorporates autobiography. I am very aware that I am researching my own practice with all the subjective implications inherent in such a process, yet that subjectivity provides an awareness and understanding that helps me to offer to the students something from my lived experiences in the studio. While I am doing my research my awareness about my own subjectivity allows me to realise that the student's own experiences, background and culture also affect his/her learning.

Palmer continues:

... of course, everyone's story is, in part, parochial and biased. But when we deal with the fact that by ignoring autobiography, we create educated monsters who know about the world's external workings but little about their inner selves. The authentically educated person is one who can both embrace and transcend the particular of his or her story because it has been triangulated many times from the standpoints of other stories and other disciplines - a process that enriches the disciplines as well. ( p. 2)

According to Palmer,



By intersecting knowledge and autobiography we not only encourage intellectual humility and offer students self-understanding, we also make it more likely that the subject will be learned. ... curiosity about the self can empower curiosity about the world.  
( p. 2)

These ideas echo my belief in personal creative activity as essential to the characteristics of the art-educator. At the same time my experiences can be shared and can provide a model for the student in his/her own learning process.

In *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (1991-1992) specifically illustrates a link between creative activity and art teaching practice.

Good teaching requires courage - the courage to expose one's ignorance as well as insight, to invite contradiction as well as consent, to yield some control in order to empower the group, to evoke other people's lives as well as reveal one's own. ( p. 2)

### Research Focus

This thesis arose out of my teaching practice, especially from wanting to become a better animator and facilitator between the subject of art and my art students. In my pilot project I realised that my creative activity in the studio significantly influenced my role as an art-educator and contributed to fulfilling

some objectives in the classroom<sup>4</sup> . My resolve for this research is partially for self-improvement,<sup>5</sup> but mainly it is about questioning, becoming conscious, realising what it is and how it is, to what degree and why, one practice informs the other with the focus to improve my professional knowledge.

In this thesis I want to determine how my art making process and my art teaching practice nurture each other. I have often questioned my abilities in the classroom, despite the fact that I have taught art for many years. At times, my insecurities overwhelm me and I want to give it all up. But when reason takes over the emotions, I trudge on and continue my search for self improvement. Am I making any difference in the lives of these children/students? Am I maturing as an adult/teacher or just burning out? How am I fulfilling my professional commitments within the educational structure where I work?

Although these questions lurk in my mind, my concerns for this thesis are more modest. First I will identify and describe who I am as artist and as art-educator. Then I shall investigate the relationships that exist between both activities and concentrate on the insights that I acquire to improve my role as art-educator.

As I indicated before, the feedback from my students' reactions triggered

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<sup>4</sup> As an art educator, I wanted to empower my students. My aim was to foster self-awareness and self-confidence, to promote observational skills, to help them communicate through an art work, and to find relationships between art and life.

<sup>5</sup> As a teacher I am trying to be the best that I can be for my students on their road to acquiring knowledge.

in me a need to go back to the studio and do my own art work. During my pilot project, I discovered that what happened in my creative process in turn had a constructive influence on my teaching. The process of reflecting on my experiences in the studio and in the classroom provided the links that revealed the relationships between creative activity and art-teaching.

In order to explore and identify the relationships that exist between my creative process and my teaching practice, I shall trace the history of reflective inquiry and its use within the discipline of art education and discuss how it has helped my research. In addition, I shall describe in depth the aspects of my creative activity and my role as art-educator, basing these descriptions on the data I collected for this research. Then I shall connect my self-reflection to the ideas and work of other art-educators who also believe that the practice of their art improved the quality of their teaching.

### Key Elements that Form the Thesis

There are three elements that form my thesis. These elements are artist, art-educator and reflective inquiry. In this thesis I will refer to myself as an artist, that is, someone who engages in a particular form of creative activity such as painting or sculpting. For me, the term "Artist" (with a capital A) refers to someone who has committed him/herself to a lifetime profession and usually that classification happens after a successful career in the creative arts. An

artist, (with a minuscule a) on the other hand, is a more realistic description of my current position: I express myself visually through my work of art.

I will also refer to myself as an art-educator, that is, one who teaches the subject of art in school, including the historical, expressive, aesthetic and technical components of the discipline. As an art-educator, my background is in the fine arts with pedagogical training.

The third element is reflective inquiry. Reflective inquiry, as I use the term in this thesis, is a mental process that is made up of close observation, analysis and evaluation. I use this mental process as a tool to determine what I do at any given point, as well as what changes I make in order to arrive at a successful conclusion. This process also enables me to trace how my creative process relates to and influences my teaching practice. Reflecting on my practice as it happens makes me conscious of my every move and my every response. Reflecting on the sensitivities, creativity, and skills inherent in my creative activity helps me to expand the dimension of my role as a professional animator and facilitator in my social practice of teaching.

#### Rationale for this Study

In his doctoral dissertation "Exploring a Diversity of Artistic Approaches Through a Studio Continuum", Paleologos (1976) concludes that his studio process gave him the insight that "artistic truths emanate from within not

legislated from without" [sic] (p. 4). From this conclusion, he was able to formulate some suppositions for his classroom experiences with his students, where he

... developed a more nurturant methodology for discussion and criticism whereby dialogue about art was shared across student and teacher lines, removing the bonds of formal analysis and encouraging individual interpretations. (Paleologos 1976, p. 5)

In my own experience as an art-educator<sup>6</sup>, the goal of curricula that exist in today's schools is not to train artists. These curricula respond to a broader spectrum of goals as defined, valued and understood by art educators that are involved in creative activity and trained as pedagogues. Capet (1986) confirms that there is a need to study the art teacher and art teaching (especially as it is different and unique among school subjects). According to Capet, what goes on in an art classroom is directed towards divergent thinking. Unlike some other subjects, there is more than one solution to any given situation (Capet 1986, p. 2- 3)

... art instructors work without a standardised curriculum, without a text, without formal evaluation tools, and without the benefit of scholarly research into the act of teaching. In spite of these drawbacks, they create programs and learning situations. (p. 3)

In presenting his thesis, Capet questions: "What is unique in art teachers

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<sup>6</sup> I have taught Arts Plastiques for sixteen years. I shall refer to curriculum goals and objectives as set forth by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, later on in this thesis.

that permit them to accept and function in a situation that would bring a teacher in another discipline, to a halt?" (p. 3) Capet confirms that "the systematic study of art education", that is, how art is taught in the classroom, is an area of study that remains untouched (p. 1). He draws on Eisner (1974) and Chapman (1975), to support his notion that there is a need for describing the achievements in art education "... so that people can begin to understand the contributions art educators are making to the educational growth of the student" (Capet 1986, p. 1). Capet demonstrates how the art classroom is different from other learning environments and hence the art teacher must also be unique (p. 3). This idea supports my notion that there is a need to tap into the interactions between myself as an art-educator and the art students in order to better understand "what happens and why" (p. 4) in the art setting.

Since the art classroom is different from other learning environments and the art curricula respond to a broader spectrum of goals, Gardner (1990) proposes a "scheme" of art education that confirms this. For Gardner, the proposed constituents of art education are:

1. competence in artistic production (at least one medium)
2. skills in looking at works of art (masters, contemporaries, peers, their own)
3. understanding of the artistic process
4. knowledge that is rooted in the historical, philosophical, and cultural traditions of art in their

society. (Gardner 1990, p. 39 - 41)

It is my contention that there is a need to describe and analyse the achievements made in art education in order to find out how one process (creative activity in the studio) animates and facilitates the other process (teaching in the classroom). Housman has stated

... there are many of the elements of artistic behaviour involved in teaching: conceiving, structuring, organising, presenting, responding, evaluating - in short, the good teacher must engage in significantly creative and qualitatively oriented behaviour as part of his (her) function in the classroom. In a similar manner ... the depth of experience and personal insights of the artist provides an essential resource for communication about the creative processes in making art. (Housman 1967, p. 13)

It is in this light that I propose that the person who practices creative activity and also teaches can respond to the broader spectrum of goals existing in today's school curricula in art education.

### Theoretical Background

David Kolb's model for experiential learning has provided me with a framework for this reflective inquiry. This model, in the form of a cycle, begins by looking at concrete experiences. Reflective observation of the concrete experiences help determine abstract conceptualisations which in turn lead to active experimentation.

Experiential learning theory offers a fundamentally different view of the learning process from that of the behavioural theories of learning based on an empirical epistemology or the more implicit theories of learning that underlie traditional educational methods, methods that for the most part are based on a rational, idealist epistemology. From this different perspective emerge some very different prescriptions for the conduct of education, the proper relationships among learning, work, and other life activities, and the creation of knowledge itself.

This ... theory ... emphasises the central role that experiences plays in the learning process ... it combines (in a holistic integrative perspective) experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour.  
(Kolb 1984, p. 20 - 21)

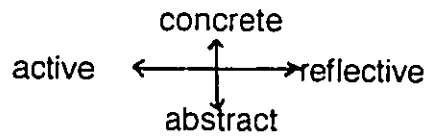
Reflecting on my experiences in the studio and in the classroom has helped me to make conceptual interpretations as well as "identify tangible felt qualities of my immediate experiences" (Kolb 1984, p. 41). Reflecting on the interpretations in effect led me to make changes in both processes, as well as to experiment and transform what I was doing, thus improving my practices.

Kolb refers to this learning process as two separate dialectics: the abstract/concrete dialectic and active/reflective dialectic

... the abstract/concrete dialectic is one of *prehension*, representing two different and opposed processes of grasping or taking hold of experience in the world - either through reliance on conceptual interpretation

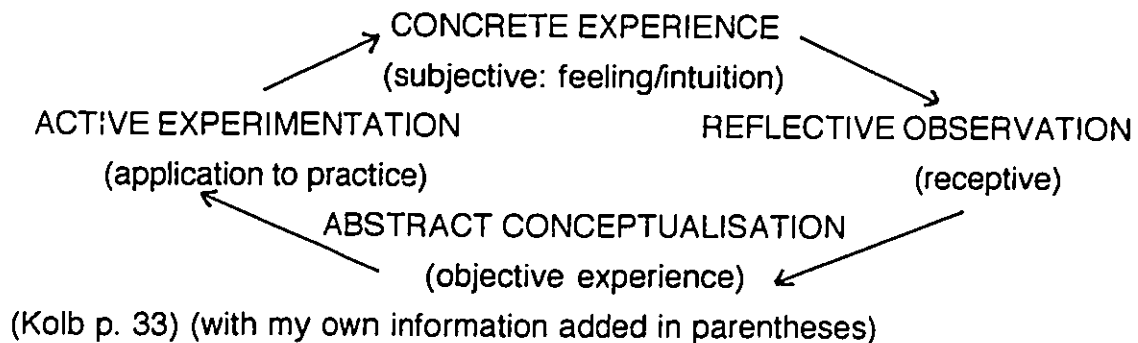


and symbolic representation, a process I will call *comprehension*, or through reliance on the tangible, felt qualities of immediate experience, what I will call *apprehension*. The active/reflective dialectic, on the other hand, is one of *transformation*, representing two opposed ways of transforming that grasp of "figurative representation" of experience - either through internal reflection, a process I will call *intention*, or active external manipulation of the external world, here called *extension*. (Kolb p. 41)



(my diagram)

Kolb's model of Experiential Learning offers a structure whereby I look at my experiences, then reflect on them and analyse them in order to apply the findings to my work in the studio and in the classroom. Because this structure affects my creative process and my teaching practice, it in turn alters my experiences; thus the cycle begins again.



## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

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#### Methodology

I have used phenomenological description and reflective introspection to document and analyse both my creative activity and my teaching practice. Other educators have also used self-reflection and phenomenological methods to study their own teaching practice. Paleologos (1976) used similar methods "to define the method of perceiving and carving descriptive meanings out of a series of events" (p. 16). Paleologos refers to Beittel to support his use of this methodology:

Phenomenological description and reflective introspection can join together in providing the richest possible basis for analysis according to the contextualist theory<sup>7</sup>. (Paleologos 1976, p. 196)

Capet (1986) gives a phenomenological account of himself as art teacher-researcher. In addition to the systematic observation of the events in the class, Capet also uses self-examination to explore his day-to-day functioning as an art

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<sup>7</sup> Beittel, Kenneth R. (1973). Alternatives for Art Education Research: inquiry into the making of art. Dubuque, Iowa: C. Brown Company Publishers.

teacher over a one-year period. In a similar fashion, he also records and reflects upon his own art making experience.

Although I have used phenomenological description to record my art teaching experience and my studio experiences, I concur with Beittel who states that "I am not prepared to write with any confidence about phenomenology". (Beittel 1973, p. 25) I will, however, use his definition of phenomenology: "... the experiential, the qualitative account of phenomena, wherein knower and known are both essential parts of the equation of knowledge." ( p. 125)

In using phenomenological accounts and reflective introspection as a research methodology, Bristol refers to Beittel, as well as Bersson (1972) and Eisner (1974, 76) as advocates of qualitative research and participant observation for art educators; "... for they would be an actual participant in and observer of their own program". (Bristol 1981, p. 10)

### Reflective Inquiry: Origin and Background

My library research for a definition of reflective inquiry or self-reflection revealed its wide use in current teacher education literature and teacher-training. Briefly, reflective inquiry, also known as self-reflection, is a systematic process of looking at a sequence of actions or experiences, describing and outlining the events as they happened, recording what went on, recording the changes that were made in the process, and recording what the outcomes of

the interactive experiences were. In the disciplined process of reflective inquiry, the process of looking back, describing and analysing what is going on, and making changes continues until a satisfactory answer or result is found.

Calderhead (1989) traces several definitions of reflection derived from various key theorists.

Dewey's (1933) concept of reflection ... (is) defined broadly as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends". ... Dewey suggested that the development of reflection involved the acquisition of certain attitudes (e.g. of open-mindedness) and skills of thinking (e.g. reasoning and ordering thought). (Calderhead 1989, p. 43-44)

Calderhead refers to Donald Schon (1983, 1987) as a more recent theorist who has stimulated much interest in teacher education with his concept of "reflection-in-action".

Professionals can frame and reframe a problem as they work on it, testing out their interpretations and solutions combining both reflection and action. "Reflection-in-action" is a reflective conversation with the materials of a situation ... it is viewed as the exercise of interactive, interpretive skills, in the analysis and solution of complex and ambiguous problems. (Calderhead 1989, p. 44)

Prior to the use of the term reflection, "self-analysis" typified an equivalent

concept. In the process that I used for collecting my data in the classroom, I wrote down my recollections of the events as they happened, as well as the thought processes that I recalled as the events developed. In an example of a field study conducted by Bristol (1981), she used self-analysis as a method of supervision and evaluation in art education. In her doctoral dissertation, Bristol defines self-analysis as a process (used by student teachers in her research), where the subjects "observed and reacted to developments as they happened" (Bristol 1981, p. 39) in the classroom. In due course, this process became a

... routine that (the student teachers) analysed, reacted, and changed gears as things occurred daily.  
... It was and included, looking back ... analysing what occurred, seeing what was occurring at the moment, and making changes accordingly.  
(Bristol,1981, p. 39)

Bristol supports the use of this process of self-analysis as an appropriate method to use particularly in supervising student teachers in art education because of the similarities to methods of evaluation used in art. To affirm this point, Bristol refers to Feldman's (1973) and Eisner's (1974) steps for evaluating art: description or identification, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. (Bristol 1981, p. 48-49)

In my work in the studio and in the classroom, the process of reflective inquiry has allowed me to look at my experiences and make conceptualisations

in order to determine possible solutions. Then select the best solution and apply it to either the painting on the canvas or the students in the classroom. The descriptions of the two experiences allow me to make the conceptualisations in order to affect active experimentation. The criteria established are based on the subjective observations and the intuitive conclusions that result.

Teacher-training programs are not the only ones employing reflective practice. In the editorial that presents various essays on the Quality in Teaching: Arguments for a Reflective Profession, Carr (1989) presents the image of professional teachers systematically improving the quality of their teaching on the basis of their own research. This research-based approach to teaching employs action research.

From the action research perspective, teachers develop professionally by collecting and analysing "data" about their own practice and reflecting on how to make their teaching more consistent with their educational values and beliefs. In my own process of viewing my experiences in the art classroom, I was able to systematically look at my actions reflect on them, and amend them when necessary, in order to implement the changes.

In her essay, Carr also refers to Schon (Carr 1989, p. 28) when he describes "reflection-in-action" as a process developed by professionals to deal with problematic situations. When a situation develops that the existing

professionals' knowledge is no longer adequate, the professional resorts to "reflection-on-action", questioning the structure of knowing, making certain changes until the problematic is resolved. In my own teaching practice this "reflection-on-action" has become a systematic process inherent in the everyday routine of teaching.

In my view reflective inquiry is closely linked to the process used by the artist in the studio and the art-educator in the classroom because they have parallel characteristics. As early as 1968, Kenneth Beittel points to the similarities in the methodology of not only creating art, but also evaluating art, and self-reflection. In a conference address, Beittel (1968) presents the particular personality traits of the creative person.

As a creative person himself, Beittel's experiences in making art allow him to "reformulate" decisions made by self-reflection which he labels a "series of cyclic reformulations brought about by self-reflective feedback" (Beittel 1968, p. 1). In the process that he presents, analysis, reaction, and change are simultaneously implemented. As I noted above, Bristol (1981) parallels the characteristics of self-reflection in teacher-training programs to the steps for looking at, and evaluating art developed by Feldman (1973) and Eisner (1974). These steps are similar to Beittel's "cyclic reformulations" used when creating an art work.

Similar to Beittel, my own data suggests a continuous interplay of

formulations of decisions as I produce a visual work. Just as Carr has suggested in his teacher training programs, I use reflective inquiry to assess my own qualities in teaching. In this thesis, reflective inquiry is the entity that I use as a tool which has helped me to explore and determine the relationships between my experiences as an artist and my experiences as a teacher.

In my creative process, I use reflective inquiry by outlining and describing what it is that I want to say visually; the ideas, emotions and opinions I want to express, deciding what is the best way to express them and with what materials. Then, as the work progresses, I also record the decisions that I make at any given point and try to understand why I made those decisions. I proceed to analyse the flow of thought and action that I recorded to understand how the creative process happens for me, until the art work is completed. Because of reflective inquiry, the understanding I obtained in the studio helps me to guide the student in the class.

I also use reflective inquiry to understand my teaching practice. In this thesis I recount what I do in the classroom and the results that I get. The process of reflection allows me to go back over the results in order that I make the necessary changes to make sure that every student understood the concept that I present at any given point. While I am teaching, my understanding of my creative process helps me to improve my teaching practice while at the same time helps me to better understand the students' processes of creating.



### Description of Settings

My studio environment was a modest room comprising a work table and an easel. I had a large window that overlooked a quiet residential street. My tools were drawing instruments and papers as well as oil paints and canvas. Occasionally I would work in a studio space in the University when I needed a larger area than what I had in my studio, or when I was doing printing. I had a black sketch book in which I could record my ideas, plans and reflections.

In the school where I teach, an old "gym locker room" was divided in two and converted into an art room and computer lab. The "art room" had one sink in the back with kitchen-like counter and lower cupboards to hold supplies. Metal shelves were installed along a second wall with two metal cabinets to store more supplies, student work in progress, any resource/educational publications, and my samples of student work. A third wall had two large windows and the exit door to the classroom which linked to the cafeteria and an adjacent outer door. The fourth wall had a blackboard that extended almost its entire length. There was a five foot wide wall space that remained beside the blackboard which allowed me to have a tintest peg board installed as my only display area. Tables and chairs comprised the furniture to accommodate twenty seven students in a surface of twenty six feet by thirty feet of space.

My students range in age between twelve and seventeen, equally split between males and females. They come from thirty two ethnic backgrounds:

many are what we call "101"<sup>8</sup> students, recent immigrants speaking a language other than French or English at home. In secondary I and II, I teach the art course in French. In secondary V, I teach the course in English.

### Procedure

In the studio I kept journals of my thought process in preparation for art work, my ideas as the work progressed, and my reactions to my work after completion. The journal entries incorporated technical information as well as sensory data, feelings, intuition and imagination. I took pictures of some of the works while they were in progress and when they were completed. Very often I also wrote poems that helped me to synthesise my thoughts in relation to the work.

I kept a journal of my experiences in the classroom and used field notes, audios, photographs, sound tapes and transcripts of my interactions with the students in the class over a period of one term. I obtained verbal agreement from my students to use the photographs which appear in this thesis.

In order to identify the characteristics inherent in the essential nature of each practice, I will present the parameters in my creative process and in my classroom practice in the chapters that follow. Through reflective inquiry I will tap into the personality structures, the styles and the dynamics in the studio

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<sup>8</sup> Students who immigrate to Quebec from other countries are obliged by law, Bill 101, to study in the French language.

between myself as an artist and my work. In the classroom data I will focus on the interactive experience between myself as the teacher and the students, revealing the relationships that emerge.

Being able to access, identify and describe the process I go through in the studio in order to find meaning and significance became particularly trying and at times enlightening. Reflecting on that process brought out meanings and significances that I would not normally be aware of. Similarly my insecurities about finding out what was really happening in my art class almost destroyed my own self-confidence. At one point, what was picked up with the camera in a video tape that I used to document my data revealed an aspect of my teaching and the resultant classroom behaviour from the students that I was not usually privy to observe. Yet I trudged on; I collected my data, and kept focussed on my goal to apply what I find out to the improvement of my teaching.

CHAPTER THREE  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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Library Research

A literature search based on key words artist/teacher and either reflection or self-analysis or both, and on phenomenology, provided a selection of relevant books, articles and periodicals for review. These references offered not only a background for me that helped the maturation of my research topic, but also confirmed the need for my research.

As part of my review, I have selected those references which present an overview of material that sanction and refute the type of research that constitutes my project, based on the artist/art-educator and reflective inquiry.

Artist / Teacher

The notion of artist/teacher has been widely researched. In the 1930's and 1940's the government in the United States initiated programs to bring artists into the classroom. Hans Hoffman, renowned model of an "artist-teacher", was primarily an artist who became a teacher of painting. Hoffman

believed that the teacher of painting must function as a giver of freedom for creativity. The teacher cannot be director, trainer, or indoctrinator. For Hoffman, the teaching of painting appears to be closer to what is technically called instructing.

Instructing involves a kind of conversation, the object of which is to give reasons, weigh evidence, justify, conclude and explain." (Dorothy Seckler, "Can Painting Be Taught?" Art News, March 1951. Quoted in Newbury 1979, p. 60)

In Europe, Paul Klee was also labelled as "master artist-teacher" (Shapiro 1986) but Klee was also an artist first. In Canada, Arthur Lismer, Anne Savage, and Irène Sénécal were all artists without pedagogical training who worked as teachers (Sherman class notes, Arte 612, 1992).

As early as 1968, Jerome Housman referred to the concept of artist-teacher in his article, "The Teacher as Artist and the Artist as Teacher" (Art Education 1968, p. 13-17). For Housman, both teachers and artists "conceive, structure, organise, present, respond to, and evaluate" ( p. 13). Housman points to the fact that although an art teacher can be an artist and be very effective as a teacher, "... persons who are not themselves practising artists can (also) be effective teachers of art" (p. 14). What is important to understand as far as Housman is concerned is that any teaching of art

... must draw its essential content from the very

nature of art itself. ... engaging in manipulative activities ... does not necessarily lead to understandings and insights about art. (Housman 1968, p. 14)

The necessary objectives that the teacher of art seeks to generate in his/her students are to impart knowledge about art, to encourage and foster values and attitudes towards art, and to achieve physical skills and techniques in art. Housman continues to elaborate distinct educational objectives in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor realm, referring to Bloom's Taxonomy of Education Objectives (p. 16).

In contrast, Rogers (1984) presents William P. Weston as an artist as well as an art educator (from the past). Different from the artists-in-the-classroom mentioned above, Rogers relates how Weston received his training in both disciplines in his formative years during the late 1800's and early 1900's, in Western Canada; Weston maintained both professions throughout his life. He made significant contributions to both fields. According to Rogers, Weston was a pioneer and great leader in both art and art education in British Columbia.

At this point I would like to differentiate between the term "artist-teacher" and my proposed term "artist/art-educator". Artist-teacher is a modern term that has been widely used, referring to a trained artist engaged by schools or universities to teach art (most Universities' Visual Art Programs, e.g. Concordia

University, the University of Montreal, U.Q.U.A.M. still employ well known artists to teach their studio classes). These artists do not necessarily have pedagogical training. For me, the artist/art-educator is a more appropriate term. The artist/art-educator is the person who practices creative activity and is trained as an educator; the course of study followed by this person is both in visual arts and in education.

LaChapelle (1991) and Smith (1991) both refer to modernist artists, Philip Guston and Oskar Kokoschka, respectively, who in the 1940's and 1950's were models of professional artists working in the classroom. But because of current beliefs (in the post-modern 1990's) both authors also question the limitations that the artist-in-the-classroom entails for students in today's schools. LaChapelle argues that research is needed to suggest an "alternative model to the professional artist" in today's classroom. Smith argues that the artist must also become educated as a teacher to be worthy of an educational institution's time and money.

Housman has stated that:

... it is the insights and the knowledge about art that is critical for the effective teaching of the subject. It is the teacher who structures the ways and means for dealing with the "how, what, and why" of art instruction. ... The structure of teaching art ... must be done with a sense for a larger body of knowledge and understanding about art itself. The concept of

what constitutes an "artistic" problem --- its limitations and possibilities --- is central to what is to be taught. ... By educating students to be more sensitive to and knowledgeable about their visual world, we will provide a key avenue for dealing with the future. (Housman 1967, p. 17)

From this stance, I concur with Housman and emphasise my use of the term artist/art-educator to refer to the person who can provide the "key avenue" towards this pursuit. Although one does not have to be an artist to be an "effective" teacher of art according to some viewpoints, in my opinion, being both an artist and a pedagogue allows the creative process to support and facilitate teaching and it brings more real practical experience to the craft of teaching.

In his work in teacher-training programs in art education at Concordia University, Stanley Horner (1990) has helped to redefine the term artist-teacher. He uses a "revised syntax" artist/educator to refer to the person in this dual role as both an artist and a pedagogue. Because of his work (in teacher-training) he confirms the necessity for being educated in fine arts as well as training in art education. Horner's view of this dual role is reflected in the Art Education Department in which he taught for most of his career. My own experience in the Department of Art Education at Concordia University reflects this approach.

In presenting and comparing "Two Images of Art Teachers' Beliefs and



Practices", Bullock and Galbraith (1992) confirm the use of the teacher's own "art-in-progress" or "finished" pieces (of art work) in the classroom. They also confirm the importance that art plays in the teacher's own lives. Art production is an integral part of the art-teacher's characteristics. This study shows concrete examples of "exemplar role models", both as artists in the studio and as teachers in the classroom.

#### Discussion: Artist/Art-Educator

Often the teacher gets so wrapped up and overwhelmed with teaching that he/she does not have "time" left to pursue his/her own artistic endeavours (be they professional, avocational or amateur). Horner cited this as a constant complaint of the art teacher (Horner 1990, p. 29).

A survey in School Arts (Kurt Bittle, 1987) indicates that after ten years of teaching only 10% of all art teachers continue to be "vigorously" active artists <sup>9</sup>. The question that this survey raises is how can the art teacher

... relate new experiences, adventures in perception, innovative skills and techniques or concepts of image making (to students) if she (he) is not informed by her (his) own visual activities? (Bittle 1987, p. 21)

A "Teacher Viewpoint Survey" conducted in 1990 by Chapman and

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<sup>9</sup> Although the citation does not define the term "vigorously", I take it to mean that the remaining 90% of art teachers do little if any personal studio work outside of the art classroom

Newton (School Arts September 1990, p. 41-45) found that over 50% of the teachers surveyed indicate that "it is valuable for art teachers to also be practising artists" (p. 41). This survey also found that about 45% of the teachers surveyed have created, but not exhibited, work and over one third had exhibited in juried or invitational shows over a three year period.

Laurie Ball (January 1990) cannot separate the artist "within" from the art teacher "without". Where the artist "strives to remain creative, autonomous and individual", however, the teacher on the other hand needs to be "... outgoing, analytical, and confident, ... focused on the needs of others." (p. 54) Where the artist "introspects", the teacher must "... evaluate art, student behaviour; he (she) must teach and verbalise the internal processes of the artist" (p. 54). She reinforces the importance of not "losing touch" with the artist within her:

I don't believe I can be an effective teacher if I am not also in tune with my own artistic myth. The qualities of the artist within need to be linked to the teacher I am if I am to enable my students to stand beside me and form their own vision of the world.

Through his/her art, the imagination of the artist "lifts" the viewers from goal-oriented, practical, harried existence where we enact conventional generalised roles and play abstract games with other people, ... (to) a special world of human interaction. (Ball 1990, p. 59)

It is that human interaction, according to Ball, that is what teaching is about.

In an interview cited by Newbury (1979 p. 50), Hoffman concurs with Ball

Being an artist and being a teacher are two conflicting things. When I paint, I improvise, speculate, and my work manifests the unexpected and unique. I deny theory and method and rely only on empathy or feeling into. ... In teaching, it is just the opposite. I must account for every line, shape and colour. One is forced to give an explanation for the inexplicable ..." (Dorothy Seckler, "Can Painting Be Taught?" Art News, March 1951. Quoted in Newbury 1979, p 40 - 41)

The teacher-as-artist is the theme of a conference address by Dr. Cynthia Taylor entitled "SHAPESHIFTERS DANCE: The Art of the Teacher" (1987). She believes that art is a "transformative process" by which we are led to meaning; education is in the service of "transformation in consciousness". Dr. Taylor examines various roles of the teacher: the teacher as

1. Shaper of Content,
2. Instructor,
3. Nourisher,
4. Reflector,
5. Companion.

"The teacher emerges embodying art at work" (Taylor 1987, p. 29). According to Dr. Taylor, the teacher is seen as the mediating person:

... the one who stands between the message and the instance, between the past and the future, between the real and the illusory. He/she is the one

who is almost like a passageway --- inviting the initiate to enter the sacred precinct of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. (p. 31)

Both Capet (1986) and Paleologos (1976) agree that the insights, intuitions, and reflections of the teacher-as-artist facilitate to better guide and elicit response from the student in the art classroom. In his doctoral dissertation, Capet focuses on the art teacher as artist (as well as researcher) instead of "what is taught" (in the classroom) and "what students learn". Capet studies the teacher of art in a classroom situation, carefully describing the scene as well as incorporating in his descriptions, cues, assumptions and motivations from the teacher's point of view. The most obvious point of Capet's study is the impact an art teacher's personality has on his teaching.

Although the most obvious outlet or exercise for his creativity is his art, ... in reviewing the lessons he generated during his study and paintings he worked on, the sensation was one of equality between both "art forms". His constant generation of new lessons is a conscious effort to exercise his personal creativity. (Capet 1986, p. 74-75)

Paleologos investigates the observable and reflective behaviour of the professional artist to establish functional educational avenues for the teaching of art at the college level (Paleologos 1976, p. 69). He based his research on

the mature artist-teacher within a theoretical framework from which he presented certain assumptions.

1. he assumed that art was both experience and process
2. education elicits and guides reflective behaviour
3. the phenomenological rationale and methodology was conducive to both processes (Paleologos 1976. p. 70)

In contrast to Paleologos and Capet, Housman posits that

“... it is the knowledge and insight about art that is critical for the effective teaching of the subject, ... it is the teacher who structures the how, what, and why of art instruction”. (Housman 1967, p. 17)

Yet, he makes reference to different kinds of “artists”. Even though some artists can be effective teachers of art, some are not, just as persons who are not themselves practising artists can be effective teachers of art. Housman does agree however, that where

... the good teacher must engage in significantly creative and qualitatively oriented behaviour as part of his (her) function in the classroom. ... In a similar manner ... the depth of experience and personal insights of the artist provides an essential resource for communicating about the creative process in making art. ( p. 13)

In a review of the artist Robert Henri, Scholfield-Sweet (School Arts, September 1990) in a similar way, makes a plea for art teachers to “behave (as) artists” (p. 40), that is, only by being artists-as-art educators can we “... have our students gain access to (an) empowering awareness” (p. 40) in creating art. Ultimately, she says, art making is “direct experience”.

Wright (Art Education 1990, p. 50-57) further confirms the notion that the “practising” artist-as-art educator can better direct the process of creativity for students’ specific goals:

The art teacher should consider being model versus advisor. This implies we all need to pursue our own struggle to create. Not personally understanding how to produce limits us if we attempt to help others create.<sup>10</sup> (Wright 1990, p. 50)

Staub (1988) stresses the need for artists-as-art educators in an “emphatic” proposal for “... our arts students deserve better than to be taught by non-artists”. (p. 25) Staub goes on to state that

... persons highly trained as artists, and practising in their art, are the best teachers of arts. Surely we all believe this about engineering, and plumbing, about law, medicine, chemistry ... this concept is ... fundamental. (p. 26)

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<sup>10</sup> Although this citation may assume that one person’s creative process is the same as another’s, I would place emphasis on the process of creative activity, rather than the content of what is created, in the reference to model versus adviser.

In a more recent article (1990), Staub continues to profess the need for teachers of the arts to be "professional artists", those "who have found the art for and in themselves" (p. 4) . Working from the assumption that "teaching begins with someone knowing enough to teach" (p. 26), Staub proposes that universities adopt a new approach to art-teacher training. Since teaching is learned through the process of teaching; first, (universities should) educate artists willing to teach; second, (they should) encourage current elementary and high school teachers to mediate or act as mentors (to the artists who are willing to teach); third, allow the new artist-teachers to get professionals in various fields for support, inform and advise. The university, according to Staub, would have the role of resource and communicator (p. 2- 6).

In a paper presented in 1990, Horner emphasised the need for the art teacher to produce his/her own art. As I mentioned earlier, Horner (as a professor in the art education faculty at Concordia University) is often confronted with the art teacher who "feels guilty" at not being able to develop his/her art-making. He questions whether these feelings of guilt and helplessness, on the artist-side do not affect performance in their teaching. Horner refers to this lack of production of art work as "the presence of absence". This concern on the part of the teacher will inadvertently "haunt" the inner-image, (or as Ball refers to it, the "within") that is, it will haunt the artist's creative capacity (Horner 1990, p. 29).

Horner proposes some suggestions for the liaison between artist and teacher roles. Horner supposes that both the "pedagogical" and the "material" practice have a common aim; both "affirm a social engagement in art, an empowerment of self through an empowerment of art" (Horner 1990, p. 29). A liaison exists between the artist responding to his art and the teacher responding to the student.

Horner (1990) makes a connection between the artist responding to his art as a dialogue that exists as the process of creating unfolds, and a dialogue that unfolds between the teacher and the student. Capet (1986) demonstrates a similar connection as he records his practice in his studio and in his classroom. Scholfield-Sweet (1990) refers to "empowerment" when talking about teaching and making art. When the artist/teacher "behaves artist", he/she allows students "to gain access to this empowerment" (Scholfield-Sweet 1990, p. 40).

LaChapelle (1991) suggests that we need "to know more about the necessary circumstances for all types of art making and more about what is meaningful for students" (p. 169). This view confirms the need for creative activity and pedagogical training. In my view the alternative to the notion of professional artist in the classroom is the artist/art-educator, educated in the fine arts and trained as a teacher so that he/she can bridge the gap as animator and facilitator between the social practice (teaching) and the creative activity (making art); between the art and the student; between the subject (art) and the



object (the art product).

In my opinion, there are two distinct teaching styles that pervade the school system. On the one hand teaching is the dispersing and dissemination of knowledge from teacher to student; on the other hand, teaching is a dynamic process of the student's discovery of knowledge (wherein the teacher creates the context in which learning can occur, and facilitating becomes a central focus).

It is this second teaching style that allows the art-educator to be a dynamic element in the learning process of the student. As practitioner in a creative activity the art-educator has inherent skills and knowledge that help to facilitate the teaching process and hence create the learning environment for the student.

CHAPTER FOUR  
ARTIST: ASPECTS OF MY CREATIVE PROCESS

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Parameters

As an artist, I respond in a most concrete way to my natural environment, specifically from the smallest cell structure to the largest flora, the tree. My environment also allows me to appropriate experiences. In addition, I am affected by concerns relating to social issues: gender, cultural, economic, environmental, political, and religious. I am affected by concerns relating to different forms of literal expression: poetic, narrative, fictional, documentary. I am affected by other visual stimuli: painting, photography, sculpture, exhibitions, operas, films, and plays. I am also affected by inner experiences: states of mind, emotions, imaginative concerns.

Visual art, in my view, is a means of sharing these personal concerns, states of mind, feelings and imagination. In my paintings, my drawings and my prints I try to address themes of human experience in terms of thought and feeling as well as visual fact and fantasy. In my creative process my concern with feelings and ideas, marry with issues of visual form in a complexity of

psychic self-exposure. I am in constant search for the closest articulation of content using painting and printing as modes of expression. My works suggest an affirmation of my existence with an urgency of feeling that in turn drives and determines my content.

In this chapter I give examples of how I verbally articulate and visually illustrate my ideas. Each example relates to my private concerns, be they states of mind, emotions or other conscious reflections. I also give two examples of responses to external stimuli: first, an installation titled XX, Temporary Monument (Istvan Kantor) that greatly affected me and to which I responded emotionally and intellectually, in poetic form; and second, a visual response to an article I read in Macleans Magazine (1994).

#### Example #1

As an artist my reactions are manifested in the creation of visual works of art and/or written work. Since I am involved in using reflective inquiry in my research project, I reflect upon the experiences in the studio and react to them. As I describe them, incorporating the constant decisions and changes that I make as the work progresses and then analyse them, I write my responses and reflections about the work. Often, I look at my art work in a contemplative way in order to understand how it influences or how it is transferred to my teaching. I write text in different verbal forms prior to beginning the work, during a break, or

after completing the work. The text allows me to emphasise the intellectual as well as the aesthetic concerns inherent in the visual result. I respond to the work, whether it is in progress or finished as its first viewer. The writings reflect the symbolic content I begin with, the process, the thoughts, the emotions, the memories elicited, or all these elements combined. The following is an example of a personal journal entry that illustrates this:

... the steps I am going through subconsciously should be brought to the surface and recorded (I tell myself this as I sit to write in my journal). I have been stumped with my art work primarily because what I have done in the past couple of weeks in terms of content, was too "controlled" again and "too vague" for my liking. Wherein in the first semester I dealt with "inner workings" and concerns, I now want to tie that in with what is outside. I have been searching for an "articulation" of my content. i.e. clear and concise detail of what I want to say visually and my struggle has been contrite, controlled, disciplined and in my opinion, vague.

I worked this past week with landscapes (as opposed to the "bodyscapes" I did before) this is because I want to join in the outer with the inner scapes in a series of works. My focus before was "inner", now it's the "outer", i.e. the vastness that exists beyond me in my "outer environment". Through the "scape" theme, I can maybe be able to tie in the two.

I want to extract certain elements from the scene I

see outside my studio window. What I see appears to be a very uninteresting scene. Yet I accept it with rigour (I have this data to collect), a rooftop attracts my eye as do the tops of the trees that emerge like sticks, in a regular pattern, from behind the rooftop. Snow covered shrubs that look like rounded balls of snow in the forefront with a "mountain" of snow on this side of the street also catch my eye. These elements are very simple, yet they portray what is outside my home, in the dead of winter. I see the elements in terms of undulating shapes overlapped in space. At this particular time I translate them as layers of overlapping elements .

... (In a first landscape I did, mainly in rich grey pastel) I emphasised that layering effect with a grid in the forefront which for me represented a netting or mesh as from a window screen. The screen connected me from the inside with what I was observing on the outside.

A second landscape I did was not an observed "scene" but rather one that I fabricated. It contained elements that I wanted to work out: trees in a cluster, shrubs, one lonesome house, evergreens in a row, and again undulating parts, depicting landscape and sky area. My intention was to see the effect of the different elements superimposed on a surface where the elements would be drawn generally, not specifically, in terms of line shape, colour and texture. The grid in this second work was omitted for two reasons: first, the texture of the Ingres paper I

used with the pastel colour showed through only in places in this work (In the first work, because I applied pastel very thinly, the texture of the paper created an inherent grid in the work). Here, depending on the amount of pastel I applied the "inherent" grid was at times present, at times hidden. Second, my intention was primarily to work out the different elements within the context of a landscape.

Today as I sat down to work I tore a sheet of cream coloured Ingres paper in two. I wanted a more rectangular dimension. I wanted to continue with the idea of the landscape, but what I was trying to do was to show how I felt about landscape, what I thought about it, not what I observed. What I saw outside the window was my reference point.

I recalled Georgia O'Keefe's landscapes done at Lake George. I recalled undulating layers woven between land and sky. I recalled cool colours. I took my graphite pencil and transformed the shrubs I saw outside covered with snow, into clumps. On the lower surface of the paper, these clumps were superimposed on the left side of the paper. As I got to the right side, the clumps swept into a curve that lead the eye back into the middle of the page from the right side. I also swept up the line on the left side creating a "lumpy valley" on the bottom of my page. I placed the rooftop of a house, peeking through the valley, and made suggestions of trees in the back of the rooftop, not in linear fashion but shaped like evergreens, suggested evergreens.

I made a curve in the centre of the page from the left, cascading down into the other side towards the valley. Then I reflected. I contemplated whether the sky would be suggested in undulating shapes? I looked at the clear cold sky I saw outside my window. It was not grey, it was not undulating. I looked back at my sketch and began to shade the upper part of the curve. As I did this, I thought this is an outer scape and yet, I want to present it as part of me, not on the other side of the window. Above the central curves I drew a type of line reminiscent of "fire" shapes or flame shapes just above the curves. It was a burning feeling that I wanted to represent; that contact that happens as the "inner scape" is awakened and excited. Above this are suspended shapes that cause this effect of burning excitation, travelling excitedly as they approach the flame space. It is that inner scape that descends upon the outer scape.

I have visions of how this sketch will lead me to do another work, where the inner scape will envelope, surround or take over what is outside. Where here I am using graphite pencil, in the next work I will introduce colour, I'm thinking of reds and blues and yellows. I will stop writing now and go back to the sketch, later when I begin my piece I will make another journal entry. (personal journal, p. 28-32)

As an artist, I want to share with other viewers of the art work my vision of reality, by transforming my experiences, my impressions, and my emotions.

Whereas my concerns with emotions, ideas, and experiences provide a content for me to not only express my feelings but also to respond to the multiple stimuli I encounter, I am aware that other viewers will in turn have the privilege of responding subjectively to the work through their own experiences.

### Example #2

In this section I present a picture of my painting Self-Centered (see fig. #2). This image originated as a visual response to a criticism I received. An excerpt from my journal illustrates my response to my painting once I completed it. I continue with reactions of my peers' responses to the same painting<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> At the time that I did this painting, I was taking a studio course. As students in a class we reacted and responded to each other's works of art.



(fig. #2)



### **Self-Centered**

The focus is centred.

The focus is the unrelenting, naked introspection of self.

The self is centred

I am self

I am centred

I am self-centered.

A fact and a form of my being I was certain I did not possess.

The image directs me to my self-centeredness.

Do I accept it?

No, I question it.

I am consumed by my self-centeredness.

On one hand I rejoice,

On the other hand, it leaves me vulnerable.

I am sensitive to this criticism.

It is a fact of my being.

It is a form in my image.

A fact and a form of my being I was certain I did not possess.

I thought as a being I was self-less.

I am self,

I am centred,

I am self-centered.

“Becoming aware means you have to suffer (my concern at the time with my self-centeredness was a shocking revelation) ... you stop accepting your life as given...” (Adrienne Rich, Claiming Reality. Quoted in Levesque-Lopman 1988, p. 61).

Where the context for my work is an unrelenting naked introspection, my peers respond to my work through their own experiential prisms:

“... a web of life in organic form with a centralised focal point that is controlled ...”

"... the blue and white are cold yet there exists a warmth in the undulating form as it moves in and out..."

"... an inviting place yet one where secrets are kept..."

"... pleasing for the eye but how does it affect the mind?..."

"... feminine reproductive anatomy that works to regenerate the feminine imagery by trying to validate it and establish it as self ..."

"... a passageway, a notion of entry, moving into and entering something else, then, floating into space. ..."

My work is influenced by my own reflections as well as my reflections on my reactions and my reflections on my peers' responses. As I become more aware through my own introspection and through outside influences, my work evolves. Because of my research readings and a peer response (see entry above) a passageway, in subsequent work, becomes for me a metaphor for being; in the physical sense, a passageway is a path from creation through to life and eventual death; psychologically it is a path from inner truths to outer reality.

### Example #3

I was overwhelmed upon viewing an art work by Istvan Kantor. The art

work was an installation that formed part of an exhibition at the Centre International d'Art Contemporain de Montreal, "Les Cent Jours" (1993). The monument titled XX, Temporary Monument comprised an image of a soldier on a pedestal on the side facing the entrance way. For me this artist presented, in a visual way, the reality of my state of mind at that particular time.

The photographic image of a soldier was represented on the monument. The image of the soldier flanked the front panel of the monument as on a billboard. The monument stood diagonally across the gallery, about twelve feet wide, eight feet high, and four feet deep. The soldier in the picture on the monument was waving farewell. The image of the soldier was that of a man in uniform, wearing a smile of encouragement as well as a hidden tear. The man's image shouted out to me about the uncertain future that awaited him. Forming a pedestal to the monument, was a shelf. On the shelf, forming a linear rhythmical pattern, were a dozen or so irons. The irons were spaced equally on the shelf. The tips of the irons were pointing upwards, towards the image of the soldier in uniform. The bases of the irons, the area that is usually hot, usually shiny, usually not seen, were smeared with a black waxy buildup. Some of the smears formed X's.

The image on the monument presented to me a metaphor for a gender issue. The man in the image represented power, authority, superiority, masculinity, and dominance. He represented self-assuredness, he represented

control. The irons neatly patterned below this image, were for me a metaphor for women. The irons reminded me of the domestic chore usually "assigned" to women, a chore few women enjoy doing. Somehow this realisation affected me. The clean cut image of the soldier had caught my eye, but as my eye went down towards the irons, the linear pattern of the irons led my eyes to the other side. There was another side to the monument! I was compelled to see what was on the other side of the monument.

As I walked around to the other side, my eyes were still focused low on the level of the irons. On this side, there was a similar shelf as in the front. This shelf was also supporting irons, but, the irons were not placed in a neat regular pattern. Rather, dozens of irons were piled on the shelf, dozens more spilled to the floor. The black buildup that was suggested on the bases of the irons on the other side, had literally "exploded" in these irons, tarnishing the shelf, dripping over the irons that had spilled to the floor. Where on the other side was the "pristine" image of the soldier above the neat row of irons, on this side the explosion from inside the irons extended above the shelf. Two large painted XX's covered the entire surface of the upper panel. The paint that was used for making the large X's was carelessly dripping on the entire monument, dripping on the irons, dripping even onto the floor.

My emotions peaked at this sight. My realisations of the impact this monument had on me was overwhelming. I had to find out the name of the

artist. There was a special inscription with the artist's name: it read "THIS IS A TEMPORARY MONUMENT". This monument presented for me, in a visual way, the plight of women in our society, for me the irons were a metaphor for women. The temporary monument, soon to be dismantled, represented another metaphor. The monument represented the paradox wherein women try to confront and fight for equal rights and status in our society, yet the power held by men tries to calm it down, to control it. As women's attempts to attain this equality gain prominence, the whole issue gets "dismantled" and rejected.

My response to XX, Temporary Monument was primarily intellectual, I tried to understand the significance of the work. Because at the time I was in a particular frame of mind within my own experiences, I reacted, and my personal response became an emotional reaction that physically and intellectually affected me.

At the time that I saw this exhibition, I was taking a course at University on the subject of inclusion/exclusion. My assignment was to write a reaction report on works that were for me examples of inclusion or exclusion. My response/reaction to the work was a paper delineating my experience after viewing the exhibition. The paper included the following verse:

#### THE XX MONUMENT

This monument will not "be" much longer,  
The "XX Monument" is only temporary  
Something else will replace it,

Something else will take precedence  
over the power  
over the dominance  
over the superiority  
over the self assuredness  
of the masculine image.

The "XX Monument" is only temporary.  
The inner waxy buildup of the irons has erupted.  
The irons will no longer hold that buildup inside.  
Amen.

In my view, the controversy of the gender gap continues to exist, the dominant sector of our society continues to control and suppress the subordinate sector, despite the obvious "eruptions" and confrontations. This gender issue is one that continues to influence my visual responses/reactions.

#### Example #4

In a recent article "Sex and the Vatican" reviewed in Macleans Magazine, (Dec. 19, 1994) the Pope denounced the position a woman can hold within the Catholic Church, other than a mere follower. "Pope John Paul II ... remains a staunch opponent ... of women becoming priests" (p. 32). This stand holds true despite the fact that women constitute the majority of parishioners within this religious group. My visual response to this controversy was a painting I titled The Way It Is (see fig. #3).

(fig. #3)



The personal meanings intended in my painting The Way It Is reflect my responses and my feelings about this religious issue. In the painting I represent "woman" as an adornment, rich in colour and texture, yet, totally vulnerable, "naked" to the environment that surrounds her, "naked" to the world. On the other hand, I represent the Church's dogmatic ideologies by a large mitre that adorns a minuscule head; a penis as an image that is camouflaged by the



greenery in the environment is a hidden element. These images represent the aspect of repressed and hidden, but very real, sexuality that exists in the Church. They symbolise to me all the sexual abuses by brothers and priests of children and of women and, by extension, by lay men. The mitre, an exaggerated headdress for the minuscule head, symbolises for me a concern only with the power that the Church holds through its representatives on earth, namely the Pope, the archbishops, and the priests; all men, all imposing their power over the masses, the majority being women and orphans in their care.

#### Example #5

Often I set myself to work to create images in the form of textures, lines, and shapes assembled on a surface, intuitively and randomly placed. Because of my involvement in the visual creative process, I am aware of the fundamental art and design principles. I create a work of art that to me is visually and aesthetically valid (see fig. #4). This process of creating work grows as a continuous build up of lines, shapes, textures, symbols, and sometimes identifiable images.



(fig. #4)

I develop these forms, lines and textures intuitively; I base my decisions of where to place elements on what is already on the picture plane; as I make additions to the surface, each addition affects what is there as well as what else can be added. In creating an art work this way, the product becomes a manifestation of an inner self, recreated in an outer form.

After I develop the art work, I record my reflections to my artistic creative process. It is then that I become aware of the thoughts, the emotions, and the feelings that I develop in the visual works. In turn, I identify themes that portray and reflect recent concerns.

Under the theme of  
"inner/outer" (see  
fig. #5) I relay  
images and poems  
that relate to an  
inner abode:



(fig. #5)

Under the theme of "passageway" (see fig. #6) I relay images that relate to my  
place within a social structure:

(fig. #6)



Using the theme of  
"past/present/future"  
(see fig. #7) my  
philosophical thrust  
relates to a concern  
with time and  
space as a  
creative,  
questioning  
person:

( fig. #7)



Because of the process of writing and making art, I realise that my creative pursuit becomes a quest for understanding what I am about, who I am, what I want to do, where I want to be and so on as a never ending process of personal growth and creative maturation.

By writing journals or poems, either prior to or after creating an art work, I pursue the themes that surface as I continue to work. According to Adrienne Rich, poems can be "open windows of consciousness" (Rich 1975, p.89 ). In the

example that follows (see fig. #8) I came across a photograph of Abbaye du Mont-Saint-Michel, titled Jardin by Marc Lemene.



(fig. #8)

This photograph greatly influenced me because of its visual content; for me, this

image was a metaphor for the way I saw my life. The image was a stimuli to which I wanted to respond visually and verbally. I wrote the following text:

Landscape with tree

I am the tree  
The tree is me  
    at once fledgling  
    yet grounded by my roots  
The roots provide me with strength.

I am compelled to paint the tree  
The landscape with the tree  
Taking dominance over its territory for it is strong and well rooted.

I must now paint the tree  
The tree that is me  
I am the tree  
The tree is me.

I found an image, an image, a reflection, a photograph of a tree  
    amongst discarded papers in a rubble.  
It was like finding a treasure,  
A treasure once discarded as useless and unworthy.

This image was precious to me  
Because it is me  
The precious treasure,  
The picture of the tree,  
The tree that is me.

I have become the tree

The tree in the landscape  
The landscape with the tree.  
    The tree that looks back at the tunnel  
    The tunnel of life  
    The life that was confined, confined and restricted.  
The life that was once a tunnel is no longer a tunnel.  
The life that was once a cocoon is no longer a cocoon.

I have become the tree  
The tree in the landscape.  
Resistant, firm, and strong to exist in the open air  
Taking the space that I need  
Connected to my roots  
Connected to my branches  
Resistant, firm, and strong  
I am the tree  
The tree is me.

I proceeded to paint the Landscape with tree, the image that resulted is fig. #9.



(fig. #9)

I then recorded my response to my completed painting:

**Ode to the tree**

I wanted to paint the tree  
I wanted to paint the tree that was me.

The tree that I painted  
is not the tree that I thought would be me.



Something happened.  
The branches are cut off.  
The branches are cut from the trunk.  
The trunk only has its roots.

The trunk seems to be bleeding.  
The trunk feels the pain, the sorrow, and the anguish.

The tree is bleeding.  
The tree is bleeding because the branches of the tree were cut off.

In my mind the result was a painting where the image was altered from my initial intent, influenced by my personal disposition at the time.

#### Concluding Remarks

Looking at and reacting to art work, reflecting on it or responding to it, be it my own work or someone else's, allows me to place myself within its time and space in order to come to some understanding about it and to make the event purposeful. This form of responding allows me to look at the work in order to not only gain some understanding about it but also to apply the understanding to my own experiences personally in the studio or socially in the classroom. This process of dialoguing with myself (making the art and then looking and reflecting at what I have done) allows me to build an emotional, intellectual and visual vocabulary which cumulatively gives me the ability to articulate my concerns.

I have used Stanley Horner's paradigm of developmental responding as a method by which I could look at my art work and my teaching in order to gain insight into the two processes. In his article: "2C and Not 2B: That is Not a Question" (1988), Horner articulates a theory described as a series of sequential propositions that are not prescriptive but adaptive and are applicable to looking at art, whether in the studio or in the classroom.

Horner's premise, as I understand it, is that we (as viewers of the artwork) are active (not passive) agents in the process of responding. In contrast to the Modernist ideal exemplified by Feldman (1973) and Eisner (1974) who profess that it is the work that holds the "message" and it is the viewer who must "decode" this message in order to be able to interpret it through a process of structured analysis, Horner claims that such decoding fragments and distances the viewer from the work. Rather, Horner acknowledges that the viewer does not come into the process of responding as a "blank slate", but with emotions, culture, environments, influences and knowledge; the viewer is an active participant in the creation of significance. (Horner 1988, p. 3-4)

In this thesis responding for me is similar to reflecting in as much as both imply that the one who looks at a situation or an art work is affected by it. In both reflecting and responding, the viewer is an active agent in the creative significance of the situation or the work. As an artist, I reflect on and respond to what is on the canvas at any point in the process, making changes as I do until I

arrive at an aesthetic completion. As an art-educator, I reflect on and respond to my teaching and make changes until the student has understood. Both responding and reflecting entail looking at the work of art or the classroom situation and dialoguing with it in order to decipher significance. Both are influenced by my knowledge and experience.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ART EDUCATOR: ASPECTS OF MY SOCIAL PRACTICE

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#### Parameters

According to the World Book Encyclopaedia, (1989 ed. p. 2152) teaching means to give instruction to; to help to learn; to show how (to); make understand; to give lessons in or instruction about (a subject). Teach and instruct both mean to convey knowledge or skill to someone. Teach also implies giving individual guidance and training to the learner while instruct implies providing, in a systematic way, the necessary information or knowledge about a subject.

In the discipline of art education, teaching for me has additional connotations. The subject of art is broadly educational. It incorporates knowledge about art that is technical, historical, and aesthetic, including knowledge about the environment that spills into the students' awareness of culture and good taste. Amongst others, teaching the subject of art includes discussions about psychology, politics and social issues that make the student sensitive to different aspects of reactions and emotions.

As an art educator I have to set goals and objectives for my students. These goals and objectives are based on the Curriculum Guide intended for use in all Quebec secondary schools.<sup>12</sup> The guide outlines the learning objectives that make up the art program. The overall objective of the program is "... to enable the students to have AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES THROUGH "MAKING" AND "SEEING" IMAGES. ..." (p. 19) In addition to the overall objective, each course that I teach comprises four modules:

1. Theme
2. Visual Language
3. Gesture and Technique
4. Art and Society

(Secondary School Curriculum, Visual Art, p. 20)

In high school, art is a discipline comprising a domain, a structure, and a history. It integrates aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and studio production. Students are involved in the process of exploring, understanding and producing works of art. By offering students aesthetic experiences through "making" and "seeing" images, the program addresses in a systematic and integrated fashion the following goals and objectives (Ragans and Rhoades 1992, p. TM 5):

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<sup>12</sup> Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1988. A curriculum guide prepared by "la direction générale des programmes", as an educational document developed in keeping with the orientations and structure of the Visual Art program, 16-3502-01A. This document is intended for use in all Quebec secondary schools. It is an official document that specifies the learning objectives for the sections and levels that make up the program intended to help teachers to understand and apply the program.

1. The development, expression, and evaluation of ideas and processes both in the self and the world around us;
2. The ability to produce, read, and interpret visual symbols wherein students transform various materials employing the elements of art and the principles of design to create the image;
3. The assimilation of information needed to recognise and understand the artistic achievements and expectations of various societies and cultures throughout history.

Although specific goals are set forth by others I also set goals:

My goal is to provide opportunities for the students to find out about who they are.

My goal is to advance the students' creative potential to a level where they can feel confident so that they transmit this confidence to other facets of their lives.

My goal is to engage the student in creative experiences by creating a climate where they can express their emotions poetically and lyrically and where they feel good about what they do.

My goal is to instil in the students the attitude that they can take chances and express themselves visually, while at the same time understand what they are doing and why they are doing it.

As an art-educator I play a very active role in the classroom: I structure, I liberate, I perform, I question, I demonstrate, I nurture, and I support the student. I also facilitate opportunities for growth and self-assurance in the individual student, providing acceptance of his/her expression of his/her inner feelings and convictions.

I want my students to experience art, to express their feelings with art, to create using images, to understand how others have engaged in creative experiences so that they too can engage and transmit their ideas in a visual way. I want them to become aware of their environment, and to recognise its beauty so that they can be respectful and appreciative of it in order to preserve that beauty. I want to guide them to scrutinise their inner selves and see what there is, to try to make sense of what they are doing at any given point, so that they can shape their future and that of others in a constructive way.

As an art-educator, I am also aware that my flexible attitude and my pedagogical approach in a classroom are very important. These factors affect the student's feeling that he/she is capable of expressing himself/herself visually and that these expressions will be respected. In addition, the student will sense if he/she can take risks and share the personal insights on a visual level with everyone else in the class. Depending on the situation, my attitude and approach, can help the student to exteriorise his/her personality in a visual way no matter his/her level of competence.

“Wanting” for myself or “wanting” for my students is a need for something to be fulfilled, something that is lacking. As an artist, I want to express in ways that communicate in aesthetic language what it is that I represent, what it is that I feel, what it is that I think about what goes on around me. As I pointed out in the description of my art-making process (Chapter 4), I use a passageway as a metaphor. A passageway in my painting depicts the space and time between various events in my life. Because I want to foster my students' creative potential so that they can better cope with the demands imposed on them by their daily routines and environment, in my role as an art-educator, I become a “passageway” between the curriculum that I present in the class and the student.

In that role, one of the greatest satisfactions for me is to see a student who has not been able to achieve very high academic marks succeed in producing (excellent) art works; art works about which he or she is proud; art works through which he or she attains self-confidence. In the art classroom, there is the student who considers himself/herself as “not artistically inclined”. He or she will profess: “...I can't draw for my life...”. This type of student becomes a challenge for me. I want that student to also attain the self-confidence to produce art works that express and communicate feelings, ideas, and opinions. Parents sometimes come to apologise for their son or daughter because “...he/she is not good at art, there are no Artists in our family...”. This



misconception occurs out of a naive notion of what an "Artist" is. I find that it is my role as an art-educator to explain and reassure them that the program I offer takes many aspects into consideration. I reassure them that in the process of making art the students are taught "how to do" things, that is, how to use materials, how to do various techniques such as drawing and painting. Sometimes the creative process becomes even more important than the product, because the end results sometimes break or get destroyed. In addition, looking at art, discussing it and its aesthetics are also very important processes. As they examine the work of established artists, they become better able to acknowledge their own feelings, accept them, articulate them, and therefore become more sensitive to who they are.

In the section that follows, I shall cite examples taken from my field notes as well as notes from my participant observation sessions. The examples I chose to discuss demonstrate interactions that enable the students to have aesthetic experiences through "making" and "seeing" images.

### The Art Classroom Context

I teach within a traditional classroom setting. I rely on books, reproductions of art works, slides, and filmstrips and the indispensable student samples as teaching aids to present my lessons. Occasional field trips to

museums and galleries also form part of my activities with the students.

"Will you teach us how to draw?"

"Will we do clay?"

"I can't even draw a straight line, how will you be able to mark me?"

"I went to a museum once and there was this red painting. That's all there was. I could even do that! Why does it hang in a museum?"

The questions the students ask vary only in the manner in which they are structured; the content of their questioning remains the same from class to class, and from year to year. I see my role in the classroom as an animator and as a facilitator, the connecting link between the curriculum and the student, between the subject of art and the art product created by the student, between the art work and the student. From experience I know that students have markedly different personalities. Students have different cognitive levels, perceptions, ways of learning, attention spans, and interests. Students come from different educational and cultural backgrounds, in all they are affected by a repertoire of varied experiences. I try to take all these differences into consideration in planning and presenting the lessons.

As an art educator I realise the importance of open-endedness in the presentations of my lessons. I have to take into consideration the individuality and inventiveness in each student. I have to give an explanation for everything I do so that each and every student understands and is able to attain the goals and objectives I set forth. When I introduce the technical aspects of using materials, I have to give more detailed and precise instruction coupled with demonstrations. I implement a diversity of teaching styles depending upon the aspect of the discipline I cover for any given lesson, while at the same time I incorporate classroom management methods that provide an outlet for creativity for all the students, balancing freedom and control.

Although fundamental objectives are embedded in my pedagogy, I present opportunities to the students to discover for themselves those goals that are of most significance to them. As the student is initially presented with problem solving situations, he/she can develop new ideas, make discoveries, and solve problems.

In the section that follows I will present key examples of classroom interactions.

#### Example #1

“I don't know what to draw” and “I never have any ideas” are common

comments of my secondary I students. In order to help the student to develop ideas and processes both in the self and the world around us, I introduce projects that deal with the theme of "knowing the self". These twelve-and-thirteen year-old students in secondary I and II, are changing physically, emotionally, and mentally. I want them to become aware of themselves. I want them to find out who they are as people in a particular cultural society. I want them to become aware of their interests, their joys, their fears, their dreams. What makes them who they are? At this stage in their life, they can develop either self-doubt or self-esteem. They can develop either insecurities or self-assurance. They are at a stage when they are building fundamental characteristics as young people in an adult environment.

I find it important that students do work that helps them to identify the self. Because I recognise their developmental stage, I structure projects that encourage them to express ideas that relate to knowing the "self".

"What is a metaphor?" I ask.

"This isn't English class", a student comments.

"No, but in art class we use metaphors also." I explain. "Visual metaphors are sometimes used to define and explore your own identity, who you are and what are your characteristics." I continue, "by using metaphor you can either reveal or conceal characteristics".

Using universally understood metaphors can help them reveal their personality.

David comes up to me dissatisfied with a "blob" on his page. In his mind he can't draw anything else. As I question him, he explains to me that he can be easily moulded by others and therefore he has no personality, a characteristic that he identified. He shows me his "blob" and timidly and hesitantly asks me, "how can this be considered art"? I look at his work and I tell him "think of your blob as silly putty". I suggest to him to try and think of an experience that he can adapt and attribute to the blob and write a little story that illustrates that he can be easily moulded. From the story and the "character", I suggest that he create a comic strip.

"You can tell a story, you can teach a lesson, you can entertain the reader in some way visually with your character, and verbally with your story. Have your "blob" do something." I recognise the questioning look on David's face. I continue. "Relate something that is eventful in your life, something that shows an aspect of what happens to you that can be "moulded" just like the "blob" that you made."

David responds positively, his eyes sparkle, he has an idea and goes back to his seat to continue his work.

#### Example #2

In order to give the students the opportunity to read, produce, and

interpret symbols, I show the students Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride by Jan Van Eyck, 1434. I give them the following instructions:

"Imagine that you go into the picture plane, go into the room and take an inventory of all the contents in the room. Write down every item that you find. Think also about the atmosphere in the picture space, that is, the feelings and emotions that you get because you are in the picture. Write down those feelings".

I keep the slide of the work projected on the screen, while I divide the class in groups of three or four students. I allow them to work in groups. This way they get the benefit of each other's ideas. The students present their inventory. They identify the elaborate dress of his bride, the emerald green, the gold, the blue, and the white. They identify the very warm brown in Arnolfini's clothes. There are beds in the room, decorated with red bedspreads. The students identify the circular mirror on the back wall with an inscription above it. There is a dog, a window on the left wall, shoes on the floor, one lighted candle in the candelabra on the ceiling, oranges on the side table by the window. There is a reflection in the mirror, showing the backs of the couple, but there is also another figure reflected. The "bride" appears pregnant; she extends and places her hand on the man's hand; they are not looking at each other. The atmosphere is almost solemn, it is quiet and serene.

Once the inventory is made, I explain to them the meaning of symbol:

"Something that stands for or represents something else, especially an idea, quality, or condition is a symbol: The lion for example is the symbol of courage; the lamb of meekness; the olive branch of peace; the cross of Christianity." (World Book Dictionary, 1989 ed. p. 2124)

"A symbol is an important part of human communication since it is an interpretation of human experience." I tell them. "It is also a universal language. Can any of you explain the symbolism that is represented in this painting?"

The students come up with different interpretations:

"I have a dog, and my dog is a very loyal friend"; says one student.

"Red symbolises love, those two people are in love"; says another student.

"In our culture we remove our shoes when we walk in the house, because we believe that the home is a sacred place", says a Chinese student.

"We light candles to God when we want something good to happen to us", says a Catholic student.

As the students present their interpretations of the symbols in the painting, I acknowledge their responses and applaud them. Then I explain to

them the symbolism in the painting by Van Eyck according to a "professional source":

"... the mirror symbolises virginity; the sacrament beads indicate dedication to the Church and God; the dog, fidelity; oranges, generosity; the bedroom, symbol of the Annunciation; the lighted candle, the presence of Christ; the eggs fertility; shoes removed, respect for holy ground. In essence the painting serves as a pictorial wedding certificate; the signature of the artist is symbolic "witness" to the ceremony". (Roukes 1984, p. 50)

"Close your eyes", I tell my students. I play music excerpts that are tranquil, then eerie, then symphonic, allegro, and melodic, then rap and once again tranquil. Then I ask:

"Who are you? Think about your characteristics. Think about how people see you when they look at you. What do people see when they look at you? Think also about those characteristics that people do not see, the inner qualities that you have."

I tell the students to stay in their groups but for each one to write down his/her personal characteristics. I tell them to concentrate only on the salient ones, the ones that are easily identified. Then I tell them to write down the quality or trait that other people do not see. Within their groups, I want them to



think of symbols and images that can represent their attributes. Once the characteristics are identified and the symbols are attributed, the students are instructed to bring to class a box, "as small as a matchbox and no bigger than a shoe box." Their project is to present their outer characteristics on the outside of the box, and their inner characteristics on the inside of the box. When the projects are completed, the boxes are placed on display tables for the class to see. As part of the closure to the lesson, each student can speak about his/her own work as well as comment on someone else's work, mentioning the characteristics represented and the symbols that were used to represent the characteristics.

Danya says, "My box is the fun part of me, except for the Guatemallen worry dolls inside. I worry a lot."

"What do you worry about Danya?" I ask.

"About school, about marks", she replies.

The outside of Danya's box is covered with a shiny paper that has stars printed all over. She has glued golden raffia onto part of the box.

"The shiny paper reflects happiness. I'm generally happy, I smile a lot and like the stars, I shine. On the outside people recognise my hair, it's thick and yellow." continues Danya.

Danya has a quarter (25c) taped to the inside of the box:

"There is a caribou on this side of the quarter." she explains, "in French it's called "original". That sounds like "original". I'm original. The smarties are there because I'm smart and the large lips are there because I'm always talking, I'm a motor mouth."

Stuart comments on Kara-Jade's box: "This box is brown and empty inside" he says, after opening a richly patterned and brightly coloured African designed box.

"That's because all my characteristics are seen from the outside, there is nothing more inside," answers Kara-Jade.

Kevin is distracted.

"Kevin, can you please comment on Lori's box?" I ask.

"She is full of colours," says Kevin after looking intently at the box that was passed over to him.

"What does it mean to you that she is full of colours?" I ask Kevin.

"I know that Lori is always smiling. I guess she is happy, she has a good time, she has lots of friends, everybody likes her. Even the teachers like her. So she is full of colours."

Todd comments on another box:

“He's all scribbled up, so that means that he is unorganised. I know him, he also has mixed emotions. The scribbles are symbols for who he really is.”

By providing a forum for students to discuss, read and interpret the work that they produce, they can tap into their own and their peers' personalities finding out more about themselves, and learning to express themselves through a visual vocabulary.

### Example #3

When I began teaching, my students were mainly Anglo-Saxon Canadian and French Canadian. Today my art classes are a multi-cultural milieu, with students from thirty two different countries (many are first generation immigrants). Because of the diversity in the cultures represented in the school, I feel it is a great opportunity for me as an art educator to work with the diversity and richness that each and every student can bring into the group. Course content I recently developed for my secondary one classes attempts to fulfil this objective. Each student must do research on a culture and an art form from that culture and then present the findings to the class. Although some students choose to research their own culture, others choose one that is of interest to

them because they had visited that particular country or they know someone from there. Still others select a culture for other reasons, such as:

"A friend of mine sent me this card from China. The card says (illustrates) my name using Chinese symbols. It's like picture writing" explained Valerie. "We were best friends until she moved back there, we always write to each other."

Occasionally a student will have reservations about researching his/her own culture because he/she wants to be "like everybody else". Others will want to find out more about who they are and what features are particular to their culture:

"Je suis fier d'être Québécois," says Christian. "J'aimerais faire ma recherche sur la Saint Jean Baptiste, la fête nationale du Québec."

Yet other students have trouble deciding, and accept suggestions from others. Angelo did not know which culture to research. He went to the library to look for books to help him do his work. The librarian showed him some books on India. Angelo was intrigued by the colourful costumes that the people in India wear during their celebrations and decided to do his project on Indian costumes.

I guide the students to focus in on just one aspect or one art form from the culture they selected. I emphasise that they make sure they can get enough

information on their subject or else they will have to change either the art form or the culture. I outline a written research assignment (see Appendix 1) that helps them 1) to identify the art form; 2) to identify the symbols or the images that are dominant in that art form; 3) to name the materials that are used; 4) to outline the particular uses for the art works (if any); and 5) to identify the people that make the work as well as the reasons why they make it. I also ask the students to write about what they learn about the people in that culture by looking at the art, by responding to questions like these: Do people communicate through art? What do the artists communicate through their art?

To prepare the written research assignment, students first write an outline in point form, giving me the basic information based on the questions that I asked them to cover. From this outline I guide them to complete their research paper and suggest to each student possible visual projects that he or she may do to exemplify an aspect of the art form in relation to the written research assignment.

The students are responsible to write the short research paper on their own at home, while they do the visual projects in class. I explain the differences between imitation, replication and interpretation of existing images, thus guiding them to create their own personal art. The first phase of the project entails replicating the general characteristics of the art form - the symbols and images used, as well as its lines, shapes, colours and textures. Some students have

difficulty translating the characteristics of the art form, but I recognise their effort and they are assured and guided through the process. Students produce two dimensional and three dimensional projects emphasising the characteristics of the works they viewed and responded to. The projects they make in class are personal as well as influenced by exposure to the art forms that they researched. The visual projects range from a mural painting depicting La parade de la Saint Jean-Baptiste, (fig. #10 shows the student in front of his mural) to a relief frieze replicating part of a Greek building, to a Northwest Coast Indian totem pole, to African masks. The projects are as varied as the students.



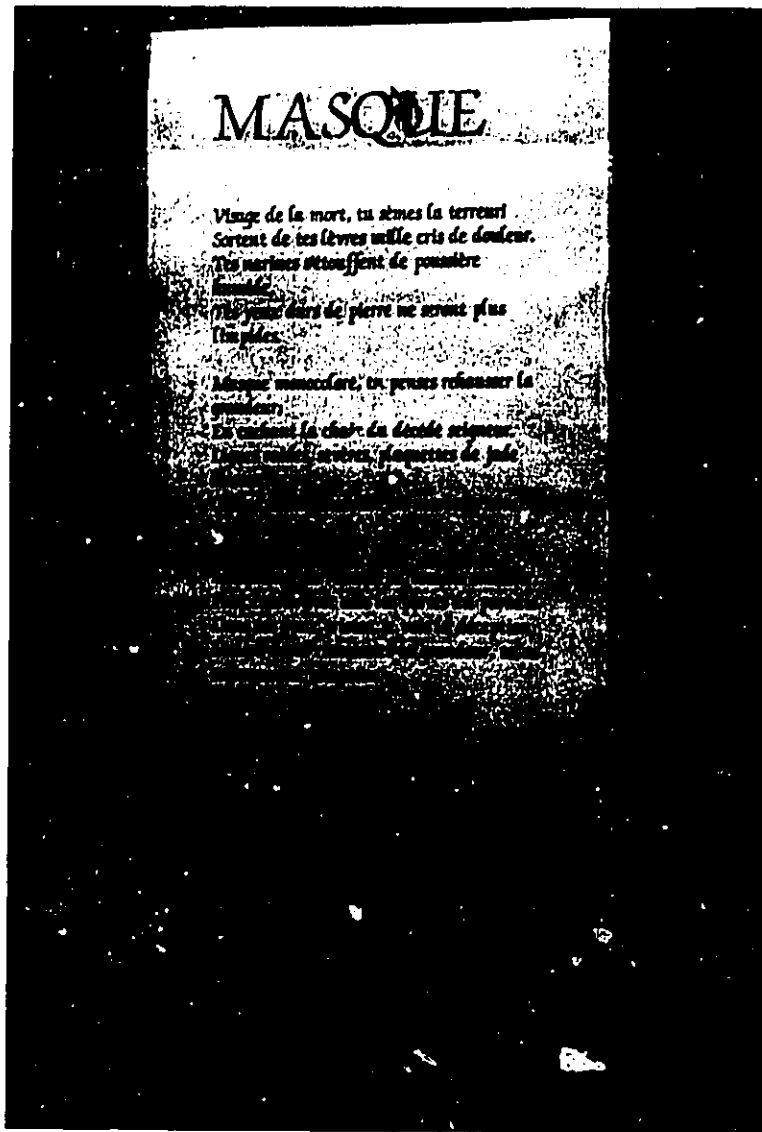
(fig. #10)

Once the students replicate art works based on looking at the art of a particular culture, using materials that are available to them in the school or at home, they are ready for the more creative personal part of the project which takes the form of a creative response.

The creative response<sup>13</sup> assignment (see Appendix 2) focuses on the sensory effects of art work that the students have researched. This response entails looking at an art work or several works from the culture that the student researched, answering questions while looking at the work and writing the answers down in point form. Then, from those answers, they write a poem or a paragraph using as many of the words as possible. Finally, they produce a visual response that illustrates the poem or the paragraph that they composed. A diversity of responses emerge, as different as the students themselves. This "creative response" process allows the students to integrate the information retrieved from the research into creative work that is independent and personal (fig. #11 shows a verbal creative response derived from looking at Mexican masks).

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<sup>13</sup> The creative response exercise fulfils the educational objective wherein students are given opportunities "to resolve certain problems by finding their own solutions" (Quebec Secondary School Curriculum, p. 20)

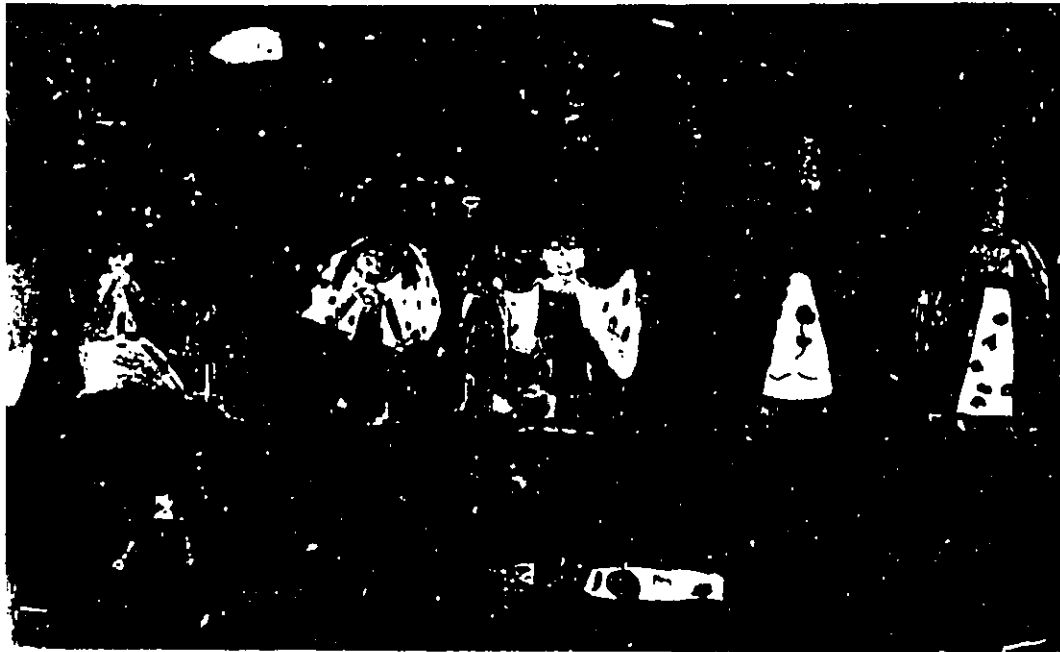


(Fig. #11)

(fig. #12 shows a visual creative response derived from looking at Indian costumes)



(fig.  
#12)



#### Concluding Remarks

I encourage students to develop and express ideas about themselves and their environment, using a variety of materials and processes. I offer them the opportunity to read, interpret, and produce visual symbols and images. I expose students to achievements made in art by other cultures and societies throughout history incorporating aesthetics and art critique. By looking at what has gone on before, by looking at how artists have made meaningful contributions, by analysing the structure of art works and the content of these works, students can learn to form ideas and opinions. They not only can learn to express themselves and communicate ideas and opinions through their own art works, but they can also build their own visions through invention and imagination.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RELATIONSHIPS

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There are three significant relationships that emerge between my studio activity and my teaching practice. These relationships are: expressing, responding and dialoguing.

I have mentioned that the overall objective of art according to the Curriculum Guide of Quebec (see Chapter 5) is to allow students to "have aesthetic experiences by "making" and "seeing" the image" (1988, p. 19). Fundamentally, art instruction from this frame is "expressing" or making the image and "responding" or seeing the image. In addition to expressing and responding there is a conversation between these two relationships that I call dialoguing. In this chapter I will discuss these three relationships.

#### Expressing

There are motivating factors that help me to generate expression, in the

studio and in the classroom. Work that relates to knowing the "self", work that reflects issues in our society within a historical and cultural context, as well as work based on the notion that we make art "because we want to" (or have to in art class) are motivating factors that help me to generate expression both as a creative person and as an art educator.

a) Work that Relates to Knowing the "Self"

Example #1:

If teaching is about "human interaction" - art is the introspection of interacting with oneself - the art object is the result of that search for self. ... Students deserve the opportunity to gain an understanding of themselves as well as an understanding of the images and symbols of their culture. (Ball 1990, p. 59)

As an artist I want to make the implicit explicit, that is, I want to communicate my feelings, ideas, opinions and concerns visually. I want to externalise these feelings, ideas and opinions by bringing the inside out using a particular visual language appropriate to the content .

In my personal journal I wrote the following text prior to making the painting represented on p. 5:

Where before I dealt with inner workings; tensions between body and psyche; time past, present and future; I now want to tie that in with what is outside, in the "without". I am searching for an "articulation" of

my content, i.e., clear and concise detail of what I want to say visually (personal journal p. 76).

In the above journal entry, I realise that my intention was to integrate, connect and expand personal images that dealt with an "inner self" and the "within", to more general images that dealt with my "environment" and the "without". I wanted to find ways of expressing my content using what, to me, would be a clear visual vocabulary.

In the painting on p. 5, the central element is the black wave shape, with touches of red on its contour, surrounded on the lower part by a dark curved form and on the upper part by globular ovals in white and black sliding into the jagged central wave element, represents the "within", my inner workings and tensions between body and psyche, incorporating time past, present and future. On the periphery, this central element is enveloped on the bottom by an emerging landscape situated on the lower forefront, containing a rooftop of a dwelling and trees, and on the top by what - for me - was a sea going into a horizon with clouded sky, all of which represents my outer environment, the "without".

At the time that I was working on my painting and writing my journals, these images represented personal, intimate meanings which I was not prepared to share verbally with the readers of my research. Through further observation and reflection I integrated, in my journal entries, an interpretation to

the painting that related to my teaching practice, omitting references to other personal meanings. The central elements represented by the black jagged wave with touches of red on its contour became a dynamic symbol for myself as a teacher. The ovum globules in this central nucleus represented my students within the class. What I first thought was a clouded sky looming over a sea going into the horizon, visually became a limiting stone wall. This, and the lower emerging landscape, for me represented the school. Through reflective inquiry and responding, I observe that there are specific dynamics that happen within the nucleus/the class, that are enclosed from the exterior environment represented as landscape images/the school. Although my intention was to integrate the two "scapes", clearly, I kept them distinct and apart. This painting related to my interpretation that even though a lot of creative activity emanated from within the class, the looming outer "scape", the school, allowed it to thrive within its boundaries yet kept it enclosed and separate.

This process of integrating other interpretations to art work can also manifest itself in my students. Students occasionally also disguise and mask their personal feelings, ideas and/or opinions. For example, students may overtly construct images pertaining to their personal concerns and phobias: a very short (small in stature) student will make a very large macho-like image; boys will mask phallic symbols; girls will camouflage fetal forms.

Sometimes content, like divorce, rape, suicide, and abortion, are barely

disguised. Because of my own experiences and my awareness of personal content in my own art works, I do not dwell on an open discussion about the content of a student's work. I was not ready to disclose my personal intentions even in my own journals just because the journals and the reflections formed part of my public research. I can respect this vulnerability in students. Unless the student begins the discussion, I discuss the visual qualities of the work only.

In the classroom I learn about myself through the process of teaching. Teaching involves students; the students respond to me and I cannot ignore that. The more classes I teach, the more experience I acquire, the better I know myself as a teacher. My studio involvement with knowing the "self" comes into play when I transfer my practice in the studio to the classroom, juxtaposing it with my students' art making processes. The transfer of my own self-inquiry process to the classroom is in the form of accumulation of images and content, of being aware of emotion in my own art work. I transfer this awareness to the students as I speak about it in relation to content for their own work, or in relation to content in art work done by other artists.

Example #2:

Although I had planned several sketches using colour for my painting, as I began to paint, I could no longer think of colour. My general mood and frame of mind affected what I was doing, ... I wanted nothing

to do with colour. I had an emotional aversion to colour. Nothing at that point could replace the richness of blacks whites and greys. (personal journal pp. 57 - 60)

My mood and disposition dictate the choice of colour that I make (as I work on my painting) and my choice of colour directly influences my mood. The two marry in order that I attain the right articulation. The articulation, the communion, the discourse, the communication, that goes on as the work progresses, between the inner need and the outer manifestation is set forth in the work. (As I continue working) I feel it is the inner (land)scape that predominates most often, that dictates, that controls, but at the same time it is controlled by what happens in the outer (land)scape. The work becomes an ongoing dialogue that feeds onto itself; affects and is affected. (personal journal p. 64)

In this journal entry I started off with a definite concept of what I wanted to do. I did a series of sketches in colour to prepare myself for the painting, but once I was ready to begin the work, my emotional state influenced and affected the work to the point that I started the work in black and white instead of colour. I can also see a similar decision-making process in my students. Students go through similar emotional changes, even more so because of their insecurities and/or inexperience. Very often they start with one idea and change midstream

because they react and/or respond to observations made by me or by other students. Since this is all very subjective, I do not interfere.

Making work that relates to knowing the "self" allows me to develop teaching methods to facilitate students' self-discovery. At the same time, their reaction and feedback allows me to discover my own teaching abilities. As I create an art work, I accumulate content and technical knowledge. I use this content and technical background in my teaching. I find that the more art I make the more it influences my teaching. Through reflective inquiry, the understanding of my own creative activity facilitates the transfer of my art-making knowledge and experiences to the students.

#### b) Work that Relates to Issues in Today's Society

The article I read in Mclean's Magazine in relation to the pope's views on the role of women within the church, angered me (see Chapter 4). I was influenced by that reading experience. I wanted to share my reaction by putting my emotions on canvas, using particular symbols and colour relationships, in an aesthetically valid visual language to identify the issue, underline my anger, and express the conflict that I felt. By reflecting upon what I was putting down at any given point, I constantly verified if the image expressed the feeling I had when I read the article. I wanted my reaction to be clearly understood, and my conflict clearly communicated.



Issues in today's society form a content for my art-making. I know that students also have interests, emotions, ideas, opinions, problems and frustrations, often in reaction to social issues. I know that students do not necessarily have a forum to discuss and present these reactions in academic courses because specific curricula "must be covered". Reading material in those courses may be provocative, interesting and debatable, but the courses do not always connect to the particular interests, problems, emotions, ideas, or opinions that teenagers may be experiencing. In the art classroom, these social issues can form rich content for visual creativity. Students can identify, explore and present their concerns visually, without necessarily having to discuss them. LaChapelle (1991) has suggested that we need to "know more about the necessary circumstances for all types of art making and more about what is meaningful to students" (p. 169). All teenagers can be guided to identify an issue of concern at an emotional, psychological or physical level and form an opinion about it. The issue of concern does not have to be earth shattering or global: it can be intimate, personal, even "self-centered" (a characteristic of many teenagers), as well as political, educational or social. In the classroom I share my interest in forming personal opinions about issues in today's society. I talk about my interests with the students because it is important to me. As I present my interests to them, some students accept my opinions while others reject them, yet, at the same time they form and acknowledge their own

opinions about similar issues or other issues that are important to them.

By introducing very real concerns, I facilitate the process by which students engage with meaningful content, rather than merely manipulating art materials. The students' visual expression includes content that is of direct interest to them. Although ideas for celebrations are suggested to them, many students focus on issues that are threatening, for example: AIDS, abortion, rape, child abuse, cruelty to animals and general lack of love. Some of their concerns are particular to emerging adulthood, such as the job market or how I will look as an adult. Others are about personal identity, fashion styles, physical appearances, coping with homework assignments, being understood by parents and/or teachers, and staying happy.

#### c) Work that is made "Because We Want To"

Sometimes I make art "because I want to." I use lines, shapes, colours and textures, pulled together in an intuitive or deliberate fashion as a form of visual expression. These art elements form my visual vocabulary. With every stroke, every colour, every texture, every form, the content integrates and coagulates as it grows bit by bit. As marks are put down, the work builds on what is already there. These marks also give back information once they are placed together, and are interrelating. Ideas are visualised, content is formed, feeling and opinion become apparent. meaning becomes clear as I work. Each

factor builds on the other and the work grows.

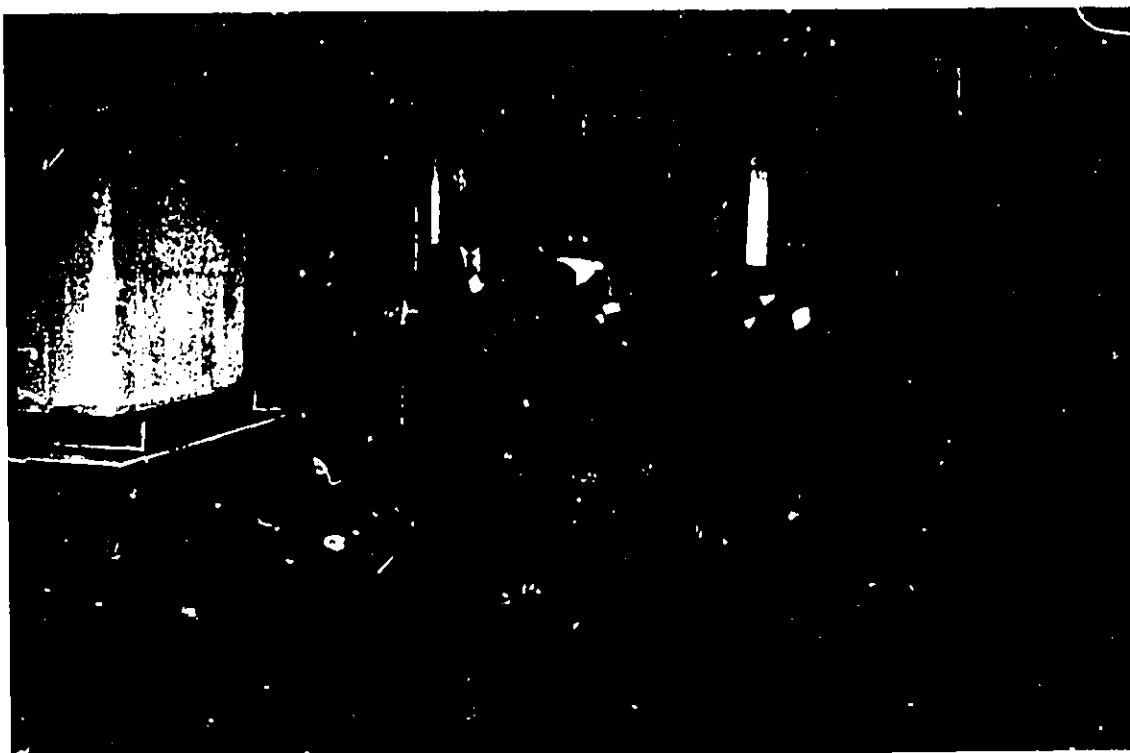
In my personal journal I wrote:

I added some red lines in the centre area, but then I wiped them off. They were too obvious. I left only suggested red streaks. The need for so much red had dissipated; a suggestion was sufficient. (p. 76)

These reflections on my art making process during a painting session, show that as the work progresses it is affected not only by my primary disposition, but also by how I react to my marks on the surface plane of the work at a given time. In this process, the work grows from what is already there; decisions are made as I respond and reflect on it in relation to how each part of the work relates to the other, as well as to the changes in my emotional state, until the work is completed. The marks form my style of work and acquire aesthetic significance. The more I create the more I build my own visual language.

In the classroom I serve as the facilitator for building the visual language for each student. In order to explain the elements of design and the principles of art, I use body language and voice modulation or inflection to enhance this vocabulary instruction. For example, I use my arms to express a variety of lines, I use sounds to represent some moods that may represent an emotion, and then demonstrate to the students how the emotion can be translated into a line. I

also use symbolic language with my hands and my body to illustrate the various concepts. Besides my own use of body language during instruction, I encourage students to physically act out the image content of the work. As part of a response process when they view art, I ask them to look at the image content of the work and with their bodies, interpret the shapes and act out the images. (fig. #13 shows one student, to the left, playing the role of the artist who uses the other students' bodies, positioned in front of the work of art, as art materials to act out the images in the work in question)



(fig. #13)

### Expressing: Concluding Remarks

Many students say "I don't know what to draw" and stare blankly at a page. Being able to assist students to generate ideas that are relevant and meaningful to them is the first step in expressing, in making art. By reflecting on my own art-making experiences, I was able to find ways to facilitate this process for them such as the examples presented above.

### Responding to Art

Responding is the second relationship that emerges between my studio activity and my teaching practice. Responding to art in the studio refers to what happens when a viewer reacts to a work emotionally, intellectually or even physically, through verbal or visual exteriorization. For me, responding entails looking at the art work, processing and interpreting its vocabulary and content, and forming an interpretation derived from my own experiences and knowledge. As this happens the experience of responding is added to my already-existing experiences. As the first viewer of the work, when I respond to my art work in the studio, I respond to what is going on in the picture in terms of the content and in terms of the communicative function<sup>14</sup> that it plays. In this process of responding, I am an active participant with the art work, incorporating my personal understandings, emotions, and knowledge into my responses.

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<sup>14</sup> The communicative functions can be works that use aesthetic elements for the sake of their qualities only, or works that express the artists' ideas figuratively or emotionally.

There is a triangular dynamic (a, b, c) that occurs in the process of responding in the studio between a) the artist, b) the art work, and c) the viewer. The process of reflection allows me to analyse and understand that triangular dynamic. I came to these realisations with the conscious awareness of describing and analysing the steps that I go through as I create an art work. Reflection allowed me to understand how my creative process influenced my teaching practice.

In my teaching practice responding is a process through which I provide opportunities for students to engage with their own work and the work of others in order to acquire knowledge, understanding and to draw conclusions. With my guidance, students working on particular projects go through a similar process of responding to their own art as I do in the studio. They are gradually sensitised to the visual language of art and its vocabulary. They use this new awareness to create their own visual work. Students respond to art work done in class as well as work by famous artists. The boxes that the students made depicting their characteristics is one such example (see Chapter 5). By reacting and responding to the images they presented, they can determine what the images may represent and in turn come to some realisations about who they are.

There is a triangular dynamic that also occurs in the classroom, just like in the studio. However in the classroom, the dynamic is between a) the teacher

b) the student and c) the art. This dynamic becomes evident as I plan and execute the process of responding. We look at art work and become “active participants in the creation of significance” (Horner 1988, p. 3-4) with the work. As an active participant, I guide and facilitate the students' involvement and response to the work of art. In the studio I deal with only my own background, experiences and culture. In the classroom I must be cognizant of many backgrounds, experiences and cultures, in order to help each student in his/her understanding. I respond to art work but I also respond to the personalities of the students.

According to Horner (1988), reflective inquiry is the process by which the active agent observes, responds, and analyses what is going on, be it in the studio or in the classroom. Horner's process of responding forms a structure for me that links the elements: artist, art-educator and reflective inquiry. As a creative person in the studio, I make a singular reaction in terms of the fact that I am the sole person responding to one work. In the classroom as the art-educator, I respond to art works and I also respond to the many personalities, cultures and experiences of the students. In reflective inquiry the process involves me being both an observer and an active agent, who responds to and analyses what is going on.

Although some authors propose that there are some clear differences between the role of the artist and the role of the teacher (see Housman, 1967)

Ball (1990) confirms my views that "in (her) own experiences as an artist and as a teacher herself, she cannot separate the artist "within" from the art teacher "without" (Ball 1990, p. 54). In her article, "What Role: Artist or Teacher?", she responds to a student's question about whether she always wanted to be an art teacher. She confirms that she could not think of becoming an art teacher without first being an artist (p. 54). She reflects on the "paradox" that exists between the two, describing the artist

within, ... in constant internal battle ... who strives to remain creative, autonomous and individual, ... protective of (his/her) role as creator resentful of other obligations (like teaching) yet feels the joy only art can bring. (p. 54)

In my own experiences in my studio, the "within" exemplifies my creative activity as a personal endeavour and is a symbol I use in my paintings. The "without", on the other hand, exemplifies my social activity as an art-educator and is a symbol that portrays my environment in my paintings.

### Dialoguing

Dialoguing is the third relationship that emerges between my studio activity and my teaching practice. I call dialoguing the conversation between expressing and responding. The dialogue is what happens between the work



itself and the viewer of the work of art.

The dialogue that occurs between expressing and responding is a conversation that can be visual, verbal or in some other language.

... "language" (and the reading that results) [is here used] in a broad sense, covering not only the words we speak but also other modes of expression where we define ourselves, including the "languages" of art, of gesture, of love, and the like. (Charles Taylor 1993, p. 33)

The dialogue between expressing and responding is inherent in both my work in the studio and in the classroom. I concur with Charles Taylor who states that:

No one acquires the languages needed for self-definition on their own. ... We are inducted into these in exchange with other. (p. 33)

... In the case of the solitary artist, the work itself is addressed to a future audience, perhaps still to be created by the work itself. The very form of a work of art shows its character as *addressed*. (p. 35)

If visual art is a means of expressing personal content -- feelings, ideas, visions, and associations -- to which viewers then respond, then the artist expresses the work of art, and the viewer to whom the work is addressed responds to it; the artist is the giver and the viewer is the receiver. The artist

expresses content through images, symbols, metaphors, colours, textures, in other words, through a visual language. In order for the viewer to understand what is expressed, he/she must know the visual language. Sometimes, the viewer does not grasp the content. This may be because of the viewer's inherent characteristics, associations, knowledge, and experiences. Through my own experience of looking at art, either my own or someone else's, I can understand that as art is viewed, some people will understand the language, receive it<sup>15</sup> and respond to it emotionally, intellectually or both, others will interpret it and impart their personality and experiences in the interpretations, while still others will not understand the language and reject the work.

The dialogue between expressing and responding is fundamental to the creative process of the artist, it allows the creator to evolve the work to a completion because he/she understands the visual language expressed by the work as he/she responds to it. In a similar way the dialogue gives the viewer the opportunity to acquire understandings about art and the creative process.

As an artist, I am constantly dialoguing between expressing and responding. I create visual works of art and sometimes I write about my reactions to my work. In Self-Centered (see Chapter 4) I expressed visually what it was I wanted by doing the painting; I responded verbally by writing about how I viewed the work of art after completion, basing the response on my own

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<sup>15</sup> "Receive" in this context refers to the notion that an art work must first affect the viewer, even before the viewer can engage with it and read it.

experiences, knowledge and understanding, as well as the emotions it evoked in me. My peers responded through their own prisms comprised of their experiences, knowledge, understanding and emotions.

When I viewed XX, Temporary Monument by Istvan Kantor, the work affected me emotionally. I translated my emotion by writing about it. As a viewer responding to a work of art expressed by another artist, I become aware that I am reading his/her language or vocabulary. Through my writing I am externalising and describing what is inside me. As I verbalise my thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings I present the dialogue between the art made by the artist and the response I had to the work. The poem I wrote, The XX Monument is my dialogue, I am using words to interpret another artist's symbols and images which form his vocabulary.

In the classroom, the art made by the students dialogues with me and I respond to it by verbalising my responses to them. I explain, I demonstrate, I identify using words, symbols, marks, and examples or any means that will help me in disclosing what I want to communicate about art to the students. My responsibility is to teach students the subject of art, incorporating art history, aesthetics, art criticism, and studio production. I realise that I am integrating my personal response with the necessary instructional analysis so that I can suggest, guide and assure them.

The dialogue that exists between expressing and responding entails the

use of a visual vocabulary that is particular to the subject of art. This visual vocabulary relates to the visual language made up of art elements and art principles used by artists. As an art educator, I use external stimuli in the form of slides, film strips and visual and verbal presentations as well as field trips to museums and galleries as additional communicative tools to help me present the dialogue between expressing and responding.

In the art class, the dialogue happens between the teacher and the student. My responsibility is to explain to the student using whatever means I have available to me. As a teacher, I can recognise when the student has understood the concept (refer to David, Chapter 5). By using the process of reflection, I can ensure that the curriculum is followed, the goals are attained and the students have received and processed the information and acquired another degree of understanding.

There are some clear differences between the dialogue in the studio and the dialogue in the classroom. In the studio, there is an obvious interplay with materials. The “talk-back”, the response, in the reflective process, reveals the unforeseen; convention gives way to experimentation and discovery. In the studio I get constant feedback from the process of making the work as the intended meaning emerges. In the classroom I get feedback as I interact with the students, yet the dialogue is more specific to the visual language. I must explain the language in the classroom so that the students can also express

intended meaning. In turn, the students respond with more understanding to me, to each other and to the art.

In an interview with Dorothy Seckler, cited by Newbury, Hans Hoffman concurs that there are clear differences between making art and teaching art.

Hoffman stated:

Being an artist and being a teacher are two conflicting things. When I paint, I improvise, speculate, and my work manifests the unexpected and unique. I deny theory and method and rely only on empathy or feeling into. ... In teaching, it is just the opposite. I must account for every line, shape and colour. One is forced to give an explanation for the inexplicable ... (Dorothy Seckler, quoted in Newbury 1979, p. 40-41)

Despite the differences of dialoguing in the studio and in the classroom, there are some similarities. In both, I process ideas and content, manipulate media, amalgamate art elements and art principles and express emotion. These form the content of my art and the basis of my vocabulary.

In addition to the similarities and the differences, there is a juxtaposition in the process that I go through as an artist and the process that the students go through as they themselves are dialoguing through their visual vocabulary. With the use of symbols, metaphors, colours, textures, etc. they too express and present what it is that they want to say. Because of my experience and

understanding in the studio, I recognise that students can be in similar situations when they are creating. For example, I could not use colour for one of my works despite planning to do so because I was influenced by my disposition at that particular time. This awareness helps me and I can allow this to happen in my teaching.

The dialogue between expressing and responding connects my creative process and my social practice. In the studio I am influenced by diverse sources and experiences that help me to generate expression and I respond to them. My work is often an emotional response to something that has touched me or affected me, a response that I want to share with viewers. In the classroom, when a student has difficulty identifying what work he or she can do, I use my own experiences as examples for ideas. I use my experiences as illustrations to present to the students some possibilities that I have found to express my own opinions, concerns and ideas<sup>16</sup>.

#### Expressing, Responding, Dialoguing: Concluding Remarks

The relationships that exist between my creative process and my teaching practice are expressing, responding and the resultant dialoguing. In my view these relationships are closely linked to Kolb's model of experiential learning. In Kolb's model, the concrete experience is expressing, that is,

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to Palmer's Autobiographical Connection: p. 7

making art; reflective observation is responding, that is, looking at art; and abstract conceptualisation<sup>17</sup> becomes dialoguing, that is, the activity wherein I generate new ideas from the existing making and seeing of the image in order to later effect active experimentation.

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<sup>17</sup> Abstract conceptualisation becomes the action of generating new ideas and then of communicating these ideas.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

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Reflective inquiry has helped me to determine the relationships that connect the practices of artist and art-educator. It has also helped me to understand how the process I go through in my own work in the studio is related to what happens in my art classroom when the students do their work. Through this reflection, I understand that I teach from my own experience rather than from a theoretical point of view.

The process of understanding is interactive and cumulative in as much as I apply it to both the creative activity and teaching, learning from both. When the art educator is a practising creative person, that person uses the process of reflection constantly as he/she responds to the developing work of art, and can transfer that process to the classroom.

In my opinion, the notion of "the artist 'within' the art-educator" is the basis for art education. As an art educator, it is essential that I am an artist who brings characteristics of the creative process into my pedagogy (Ball 1990).



What happens in the studio is a continual reflection on the process (as it unfolds) until the work of art is completed.

In the (art) classroom, the dual process of the professional's reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon 1987), is directly applied and is most effective. It is in the classroom that I, as a teacher reflecting about the things that I do, can foster learning. For example,

"You can tell a story" I tell David, "you can teach a lesson, you can entertain the reader in some way visually with your character, and verbally with your story. Have your blob do something." I recognise the questioning look on David's face, I continue, "relate something that is eventful in your life, something that shows an aspect of what happens to you that can be "moulded" just like the "blob" that you made". (see p. 77 for context)

Because of the art educator's background using reflection in the creative process, he/she can also apply it to the classroom. In teaching, reflection affects and influences the dynamics that go on between the teacher and the students, between the students and the art as they create, and between the students and the art made by others.

In my view, reflection is linked to responding. Horner's theory of responding states that interpretation and meaning are derived from the engagement between the viewer and the object viewed wherein one's

memories, experiences, feelings, knowledge, culture, environment, -- imagined or real, -- all influence one's interpretation and meaning. In reflection, with the teacher placed in the position of viewer, these also influence the events as they happen. The teacher's knowledge and experience as well as his/her "style" of teaching, personality, and cognition of the visual aesthetic all play a role in the manner that he/she presents the curriculum, relates and interacts with the students as the animator and the facilitator in the classroom.

In my opinion, a work of art really comes alive when someone besides the artist views it, the work remains dormant if it sits un-exhibited. In the classroom the art work "comes alive" as the students "engage" with it. In addition, the students form their own vision of the world as they view works of art. It is the reflective teacher that facilitates this process.

As I reflect on my professional practice as teacher and my practice as an artist, my experiences, knowledge and understanding about what is happening in the classroom and in the studio builds in synchronic<sup>18</sup> layers so that I can better help the student to become more sensitive to and knowledgeable about his/her (visual) world.

### What I Learned

In my opinion, teaching is a life-long process of learning. As in art, in

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<sup>18</sup> Synchronic here implies that many things happen at the same time and affect each other.

teaching there must be a constant evolution. In life, in art, in teaching and in learning, there is a cycle. The cycle goes from feeling, to reflection, to analysis, to action, then back again to feeling (Kolb 1984).

Kolb's model of experiential learning has helped me to structure and understand my lived experiences both in the studio and in the classroom. Doing this research has taught me how little I know. Research has also taught me that I can find links and associations to many seemingly disparate situations and experiences. Through reflection on my art-making process and on one particular painting, I was able to see an association between my painting and how it stood for my classroom "nested" within the school where I teach. The links that I found in this particular example demonstrate a connection between what is going on in my painting and my classroom teaching experiences.

We are constantly bombarded with information through the media. Everything that comes to us affects us. It is up to us to sieve through this onslaught of information and select only that which is of relevance to us and with which we can make sense. This selective process in turn influences who we are and what we do. In my search for relationships between my creative activity and my teaching practice, I had to implement a selective process in order to explain what it is that I wanted to say.

In doing this research, I confirmed my intuitive view that I need the balance that exists between my activity in the studio and my social practice in

the classroom. I need a balance between the almost constant, chaotic demands put on me by students, which leaves me totally drained, and the quiet, peaceful and almost spiritual solace of creating, in my own closed, private environment of the studio.

I have realised that I am sensitive to students' responses in terms of body language and my own use of body language. I realise how much I communicate with body language: I point, I make moves, gestures, and actions that help me to explain what I want to say. I also realise how I respond to students' facial expressions which tell me if they have "received" what I have said, or the expressions that tell me that I have to try a totally different approach.

As I work, I realise more and more how I acknowledge the development of the student, receive it and nurture it in order that I concentrate on the learning process of the student rather than concentrating on the end product that he/she produces. Concentrating on the development of the student allows me to give back information and instruction at the individual student's level, so that learning is not imposed by me but rather evolves through the student's own work efforts in the course of instruction.

I have learned that my mental and emotional make-up as an artist in the studio is multi-faceted. As an artist I need to invent, to transform, to metamorphose, to communicate, to express, to record, to state. As an artist I also need to deal with my moods, feelings, interests, and my disposition as well

as with my personal knowledge of materials, techniques, design elements, compositional constructs, aesthetics, historical references, and external influences.

My mental and emotional make-up as the teacher in the classroom is multi-faceted. As the teacher I have a voice and a point of view. I have beliefs, frames of reference, empowerment of self, a cultural background. I give expression to my own authentic concerns as I relate to the students, taking into consideration their own beliefs, cultures and knowledge.

Both as an artist and as an art-educator I employ responding and reflection as a multi-faceted, multi-layered engagement, until the art work is completed in the studio, or the concept is learned by the student in the classroom. My culture, experience and background in the studio enrich me and help me to build my art work. I know that I am influenced by my own culture and background. I also recognise that I deal with students from many cultures and backgrounds who are also influenced and affected by this in their respective art work.

I believe that because I practice art I have improved and enriched my teaching. I have developed certain sensitivities relating to physical, intellectual and emotional understandings, which I translate to the level of the student in the classroom. This understanding allows me to guide students to a level where they can also become sensitive to issues, acquire a language of art, practice

creativity and experience their own process, just as I experience my process in the studio. Because I come into the classroom as someone who experiences and practices art-making, I can better receive what the students have to say visually, better guide them in their own art-making, and am better able to analyse their work.

The basis for my teaching stems from the interaction between the student and the art. I use media and elements of art as tools for expression to happen (with the student as creator). The core of my pedagogy is based on who the student is and what it is that he or she can express in order to arrive at his/her own self-discovery.

In outlining some sources for authenticity within the individual, Charles Taylor states:

... Not only should I not fit my life to the demands of external conformity; I can't even find the model to live by outside myself. I can find it only within. (p. 29)

... art is understood in terms of creation. ... if we become ourselves by expressing what we're about, and if what we become is by hypothesis original, not based on the preexisting, then what we express is not an imitation ... but a new creation. ... as an artist, ... my self-discovery passes through a creation, the making of something original and new. I forge a new artistic language ... and through this and this alone I become what I have it in me to be. (p. 62)

According to Taylor, self-discovery requires "*poiesis* , making" (p. 62), as a way for authenticity to develop.

In my opinion art education incorporates the practice (the "making" and "seeing" the image) of art with the discipline of pedagogy. I am convinced that being a practising artist is an essential component in the discipline of art education.

### Pedagogical Implications

From the very beginning of this investigation into my own experiences as teacher and as artist, I intuitively knew that there were relationships between these two processes. What I did not know was the form that the relationship would take. Yet, as the relationships began to unfold, I was able (with much difficulty) to discern them and make them available through this thesis. I live with the implications that are for me inherent in both, and I witness them emerging as I go about my work day by day.

As I reflect on any one situation in class, or in the studio, and make myself aware of what is going on, the insights and knowledge I gained through this investigation help me to structure the ways and means for dealing with the "how, what, and why" of art making and art teaching.

Each day , more than ever before, I question my role as an art-educator and what significant difference I can make on the lives of my students. If nothing

else, I realise that fundamentally my role as an art-educator is to open an awareness in students, to have them become selective with the bombardment of visual stimuli that they are confronted with each day.

Yet, I know that besides the aesthetic components in things that are visual, I have an obligation to also introduce students to the historical aspects of art and provide opportunities for them to apply this knowledge to express and respond so that they present their views in visual and sometimes verbal ways. I realise that it is through my role as an art-educator that I help to cultivate an appreciation for "things" that are presented to them, so that they do not accept mediocrity. Because they have to make choices about the things that are available to them I see my role as one who can help them develop "good taste" so that they can make sound choices in order to deter cheap consumerism and promote instead culture and quality, for it is upon culture that our society is built.

The compilation and presentation of my data with its reflection and analysis has led me to establish relationships between my creative activity and my practice as an art educator. This process has in turn helped me to realise that what I have learned has led me back to look once again at my process as an artist and my practice as an art-educator and to see those experiences with new insights as if I see them "for the first time".

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started



And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

(as quoted in Kolb 1984, p. 20)

From the very beginning of my investigative study, at the time of my pilot project, my difficulty was to present a paper that had a successive order in linear verbal fashion, about processes that have many simultaneously working levels. I saw my experiences being influenced by many aspects of my particular perception at any one time yet I could only record one at any point. Being able to decipher and present these influences without too much confusion has been a real challenge. Every day as I continue in the classroom, influences, knowledge and feeling affect the cyclical movement of my teaching. It was this cyclical motion around which my research took form, from experience, to reflection of the experience, to analysis, to action (that I implement in the class). Because of the action the experience is affected and the cycle begins again.

As an artist and an art educator, I engage with the student in the learning process. With this realisation I can conclude that in the learning process, the answers do not lie within me as the teacher, but rather, as a teacher and as an artist I also learn from the students and I bring this learning back with me to the studio. As this insight is processed in the studio, through reflective inquiry, I acquire experience and new knowledge about the creative process and transfer it back to the classroom. It is to this end in my exploration that I know I have

arrived just at the beginning of my own voyage in my search for learning and paradoxically my own self-discovery.

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## HISTORICAL RESEARCH PAPER

(This is a detail of the sections you must include in your research paper.)

### SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION (1 Paragraph / 4 - 7 sentences)

Discuss the culture and the art form you selected

### SECTION 2 - DEVELOPMENT

(answer each of the following 5 questions with at least one paragraph for each question)

1. What role does art play in this culture? (eg. social, political, expressive, etc.)
2. What are the dominant "images" or "symbols" used in the art of this culture?  
Describe these images and/or symbols and illustrate them with examples.
3. Does the geography or the climate influence the art of these people?
4. What specific art elements characterise their work?  
(the art elements are: line, shape/form, colour, texture)
5. Describe what art form you chose to research. What materials and techniques are used?  
(For example you may choose to describe totem poles of the North West Coast Indians. These were made from red cedar, a sacred material. The poles were three dimensional showing creatures both legendary and real, including wolves, ravens, thunderbirds, bears and fish. The totem poles were then painted.)

### SECTION 3 - ANALYSIS

(answer each of the following 3 questions with at least one paragraph for each question)

6. Discuss who made the art work, i.e. who are the dominant artists in this culture?  
(For example, the Hindu women of the Kumaoni tribe do ritual imagery called "aipan" on the floors and walls of their houses)
7. Discuss why the artists made this art, and under what conditions.  
(For example, the Hindu women of the Kumaoni tribe make their art for reasons of worship and ceremony, their art represents imagery of the life cycle, puberty, marriage, and other festivals.)
8. Discuss what is communicated through the art work. In other words, in your opinion, what can you learn about the people in this culture by looking at the art form on which you are focusing?

### SECTION 4 - CONCLUSION

In one short paragraph discuss what you have learned about the culture you researched.

OR

Has this research project affected you? Has it changed you in any way? Express your opinion.

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**Réponse Créative**

**Partie #1**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Choisis un oeuvre de la culture dans laquelle tu fais ta recherche.  
Réponds au moins à sept questions avec un mot ou une phrase simple.

1. Donne 3 éléments que tu vois dans l'oeuvre.
2. Nomme 2 couleurs. Décris l'effet des couleurs.
3. Décris l'atmosphère se dégageant de l'oeuvre.
4. Si tu étais une partie de cette oeuvre, comment te sentirais-tu? OU, comment ça serait si tu étais un élément dans l'oeuvre? (ex. si tu étais la couleur bleue, la ligne à droite, l'arbre au fond?)
5. Si cette oeuvre faisait partie d'un film, quel serait le prochain cadre?( la scène suivante?)
6. Si tu étais dans l'oeuvre, quelles odeurs sentirais-tu?
7. Imagine que tu es "dans" l'oeuvre, qu'est-ce que tu entends?
8. Si tu étais dans l'oeuvre, quelle serait la réalité intérieure de l'oeuvre? Donne un aspect de la personnalité dans l'oeuvre qui n'est pas visible de l'extérieur.
9. Sors de l'oeuvre. Donne une caractéristique vue en observant l'oeuvre?
10. Regard l'oeuvre attentivement. Concentre-toi, ferme tes yeux et imagine l'oeuvre. Imagine l'oeuvre avec tes yeux fermés. Ouvre tes yeux. Quel élément as-tu-manqué? Écris-le.

**Partie #2**

Lis tes réponses sur l'oeuvre.

**Partie #3**

**RÉPONSE CRÉATIVE LITTÉRAIRE**

De tes réponses, écris un poème ou un paragraphe (histoire). N'utilise que tes réponses, ajoute d'autres mots seulement si nécessaire.

**Partie #4**

**RÉPONSE CRÉATIVE VISUELLE**

Tu as écrit un poème ou un paragraphe d'après tes réponses.

Utilisant ce que tu as appris dans ta recherche historique, fais une oeuvre basée d'après ce poème ou paragraphe, c'est à dire, fais une illustration d'après ta réponse créative littéraire.

(Tu peux peindre, dessiner, sculpter, faire des collages, des empreintes, chanter, danser, mimer ou toutes combinaisons des choix précédents.)