

*MatriArt: Feminist Genealogy and Life Teaching in Art Education*

Erin Ashley McCarthy

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
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Signed by the final examining committee:

Anita Sinner \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

Linda Szabad-Smyth \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner

Kathleen Vaughan \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner

Anita Sinner \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Faculty

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

MatriArt: Feminist Genealogy and Life Teaching in Art Education

By: Erin Ashley McCarthy

This study speaks to the female identity and life-long education that occurs through traditions of nurturing, mentoring, and art. In my particular case, among these educational experiences passed down through generations of women in my family, are creative practices and independent thinking that I attribute to the notion of what I call *MatriART*, which is my interpretation of personal feminist genealogy and life teaching in relation to Art Education. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how my lived experiences and life stories not only shape who I am, but how my experiences transcend into the lives that I touch, including generations of students I now teach. This study also exemplifies how *MatriART*, as art and creative thinking, can be facilitated outside the classroom, including community settings, where art practice can be a product of mentorship from a very young age, suggesting the integration of a feminist genealogical pattern from both a holistic and a critical theory approach to art practice and art research.

I would like to thank my mother, Diana, and my aunt, Tania, for unveiling my grandmother's archive, and with it, a treasure of family history. Without you, I would have never come to this project, and with you, I have woven a relationship with Nanny that I would never have otherwise conceived possible.

I am forever grateful to my incredible husband, Tyler, for the endless support, encouragement, hugs, cups of tea, foot rubs, and slow dances, throughout this entire process. You make everything in life so much better. I love you.

Finally, I extend my sincere appreciation to my advisor, Anita Sinner, for teaching me to understand what it means when your research finds you, and to professors Kathleen Vaughan and Linda Szabad-Smyth for guiding me through my journey with this research.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Yolande Georgette Gachet Tomiuk.

To the women in my family – past, present, and future.

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## **Chapter 1: “Don’t be a Sheep, Erin...”**

Women have always been teachers. Mother, sister, aunt,  
grandmother, woman friend – rare is the woman who has not  
instructed a child. (Hoffman, 1981, p.xiv)

The above statement echoes in the spaces where my research has found me, and that is in the lives of the women in my family, and specifically the relationship between my grandmother’s life and mine, that have brought me to this thesis. This quote speaks to the female condition and traditions of nurturing, mentoring, and the life-long education that begins in our first learning space: the home. In my particular case, among these educational experiences passed down through generations of women in my family are creative practices and independent thinking that I attribute to the notion of what I call *MatriART*, which is my interpretation of feminist genealogy and life teaching in relation to Art Education. I define life teaching as being synonymous with what Bennetts (2010) refers to when discussing the dynamics of traditional mentor relationships as intimate learning experiences that happen naturally in the lives of creative people. Unlike formally organized mentoring, such as institutionalized learning, these experiences are “usually retrospectively named as mentor relationships when individuals are appreciated and honored by learners for what they have done” (Bennetts, 2010, p. 155). *MatriART* is a concept that I came to as a result of piecing together the different aspects of where my research is rooted: my grandmother as matriarch (Alexander & Talpede Mohanty, 1997; Reinhartz, 1992); the genealogical lineage that has guided me throughout my life (Kinser, 2004; van Manen, 2001); and the artistic affluence that is shared among the generations

of women in my family and among those who are close to me in my life (Rose, 2007; Sullivan, 2010). Coincidentally, and perhaps serendipitously, after having chosen this term to describe the basis of my study, it came to my attention that *Matriart* was not a novel term, but had in fact been the title of a Canadian feminist art journal published by the Women's Art and Resource Centre (WARC) in Ontario. The WARC came to be when in 1984 "a group of women artists joined together to do something about the effacement of women from art history" (Abrahams, 2013, Our Story, para.1). In 1990, *Matriart* began publication with a mandate to "present women artists with an opportunity to examine issues of concern and to share opinions and information relating to the production of women's culture" (Abrahams, 1990, foreword, para.1). Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, and their highly politicized "analysis of the gendered differential in the production of symbolic value by the art institutions" the journal was forced to cease publication of the periodical in 1998 (Godard, 2002, p.221). Godard (2002) examines the history and cultural value of women's periodicals in Canada through a feminist lens and from a material culture point of view. She states that it is crucial for feminists to find new forums to document women because "feminist publications run the risk of vanishing into the widening gap that is being entrenched between the private and public spheres" (Godard, 2002, p. 222). Informed by both a feminist and a cultural point of view, this study strives to facilitate a forum in which my learning about different forms of education through art is rooted in the lines of likeness (Raymond, 1986; Reinharz, 1992) between my grandmother's life and mine, and how this experience helps to bridge the gap between the personal and the public sphere of institutionalized education and community mentoring.

The theoretical and methodological approaches in this study bring elements of arts-based educational research and aesthetic inquiry together with self-study, informed by hermeneutic phenomenology as a way into lived experiences, life stories, and visual and literary (poetic) arts as research. My approach will provide interpretations that “artistic processes can illuminate significant aspects of qualitative research and that aesthetics is at the heart of both artistic experience and qualitative research” (Bresler, 2006, p. 52). However, Bresler (2006) notes that despite the initiative to expand literature that considers the philosophical and procedural aspects of qualitative research methodologies over the past number of decades, there is still a lack of meaningful connections between the researcher and what is being studied. My study will attempt to address this gap. Bresler (2006) refers to these connections as “dialogical relationships” and suggests that not only can arts, as aesthetically-based research, bridge this gap, but that it can also provide a third dimension in the connection to the audience, which is referred to as a *tri-directional* relationship (p. 53). This relationship is characterized by research that (1) connects to the phenomena or artwork; (2) propels a dialogic connection to oneself; and (3) connects to the audience (Bresler, 2006). My research creates this *tri-directional* relationship as (1) it incorporates my deeply meaningful connection to my grandmother; (2) the self-study aspect creates the dialogic connection with my own work as artist, educator, and researcher; and (3) my arts-based practice creates a connection to an audience, textually and visually. For this thesis, I combine arts-based and qualitative methods, and demonstrate this *tri-directional* relationship is an effective feminist-informed model that has, at its core, the same goal as the field of art education: to bridge together art and education.

I begin this conversation by sharing my personal story as the background of this study. I truly believe that serendipity has played a huge role in my life. I could never have imagined the wealth of archival information and artifacts that I would uncover that catalyzed by my pursuit of graduate studies in Art Education. Since my acceptance into the program, my family, and now my grandmother's archive, have unveiled a history associated with art, education, and art education, spanning over four generations and three waves of feminist genealogy, all situated here in Montreal. Furthermore, three out of four generations have developed through, and with, the Fine Arts faculty at Concordia University. This academic lineage started in the early 1960's and over fifty years later, it continues today, with my documentation of this history, which for me is a kind of pilgrimage with my foremothers and my own relationship with feminism, academia, and art.

Due to the scope and constraints of a Master's thesis, this is not a comprehensive study of the women in my family. This thesis explores a ten year period in the life of my grandmother, Yolande Tomiuk (née Yolande Georgette Gachet), and how events that occurred between 1965-1975 have impacted, influenced, and draw lines of likeness (Raymond 1986; Reinhartz, 1992) with my path as an artist, teacher, researcher, and as a woman. As a self-study, the subject matter and collected data are viewed through a lens informed by second wave feminist concerns, such as the breaking of gender norms, the stretching of social norms, and the move from the private to the public sphere, to understand my grandmother's lived experiences. Within third wave perspectives of identity, sense of place in a global society, and a personal search for connections to generations of women in my past, I incorporate my response to her life story. This

genealogy is located “within a history of overlapping practices and reinterpretations of femininity” (Stone, 2005, p.4). The purpose of this process is to gain a deeper understanding of the life and work of my grandmother, and to examine how our lived experiences not only shape who we were and are, but how our experiences transcend into the lives that we touch, particularly through generations of women artists, and in my case, through my family. I employ elements of qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology, arts-based research, and aspects of life writing, as this mixed methods approach that enables me to attend to an interpretation of lived experiences *and* creative expression. The element of life writing is particularly important as I tell my story of experiences leading me to art education, and in turn to this project. Throughout this study, my writing acts as a method of inquiry and a means for me to explore my thoughts, encounters, struggles, and to discover my subject, as well as myself (Richardson, 1994). This is significant as a practice informed by feminism, because life writing “directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times” (Richardson, 1994, p.518). I am writing reflexively as a woman informed by third wave feminism, and I am also writing with consideration for my grandmother’s position within second wave feminist perspectives during the 60’s and 70’s. As a means to facilitate the concept of MatriART, and make connections between women within a genealogical framework informed by feminist perspectives, life writing provides a method to “trace our history as a collective, how we have known each other and continue to learn from each other’s writing, how through relating to each other, we attend to our own education and to better understanding who and how we are in relation to others in the world” (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009, p.3).

My employment of life writing also occurs in visual form, created as part of my process of data analysis and interpretations, as well as in my final realization piece that acts as a synopsis of the information that was yielded and the themes that were generated throughout the study. As much of my grandmother's writing, other than what is typed, is illegible to me and even my mother, much of my analysis is conducted visually, and therefore interpreted and responded to visually (Rose, 2007, 2013). Photographs, sketches, and paintings play key roles in building visual connections between my grandmother's experiences and my own, and published documents including her book of poetry give insight into our family heritage as women of a creatively domestic nature. From analysis to findings, each object lends a different story and as the viewer, I piece them together to place our lives in context (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Muchmore, 2001). To begin this inquiry into *MatriART*, I foreground my story as a journey of relational experiences with women and art that have led me to this thesis.

### **My Grandmother:**

My grandmother was born in Montreal, on August 13<sup>th</sup> in 1924, to a Norwegian mother and a French father. She met my grandfather at Pointe-aux-Trembles boarding school when she was thirteen, she married him when she was nineteen, and by the time she was twenty-nine she had four children. She had begun her studies at University before having her children, and when her youngest was in high school, she decided to return and finish what she had started.

I do not have many memories of my grandmother; she passed away in October 1984, when I was only three years old, and she was only sixty years old. However,

despite this reality, I have always felt her as a guiding presence in my life, as an artist, as an independent thinker, as a woman (de Beauvoir, 1953; Green, 1979; Peltola, Milkie & Presser, 2004). What is so fascinating to me is how an individual who I knew for such a short time, and at such an early stage of my life, could have influenced me so much that I consider her to be a life-long mentor. I can recall rebellious moments of writing poetry during high school classes, rather than paying attention to the allocated subject matter, and then during those adolescent years discovering that my grandmother had written and published her own book of poetry years earlier (1970). This made me want to write poetry even more because I now felt like I was carrying on a tradition, and it continues to drive my passion for painting. It is increasingly surprising to me how many similarities I have come to know that I have with my grandmother, a woman I can hardly recall from childhood, and how many interests we have in common in the ways our lives have unfolded, and yet, how little I actually know about her. This is essentially the premise of this inquiry.

I believe that it is more than coincidence that I grew up to become an artist, and that she and I share so many characteristics and interests, and therefore, I question: How have my lived experiences been affected by my grandmother's experiences? How are traditions among women and more specifically women artists passed down and why? What did it mean for my grandmother to be a female artist in the heights of the second wave feminist era, and now for me, where am I situated within third wave and post feminist conversations? How do our generations relate and differ, and why? Can I ever really know my grandmother's story, despite the shared memories of family and the archive I

hold of her private and public life, documented in her artworks, poetry, cards and so much more?

### **My Mother:**

My mother was born on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the third child in the family. She never took any formal art lessons as a child, she started a full-time job at Sun Life when she was seventeen and worked there for 37 years until she retired, and she was a single mom who worked incessantly to give me the best of everything that she never had. However, she has always had an appreciation for various forms of art, and particularly loves Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting. She adores the presence of Renoir's women and the beautiful floralscapes of Monet's garden. Incidentally, and although she has never addressed her 'hobby' as a medium, her own creativity manifests through her art of gardening and her love of nature; perhaps this is a space where she channels Renoir and Monet as the image of 'the woman in the garden'. One very pronounced memory that I have is my mother recounting to me that when I was born with two fully formed bottom teeth, her cousin insisted to her that this was a sign of intelligence and leadership. "Don't be a sheep, Erin, be a shepherd", my mother would say to me. This is a motto that perpetually echoes in my mind and a sentence that she continues to repeat to me at times even today. The American Heritage Dictionary defines "shepherd" as "one who cares for and guides a group of people, as a minister or teacher" (AHD, 2004).

My mother took me to see my first art exhibition when I was about eight years old: Marc Chagall at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1989. I remember the whole experience being quite edifying; feeling so small in a building that seemed so grandiose,

thinking that Chagall's work was strange and questioning what made it so special that it deserved a place on these walls, and observing that his paintings were also very different from the myriad of my grandmother's paintings that hung in our home. My mother had recently enrolled me in Saturday morning art lessons, and although I could not grasp what that difference was at the time, as I grew older and began to understand more about the spectrum of art and painting, I used to wonder what my grandmother thought about when she painted, and in turn, this made me think about my own creative process and experiences. Today, it is quite clear to me that my life's path may have been very different had my mother not taken notice of my enjoyment in drawing and felt that it was important to pursue this interest, so much so that she signed me up for classes at La Palette Art School. She recognized the creative nature of our family emerging in me and wanted to find a space and a place to nurture my creative development. To recollect, my encounter with my grandmother's art, my first trip to the museum, and my enrollment in art lessons were all facilitated by my mother and acted as the primary threads in weaving my relationship with my grandmother, and in turn, my relationship with MatriART.

### **Saturday morning art lessons:**

In 1987, art school opened my eyes to the world, and every one of my other senses followed closely behind. My teacher, Renate Heidersdorf, was intense, dramatic, sensitive, 'wacky,' 'cool,' nurturing, and in love with nature. Renate had emigrated from Germany as a child and studied at the École des Beaux Arts, graduating with a degree in Painting and Engraving and later with a specialized diploma in Art Education. She opened La Palette Art School and Gallery in 1967, and it has since gained the status of

one of Canada's leading private art schools, as well as her being one of the first female members of the prestigious Canadian Society of Watercolour (Graff, 2010). Although Renate is not a member of my family, she became an important part of my life and creative growth process. Her studio and art room were literally an extension of her home and she treated us like we were her children. I never felt like I was in a classroom; I always felt support, nurturance, and guidance. At La Palette, we listened to Bob Dylan and The Rolling Stones while we painted watercolor images of wild mushrooms, carved animals out of soapstone, and drew graphite compositions of anything from an interesting image found in the myriad of books and magazines at our disposal, to the shoes on our very own feet. Renate was also very specific about certain techniques. For example, at the beginning of every semester, she would insist upon a color study, for which we had to mix ten different shades of yellow, orange, red, green, blue and brown. We were not allowed to present any pure color, and if she caught us doing so we were to start over, and mix fifteen of each instead. She taught us the use of every pencil from 5H to 6B, the techniques for different rapido pens, and the resulting effects with watercolor brushes over acrylic, as well as the different grades of sandpaper for polishing stone versus smoothing wood, and the names of every bird, tree, flower, mushroom, and every color shade under the sun. We sat at one of three long wooden workshop tables that were covered in remnants and proof of hard work, creativity and free agency. The walls were covered in students' artwork, the windowsills cluttered with lush plants, and in the only open corner of the room sat a giant fish tank filled with a variation of species, surrounded by pieces of hand gathered driftwood, rocks, and other organic materials all accessible for

us to incorporate into our work. She was a teacher, indeed a mentor. She gave us perspective; she made us love nature, and each other.

**An art student becomes an art teacher:**

In 2002, I was twenty-one years old and in my last year of CEGEP (collège d'enseignement général et professionnel) at John Abbott College, studying in the Creative Arts, Languages and Literature program. I had also become Renate's assistant teacher, although I did not consider the notion that I was facilitating 'Art Education'. There were no discussions or lessons on educational theory or philosophy; our relationship was more in line with that of an apprentice and a master artist. I studied her, watched her engage with the students, paid attention to her vocabulary, body language and insistence upon eye contact, and took mental notes on all of her demonstrations and the segue between projects. She made every student feel like an artist. And now, years later, I realize that this was her philosophy. Her way of teaching her students, as well as me, as her assistant, was positioned somewhere between the framework of 'transaction' and 'transformation' learning (Miller & Seller, 1990). It draws a direct parallel to Suzanne Lemerise and Leah Sherman's reference to Franz Cizek's teaching method as "based on the belief that children are natural artists and that the teacher's role is to encourage them to express themselves" (Lemerise & Sherman, 2007, p. 193). Students are given free agency as autonomous learners, while under the guidance, but not the control, of the teacher. Renate urged students to create ten shades of yellow, but then it was up to the student to apply them wherever and in whatever context they saw fit.

In 2003, I began my Bachelor of Fine Arts at Concordia University. My choice of the Combined Major: Art History and Studio Art program was because of my studio art experience at La Palette, combined with the impression left on me by two particular classes that I had taken in CEGEP: “*Currents*” and “*Art and Expression*”. “*Currents*” was a three part arts-based humanities study, and compulsory for every Creative Arts student. It was a fast-paced overview of the cultural world, documented in a six-volume compilation entitled *The Humanistic Tradition*, which started with *The First Civilizations and the Classical Legacy* and followed the historical timeline through to *The Global Village of the Twentieth Century* (Fiero, 1998). “*Art and Expression*” was a class given by multimedia artist Yassaman Ameri, and it explored photography and visual culture through the eye of the artist. Reading the profiles of the different fine arts programs that Concordia had to offer I felt that the combined major was where I should be. Although I went through the entire program, and graduated in 2007, I never felt like I belonged. In my studio classes, I always felt pressure to produce, but the free agency was gone; painting always had to be large-scale and abstract, in photography the colors always had to be perfectly balanced and our images never under or over exposed, and sculpture, at the time, was very centered around conceptual installation. I had never experienced any of it before, having had a modernist art training in my childhood, and although I can now say that I learned from the experience, at the time, I felt like a fraud (Caplan, 1995; Drame, Mueller, Oxford, Toro, Wisneski & Xu, 2012). It was competitive, cold, and I felt like it contradicted everything I had learned about what it meant to be ‘an artist.’ My art history classes were very interesting, and I loved the knowledge that I was acquiring, but there was a growing disconnect between the material and the class. The room was always

dark to allow a better quality of the non-stop slides that we were being exposed to, but this created an atmosphere that was neither very conducive to class discussion, nor was it very engaging. When it came to being evaluated, I truly enjoyed writing topic-specific analytical papers, and learning to apply methodological standpoints such as feminism, post-colonialism, and iconography, but I could never understand why we were tested based on memorization. I was, and continue to be, of the constructivist belief (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Prawat, 1992) that it is much more valuable to be able to discuss an art piece rather than just knowing arbitrary facts about it.

### **Becoming an artist teacher through community practice and leadership:**

After graduation, I moved to the Quebec Laurentians. For me, this environment was pure bliss. I started writing an Arts and Culture column for a local newspaper; I was photographing and painting images that did not have to conform to anybody else's rules but my own, and I was exhibiting in local establishments throughout the area. This was important because it was at this point in my life when I was without mentorship and free to create and express whatever came to mind, heart, and hand, in my art practice. It was a period of self-discovery, when the themes of 'women' and 'landscape' began to come together on my canvases, and when I began to understand myself as an artist.

My life as an artist is an ongoing evolution. Every morning, my brain awakes and my eyes open to a new session of exploration and stimulation, often so overwhelming that I feel winded by the marvel of our existence. Nature's beauty and its ruin, reciprocity and hate, the inner voice and the

unconscious mind, love and deception, nostalgia and the human condition – these are the Masters, and I the apprentice. Colors trigger my imagination like bullets with dragonfly wings – fierce yet delicate, woven with symbolism and charged with emotional impact. Although I may not produce physical evidence of my passion each day, it remains in my being as an enchanting virus that infects me in the most exquisite way. It surfaces without warning, and then manifests itself through hand to the canvas, or eye to the lens. When it is done, I reflect, somewhat mesmerized by the occurrence. (McCarthy, 2011, Artist’s Statement)

In 2008, the City of Mont-Tremblant selected me as their representative artist for the “*Journees de la Culture a Quebec*” (see Figure 1). It was through this role as an artist that I became associated with a government study “organized by QCGN (Quebec Community Groups Network) and many of its member organizations and involving nearly 300 young people in eight regions of Quebec” (Doyon, 2009, p. 3). The study brought me back to art education and it was being conducted in response to the low retention rate in rural areas of Quebec, particularly for Anglophone youth. I was invited to attend a youth forum, organized by Heritage Canada that “gave the participants a chance to discuss particular



Figure 1: Erin Ashley McCarthy, “Community,” 2008, 48” x 48”, acrylic on canvas.

Part of the “Journées de la Culture à Québec” exhibition, Salle Alphonse-Desjardins de la Bibliothèque Samuel-Ouimet, Mont-Tremblant, Québec.

issues affecting young English-speakers in Québec, to network and to launch the development of a five-year strategic plan based on their ideas and experiences” (Doyon, 2009, p. 3). Through this project, another artist and I formed a collective entitled TOPITA (Taking Our Place in the Arts). One of the major issues that had been addressed during the course of the retention study was a lack of resources for young artists looking for guidance and a venue to practice their preferred mediums. I thought about my own experiences as a young artist and how lucky I was to have a place like La Palette, the guidance of Renate, and the encouragement from women in my family, my mother and grandmother, by extension. Although I had never heard any stories of my grandmother’s community involvement, per se, I wanted to continue the tradition of mentorship that I felt she had pioneered, and by creating this kind of support system for these youth, I discovered the educational essence of what was to become my understanding of

MatriART. The TOPITA mandate was aimed at providing this service for the Laurentian youth, through developing a mentorship program between younger and more experienced artists, as well as finding an arts friendly meeting space for creative minds to come together. Although I did not realize it at the time, this would mark my first experience as a community art educator.

We established ourselves at the Morin Heights Community Center; they offered us the space free of charge, and the location was a central and widely accessible area across the Laurentians. Members met once a week, during which time my co-chair and I would facilitate discussions, have constructive group critiques, create collaboratively, and share food and music. We had created a very intimate dynamic space and we grew to feel like extended members of each other's families. I now realize that what we were experiencing through our collective is what is referred to as 'authentic education.' Authentic teaching is based on real world situations and "learning in small collaborative groups;" the essence of the holistic method of art education (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2002, p. 234). Although a very fulfilling experience, it was during this time spent with TOPITA that I realized that I wanted to pursue graduate studies. I felt I had grown as an individual and as a woman, developed as an artist and as a mentor. I loved where I was and the community I was living in, but I also knew that I had to move back to Montreal. I had a thirst for knowledge, and a myriad of questions and ideas in my mind that could only be harnessed with guidance, and through the pursuit of my next level of academic studies. While researching where I wanted to continue my education, I enrolled in an undergraduate art education class entitled "*Community Art: Theory and Practice*" to

familiarize myself with the department and environment before applying to the Master's program. This would mark the beginning of my academic relationship with art education. Suddenly everything made sense. I had found my niche.

To my emerging teaching practice in community, I recalled my childhood art teacher used to chant a catch phrase in her classes; she applied it with students ranging from ages six to sixty. She would say, "Don't rush the brush!" and then the class would respond "Cause the paint don't go on smooth..." Regardless if we were kids, teens or adults, and whether that particular week we were working with watercolor, chalk pastel, or soapstone carving, this motto always made sense us. In fact, to this day I remind myself of this mantra whenever I become frustrated with my work, or even life in general. It made sense because it was the perfect recipe for teaching and learning: logic, creativity, interaction, recreation, and language that people can relate to.

I aim to apply that experiential knowledge in all my teaching, and I believe that whomever the student may be, that approach can be appropriated to fit any profile. I regard skill and technique very highly, however, I feel that it is the "artistic experience" as a whole that will best educate the individual on what it is to create, and why we produce artwork. Furthermore, I trust that by using this approach in teaching, my students will be able to apply this reasoning to everyday situations in life, and therefore gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between life and art.

### **My story as research:**

It is through my story that I situate myself in art education, and by reflecting on the likenesses (Raymond 1986; Reinharz, 1992) of lived experiences and life stories, this

research is important not only on a personal level but to describe for others how a deeper understanding of the way we as women, at least in my familial experience, are affected by our lived experiences, as well as the lived experiences of others, including those who came before us. These stories define my ways of knowing as a woman being in the world as an artist, teacher and researcher. This is particularly significant when I consider my familial stories in relation to the different paths and waves of feminism, and how my foremothers, and in my case my grandmother, has paved the way for me to live as an ambitious and creative woman. In this self-study, through comparing the likenesses (Raymond 1986; Reinhartz, 1992) of our art practices, I examine, informed by feminist theory and genealogy, the relationship between my grandmother's life and mine. This study also exemplifies how art and creative thinking can be facilitated outside of the classroom, in community settings, where art practice can be a product of mentorship from a very young age and even from beyond the grave, as I believe is true in my case: the case of MatriART, suggesting the integration of a feminist genealogical pattern from a holistic, critical theory, and creative approach.

I question how my grandmother's experiences informed by feminist perspectives through art generated a tradition of broad-minded thinking and creative practice, and how this tradition is, and to what degree, reflected in my art and teaching practices despite not growing up with her in my life. In accordance with phenomenological bracketing (Creswell, 1998), this research will focus on the years of her life from 1965-1975, when she was in her forties. I chose this timeframe because it was at this point in her life when all her children were grown and in school that she decided to return to academia to pursue her undergraduate degree at Sir George William, now Concordia University. Incidentally,

this became her most artistically active time in her life, during which she produced the majority of her paintings, as well as publishing her book of poetry, *The Lemon Bite* (Dorrance, 1970). Consequently, this timeframe is the most fruitful when it comes to the amount of data that I will have to work with in this project. I have often walked down the hallways of the Visual Arts building and the Hall Building, and the Montreal streets that surround them, and imagined my grandmother taking these very same steps. Especially now, with my research that explores her experiences within this context, I am more than ever before aware of the history that lies like traces in and around the walls of this institution, and the connection that I feel to it (see Figure 2 & 3).



Figure 2: (left) 1971, my grandmother with my aunt Tania, at my grandmother's Concordia undergraduate graduation ceremonies, Place des Arts.

Figure 3:  
(right) 2007, my Concordia undergraduate graduation ceremonies at Place des Arts.

Considering that this research is largely based on and around her art practice, and in turn mine, I feel that it is necessary to not only question and answer in the written, but in the visual as well. My investigation begets a series of sub-questions, including: How did I see her paintings as a child, and do I see them differently now? What was the relationship

between painting and feminism informed perspectives for my grandmother, and now for me? How has or has not her style, subject matter, voice, and technique influenced my work in painting and in writing?

By responding to these queries through the written and the visual, I will invoke the traditions of thinking informed by feminist perspectives and creative practices that have been passed on by women in my family, from grandmother to me, perhaps as a kind of genealogical project in the making. This process will aid in revealing the intertextuality of our lives (Creswell, 1998; van Manen, 2001; Wilson Kind, 2003), and the lines of likeness that relate our experiences (Raymond 1986; Reinhartz, 1992). I question how this process of inquiry defines, or re-defines both my impression of my grandmother, as well as the way that I see and think of myself as artist, as teacher, as researcher, and as woman. Furthermore, I situate my mother as the connective tissue that ties me to my grandmother. She introduced me to the world of art by enrolling me at La Palette and by bringing me to the museum. She is the one who kept my grandmother's archive to pass on to me, and she continued my relationship with my grandmother even after her passing by recounting stories through family photos and artifacts (Buss & Kadar, 2001; Hirsch, 2008; Langford, 2001). This relationship also draws a parallel to the connection between women artists of the second and third waves of feminism (Coleman, 2010; Humble & Morgaine, 2002; van der Tuin, 2009). Within the second wave, women strove for independence, autonomy, and self-expression: a common theme and vocation of feminists in the 1960s. Within the third wave, this relationship exemplifies the initiative to uncover and expose women's history: a way to acknowledge our foremothers and the legacies that have brought us where we are, and made us who we are in this place

and time (Richardson, 1994). For me, this study invokes Bresler's (2006) notion of *doing* and inevitably in turn *becoming*, a notion appropriated from Deleuze (1994). I feel that by doing this research I will, in part, become the answers to my questions. It is about coming into myself, and knowing where I come from so I can know where I am going as an artist, teacher and researcher.

## Chapter 2.

### On Researching Women of the Past and How it Relates to the Present



Figure 4: Illustration by Gene Carr<sup>1</sup> found in a birthday card that my grandmother gave to her mother, date unknown.

I discovered the above illustration in a birthday card that my grandmother sent to her mother (see Figure 4). The date is unknown, and there is no explanation as to why my grandmother included this clipping in her birthday wishes, but to me this image and the

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<sup>1</sup> Gene Carr (January 7, 1881 – December 9, 1959) was an American cartoonist.

accompanying text captures the spirit of this study: two depictions of women, representing different generations, and the dichotomy between a woman's position as mother and homemaker, versus pursuing a career, personal wants, and a public life. Perhaps my grandmother sent this image to her mother when she was contemplating going back to school?

In this chapter, I employ a lens informed by feminist theory through which I explore dimensions of public/private lives, feminist genealogy, and material culture in relation to art and teaching practice. When conducting this research, I explored a myriad of fields of study and keyword combinations, considering that I was searching for information on my grandmother's era, as well as more contemporary literature relevant to my generation, and the interim years that connect our two lives with regard to waves of feminism. Buker (2003) epitomizes the fact that it is difficult to put boundaries on research regarding women and feminism because, as an area of inquiry, feminism touches on so many different fields and disciplines. She discusses how the field of Women's Studies is a 'meeting ground' for the disciplines, which gives perspective to the fact that my research is also an intersection of various veins of research, specifically art, teaching and life history. In turn, Eagleton (1996) reviews the construction of feminist literary studies, and puts certain weaknesses of feminism into perspective, such as inclusiveness and an exclusive history of empiricism, presenting new possibilities for an expanded definition of the term 'feminism' which I also take up in my work because of my use of stories (p.1).

It is important to note that when I refer to the notion of feminist genealogy, I do so in two ways. The first is with reference to the genealogical ties between my

grandmother and me: raised from the same family roots, independent thinkers, connected by my mother, and driven to disseminate our social standpoints through our creative practices. The second refers to the theoretical and philosophical genealogy that links waves of feminism throughout history, and in the case of the framework that guides this study, specifically second and third wave feminism (Reinharz, 1992; Harding, 1988, 1992; Alexander & Talpade Mohanty, 1997; Purvis, 2004). Equally imperative throughout this study is the need to consider the question of ethics and entitlement regarding my family's information, as well as the notion of 'voice,' and being clear about the fact that I am telling my version of my grandmother's story, understood in relation to my lived experiences, memories and research into her personal archive, and not her story as she lived it or may have constructed it over the course of her life (Aptheker, 1989; Haigwood, 2012; Stone, 2002). Epistemologically, such stories remind us that it can be very insightful to uncover the hidden educators and artists of the past, as in this case study (Stankiewicz, 1982). In doing so, we may gain a deeper understanding for the "day-to-day conduct of art education or in revealing basic assumptions of practitioners as differentiated from theories promoted by nationally recognized leaders" (Stankiewicz, 1982, p. 97). Ontologically, the premise of my inquiry is that by applying a process of uncovering information that is connected to the stories of women in my family, I may gain a deeper understanding of self with regard to where I am coming from, and in turn, where I am going as an artist, teacher and researcher.

## **Feminist Genealogy:**

To begin my deliberations, I turn to Ruddick and Daniels' (1977) seminal work which offers a collection of memoirs from women of all different creative corners that aims to reach out to other women by helping to expose their lived experiences and how they relate to one another. Reflective of second wave feminism, this collection represents, to me, my grandmother's generation, and given it was published in the years shortly after my research timeline, it provides a useful model for what it meant to be a woman and artist at that historic moment. Collectively, the memoirs provide "evidence of the damage that can be done to creative energy by the lack of a sense of continuity, historical validation, (and) community" (Ruddick & Daniels, 1977, p. xv). Each selection from the anthology deals with such issues in its own individual way. Reminiscent of my lived experiences, I identify with one essay in particular, entitled "In Search of Our Mother's Garden's" by Alice Walker. The artist remembers her mother's creative nature, much as I try to imagine my grandmother, how she made all of their clothes, towels, sheets, quilts, canned their fruits and vegetables, and greatest of all her creative endeavors – her garden. It is with such an aesthetic understanding as examples of MatriART in the lives of women that I lay the foundation for this study.

Grounded in feminist theory and particularly focusing on art education, Veltman (2002) questions who are the unacknowledged women in history, why were they unacknowledged, and by whom? Her research focuses on women in the arts, including literary research in the fields of feminist inquiry, art education, art history, women's studies, and education. She affirms that adopting a feminist lens to pedagogy can offer alternative and inclusive modes of education, as well as facilitating information on the

relationship between feminism and art education, and the implications of historical exclusiveness on women. It also highlights the positive effects that the feminist perspective, applied in education, can generate in, and outside of, the classroom, such as in a community, or family life setting. This feminist perspective can be applied to create a more inclusive and holistic learning environment. Considering that this research is conducted at Concordia University and it is connected to the history of women in the institution, as well as the Fine Arts department, I believe this study is an opportunity to rethink how institutions of learning are also sites of life writing. Given my grandmother's and my educational roots are founded in Concordia Fine Arts over a thirty-year period, chronicling her artistic experiences during her time as a student and comparing them with my own through the practice of life writing, exhibits the genealogy of MatriART within this study.

Addressing issues surrounding women, their place in the home, and their place in society, Alan and Baber (1992) examine the relationship between feminism and education. It is important here to consider that my grandmother was both a wife and mother of four during her academic and artistic pursuits, and that these details would have most certainly affected her experience. The authors question the positive implications of adopting a feminist approach to family life education by “investigating the structure and process of contemporary family life” (Alan & Baber, 1992, p. 378). Statistics from government censuses as well as independent studies were provided and applied to discuss areas such as ‘pedagogical accountability’ and ‘personal authenticity.’ They believe that “family structure and process is contested by the growing diversity of how people live as families and the frustration that marginalized groups, especially

women, feel in not achieving their goals of full personhood and equality” (Alan & Baber, 1992, p. 383). My study identifies with this research because it empathizes with the creative practices that my grandmother adopted in both her domestic routine, and facilitated to her children, through the notion of MatriART and authentic pedagogy of the home.

Dillabough (2005) explores “the relationship between symbolic notions of female domesticity and service as they have been expressed in liberal understandings of the nation state across time, together with accounts of contemporary Canadian and British working life as described by differently positioned women workers in teacher education” (p. 127). Although my grandmother was not a teacher by profession, this research can be applied to the fact that she was a working class mother of four, running a home while attending university classes, and maintaining a painting and poetry writing practice. Dillabough (2005) calls on the work of French sociological, anthropological, and philosophical pioneer, Pierre Bourdieu, and refers to his concept of ‘doxa’ in defining “the reproduction of historical legacies of symbolic domination, to an analysis of female work in teacher education” (p. 128). Dillabough utilizes this definition to support her main argument that surrounds teacher education having a gendered history, which has, in turn, created a paralleled dichotomy in the work of educators, and specifically women educators. This means that in the work force, and therefore in the work place, women are still being symbolically dominated, due to the systematic carry-over of stereotypes, stemming from past decades, and even the past century. This historical carrying over of stereotypes is relevant to my study as it is concerned with the genealogy of women, women workers, women educators, and consequently, waves of feminism. Dillabough

(2005) exemplifies the ramifications of this reality by evoking issues such as the “theoretical tensions inherent in analysis of female work in the academy,” arguing for “the development of a interdisciplinary theoretical framework for studying female work in the ‘social work’ disciplines,” as well as exposing “the links between the historical positioning of women’s work in the space of the ‘private’ and women’s exclusion from the domain of ‘citizenship’,” (p. 128).

In a discussion on the relationship between different waves of feminism, Kinser (2004) explores the “negotiation of spaces between feminisms” (p. 125), addressing the conversation of feminist genealogies while the author reviews the transition points and issues from one feminist wave to the next. She addresses the main themes within the second wave as moving out of private and into public space and working towards equal status in social roles, while the third wavers maintain a mentality that is more geared towards evolution and stretching the boundaries of ‘feminism,’ a shift that resonates with me as I consider my positionality and reflect upon my grandmother’s life story. This is echoed in van der Tuin (2009), who examines generational change in the field of feminist epistemology, focusing specifically on second- and third-wave feminisms. She claims that third-wave feminist epistemologists do not follow a specific framework, because ‘foundationalist’ second-wave paternal discourses would not “legitimize the theorization of qualitative, generational change in the order of feminist epistemology” (van der Tuin, 2009, p. 18). Like van der Tuin, Kinser guides the reader through a conversation on the rising paradigm of postfeminism and what that means for the third-wave, and feminism as a whole. She explains the stance of postfeminism as there no longer being a need for feminism or feminist initiatives, and asserts the effects that this kind of dismissal can

have on younger generations of women. With this perspective, Kinser (2004) states that perhaps “what is the most significant about a third wave is that it represents a complex effort to negotiate a space between second-wave and postfeminist thought” (p. 135). I relate to this statement based on where and when I first began my research and my critically thinking about feminist theory. I now recognize that in the past my mentality may have been leaning toward a postfeminist position. However, through this research and posing a feminist lens on my scope of inquiry, I have in turn become enlightened to the importance of this genealogical bridging between waves, and the pertinent role that this relationship holds in my thesis. Furthermore, I have experienced the complexities and continue to negotiate where I fit in the grander scheme of feminist representation. When discussing ‘feminist genealogy’ I am referring to the succession from second wave feminism that was engaged in further attaining equal rights and recognition in the public sphere and work force, to the third wave for who the notion of being a feminist is much more embedded in the details of everyday life such as media, technology, and identity in the face of globalization (Gillis & Munford, 2004; Snyder, 2008). In addition, my personal goal, through this study, is to contribute to the third wave feminist initiative within academia to uncover women’s stories, MatriARTful experiences, and contributions to who we are and where we are today, in relation to our foremothers.

This genealogical dimension is further developed by Tamboukou’s (2008) exploration of Deleuzo-Guattarian theories associated with the relationship between the concepts of ‘spatial relations drawing’ and ‘*machinic assemblage*,’ with regard to women and art education. The author presents these key concepts as “a useful analytical tool for making sense of the heterogeneity and meshwork of life narratives and their social

milieus” (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 359). The author goes on to discuss how a case study of Titcomb’s journey to becoming an artist was a long and winding path, affected by different geographical, cultural and social spaces, all relevant when considering Titcomb’s life history. Tamboukou (2008) insists that these details are all important factors when applying Deleuzo-Guattarian theory to unpack lives and narratives through “microsociological analyses that focus on process, deterritorializations, becomings and lines of flight, rather than striated spaces and structures, institutional segmentarities and motionless or fixed identities” (p. 360). This relates to my research through the idea of “lines of flight”, meaning one’s path and how it changes according to what and who one encounters along the way, and the importance of social milieus when regarding life narratives, particularly on one’s journey to becoming an artist. This perspective is applied when I discuss both my grandmother’s artful experiences as well as my own, and compare and contrast the two to exemplify the concept of MatriART, and how it is present in our life stories.

Turning to third-wave feminism, Mack-Canty (2004) examines and debates the need to reweave the nature/culture duality. She states that third-wave generational feminists and youth culture are the first generation to grow up with feminism as a part of their lives and recalls that largely “through the efforts of second-wave feminism, these younger feminists have inherited a different world than the one received by their feminist foremothers” (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 160). Mack-Canty (2004) also discusses aspects of popular culture, such as sexual identity and the hybridity and multiplicity of identities that affect young feminists much differently than older generations of women. She believes that although popular culture can be seen as a threat to the female experience, it

can also provide a platform for the theorizing of young feminists and youth cultures to reweave the nature/cultural dualism.

### **Material Culture:**

Continuing with this line of thought, paired with feminist informed theory, material culture also lends a large contribution in laying the groundwork for this study. Material culture is “a term that is broad-based in its meaning and application, and describes all human-made and modified forms, objects, and expressions manifested in the past and in our contemporary world” (Bolin & Blandy, 2003, p. 249). The employment of material culture theory within art education provides a well-rounded and inclusive perspective that culturally acknowledges what the individual and the collective “people of the past and present experience on a daily basis” through what Bolin and Blandy (2003) refer to as the exploration of ‘truly commonplace objects’ (p. 252). Specifically, within my study, material culture theory provides a field for the critical analysis of the similarities and differences between my grandmother’s life and my own by facilitating “the investigation and appreciation of the broadest possible range of objects, artifacts, spaces, expressions, and experiences” (Bolin & Blandy, 2003, p. 246). It implicates visual culture, pop culture, and cultural history as significant elements to consider in the analysis of MatriART, through the contextualizing of my grandmother’s experience as a woman during that time in history (1965-1975), her artwork, and her personal artifacts, in relation to my own considerations, visual representations, and writing within this thesis.

When she passed away in 1984, my grandmother left behind a personal archive with items such as vintage jewelry pieces, a collection of oil paints and paintings on

canvas, a book of poetry that she wrote and published while she was a student at Concordia, photographs, slides, a collection of greeting cards, a number of beautiful gowns including her wedding dress, and stacks of newspaper clippings, letters, and writing submissions. As a child, I formed relationships with these artifacts and I have very vivid memories of moments spent with these items, such as trying on all of her rings - all at once - one on every finger; examining each tube of her oil paints, squeezing them, trying to memorize every color name; reading her poems, trying to decipher the metaphors, wondering why they didn't rhyme; trying on her gowns, feeling - smelling- the beautiful cream-colored satin of her wedding dress, imagining how beautiful she must have looked on her wedding day. As an adult, still in possession of all these artifacts, and now as the subject and object of my research, I find myself asking questions concerning the relationships that she may have had with each of these items, what aspects of her life they were representative of, and why I have kept them all these years, not knowing if I would ever make use of them, or how I might undertake my practice as an artist, researcher and teacher in relation to representations of my grandmother.

Bolin and Blandy (2003) advocate for material culture studies as a viable theoretical foundation for art education which, similar to feminist theory, embraces “far-reaching holistic forms and practices that can be critically examined through the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary methods associated with material culture studies” (p. 246). They believe that in our multimedia, and increasingly multi-sensory world, it is vital that we, as art educators, embrace multimodal forms of art education. Bolin and Blandy (2003) also posit that if we continue to sanction solely visual experiences, consequently leaving our students vulnerable to manipulation through

other sensory modalities, “our field will continue to perpetuate the disciplinary and sensory boundaries that fail to encourage a holistic and systemic understanding of experience” (p. 247). This theorization applies to my research because my method of study triangulates arts-based and qualitative research through life writing, artifacts and visual art to experience my grandmother’s archive, my analysis and findings, and in turn demonstrate the genealogical lineage of MatriART, in a multimodal format.

Discussing the relationship between material culture and cultural history, Grassby (2005) highlights that, whether communicated through words or visual representation, cultural imperatives dictate a portion of material life. He names ‘metaphor’ and ‘symbolism’ as cultural tools used to generate human responses in specific historical contexts, and for this reason, Grassby (2005) believes “historians of material culture use artifacts, as well as written evidence, to reconstruct the patterns of meaning, values, and norms shared by members of society” (p. 592). Paramount is the notion that visual images, written word, and tactile objects are artifacts that, if carefully interpreted, help to reconstruct a person’s or culture’s everyday life and process. Objects carry social and personal information due to the fact that they are produced at a particular moment in time, within a certain context. Likewise by applying material culture theory as a tool to reveal elements of cultural history, or how people understand themselves, their character, interests, and quality of life, we may “communicate relationships and mediate progress through the social world; their diffusion bridges cultural boundaries and connects centers with peripheries” (Grassby, 2005, p. 593). Grassby (2005) highlights how the significance of objects is measured by various elements including cultural associations, histories, and social contexts. Relating to feminist theory, the objects within my

grandmother's archive can be analyzed according to what aspect of her life they represented, with regard to their feminist implications: culturally, historically, and socially. This process is important when considering the notion of MatriART, viewed through art pieces as objects within the archive, as well as other material objects within the archive that may have influenced her artistic process.

Further examining the relationship between material culture, cultural history, and feminism, by way of the construction of postwar femininity, Moseley (2008) looks at “the ways in which the work of Marguerite Patten, one of the first television cookery presenters and a prolific cookery writer, can be seen to have attended to questions we would now understand as engaging with a feminist agenda” (p.17). This literature is important, because it discusses the notion of postwar domesticity, a situation that my grandmother was living in her everyday life, and from a pop culture perspective, representations of domesticity through television arguably reflected and influenced the viewing public, and by extension, my grandmother. Moseley (2008) discusses how Patten, who became a household name through her work in both radio and television, addressed the difficult situation that women were facing, encouraged women to send her in their queries, and “offered suggestions to help women manage their domestic and professional responsibilities” (p. 17). This is particularly relevant because my grandmother was dealing with a similar dynamic of balancing her domestic life and her academic pursuits. Moseley (2008) also presents Patten as a staple in the umbrella of daytime television for women, appearing in programming that included “literature, art, music, fashion, shopping, DIY, childcare, and cookery”(p. 18).

Genz (2008) also discusses these issues but with the eye of a twenty-first-century renaissance in domesticity among contemporary women, and I recognize aspects of this in my own life. Examining a new, postfeminist position, Genz (2008), sheds light on the nouveau housewife as being a choice. Exemplified are popular figures such as *The Food Network's* 'domestic goddess' Nigella Lawson, and business mogul, ex-president of Pepsi-Cola North America's Brenda Barnes, who famously gave up her multi-million dollar position and made the choice to return to housewifery (p. 49). Genz (2008) asserts that the postfeminist housewife is characterized by the fact that "she renegotiates and resignifies her domestic/feminine position, deliberately choosing to 'go home'" (p. 50). However, Genz (2008) does conclude by stating that what we need to do in this day and age is "rethink domestic femininity itself and analyze its various resignifications without predetermined definitions and demarcations" (p. 59). This concept is addressed in my data analysis with regard to MatriART, in the way that my grandmother treated the domestic aspect of her life as a creative venue, and passed this tradition onto her children, and consequently, to me. For this reason, my relationship with domesticity is interrelated with my art practice, and research.

In a discussion regarding the cultural impact of pop icons like Martha Stewart as a business empire and a contemporary domestic guru, Lackey (2003) considers whether Martha Stewart's role in society can be viewed as that of an art educator. The author opens the conversation by canvassing the reasons for recent increasing focus on Martha Stewart in scholarly analysis associated with the field of art education, such as inquiry into material culture implications of "what does she teach and what is her practice," as well as "emphasizing issues of gender and class surrounding Martha's persona and

production” (Lackey, 2003, p. 209). Lackey (2003) believes that as art educators, if we cannot avoid Stewart’s media influence in everyday life, “whether it be by way of her magazines, syndicated television show, home décor lines, or one of thirty-five published books, it is our responsibility to consider how this may reach and affect our students,” and as an art teacher, I agree (p. 210). She then presents her case for Stewart as an educator by arguing that rather than simply being media rhetoric, because Martha’s message when ‘speaking’ to viewers is “deliberately designed to communicate and influence – (it) is, in that sense, pedagogical” (Lackey, 2003, p. 210). Lackey (2003) goes on to exemplify how Martha’s ‘curriculum creates a dichotomy for art educators, in that although “her work seems to valorize artistic practices traditionally associated with women” and foster “anti-elitist, democratizing conceptions of art in its emphasis on useful projects and craft,” there is also large importance placed on following ‘step-by-step’ instructions, in provided ‘kits’, and art educators worry that within this ‘framework’ there is minimal, if any, room left for individual creativity (p. 211). This is to say, rather than promoting artful practices, Stewart’s product may be hindering one’s conceptual growth, making her ‘a bad thing’. Lackey (2003) then suggests how this conundrum can be used as a focus for critical art education by giving examples of how Martha Stewart “has been the focus of artists interested in social criticism, as well as writers published in academic and mainstream realms”(p. 212). Lackey states that studying a subject such as Martha Stewart can provide insight into the kind of social pedagogy that occurs through media and enterprise, and through understanding this dynamic, we as educators can use this knowledge by adapting it into curriculum for our classrooms.

Dalton (2010) extends this conversation by investigating notions associated with the ways that female teachers are portrayed in popular cinema and “discusses how feminist scholars have positively influenced the way we understand teachers’ lives with regard to gender, an influence generated largely through the use of narrative research techniques” (Dalton, 2010, p. 87). Dalton takes us on a retrospective journey through a list of female teacher character portrayals in a number of Hollywood movies (Bruckheimer, Simpson & Smith, 1995; Coe & Penn, 1962; Cresson, Fryer & Neame, 1969; Johanson & Newell, 2003) while exemplifying stereotypes in role casting, as well as the “remarkable intertextuality between the research conducted by feminist scholars on women teachers’ lives and the lives of women teachers in the movies” (p. 87). The author explains that in recent years, there has been a shift in the way the academy views narrative research associated with feminist perspectives and oral history, and that rather than being viewed as a purely and traditionally ethnographic approach, scholars are now taking a more critical stance with regard to this methodology. In applying this method of inquiry, I am able to identify common themes, stereotypes, and perspectives that women in my family identify with and that are connected to, through lived experiences. Furthermore, this allows ‘subjects’ (to) become ‘participants’ and opens a space for their voices and active roles in the research project” (p. 88). Dalton reassures that this does not mean that she believes in the removal of the role of ‘researcher,’ but rather that this approach, facilitates the ‘object’ to become the ‘subject,’ and in turn, gives the interviewees the opportunity to claim and name their experience. Dalton gives examples of other scholars who have successfully used this method in their research, such as Carol Witherall and Nel Noddings, in their 1991 publication *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and*

*Dialogue in Education*, a book that discusses such notions as ‘theorizing the self’ and ‘forming the self’. Although Dalton (2010) draws from these studies, she states that her main purpose is to “demonstrate that there is a reason to draw connections between the lives of women teachers constructed in their own narratives and the social construction of women teachers in popular culture” (p. 88). Within this study, it is important to consider cultural views of women during the 60’s and 70’s, with regard to my grandmother’s generation and second wave feminism, as well as if, and how, such views have changed in contemporary society and popular culture, with regard to both women of her generation and mine (Bazin & White, 2006).

**Presentism:**

If we are to consider the positive implications associated with material culture theory and cultural history, then we must also consider the limitations and constraints that ‘symbolism’ and ‘metaphor’ may have on critical research. Although material culture artifacts do carry significance, the issue remains that the physical evidence of material culture theory is, at times, somewhat ambiguous, and artifacts “cannot reveal underlying cultural values without other evidence (Grassby, 2005, p. 599).

For this reason, I believe that it is important to acknowledge a reciprocal set of theoretical values which employ a lens that only sees what is here and now: presentism (Bigelow 1996; Crisp, 2004; Hestevold & Carter, 2002; Sider, 1999). Presentism, known as the doctrine of ‘nothing exists but the present,’ or to offer an account recently given, presentism is the view that ‘everything that exists – exists now’ (Crisp, 2004, p. 18). This ontology encourages me to question if my grandmother’s artifacts exist in the present

moment, and what is my current relationship with them? For example, how was the fact that my grandmother graduated university in the same class as her son, viewed back then? What were the historical implications and how and why would it be viewed differently now? Because presentism is also a process of viewing the past through the values, beliefs, and societal norms of today, the dualistic relationship between presentism and material culture history also complements the dynamic of this research with regard to my grandmother's life then, my life now, and how our lives and stories connect and differ from my point of view in the present. Jurist (1992) refers to this process of comprehending ourselves as emerging from the past as a means to "see how the past lives on within us, and how the past is alien to us" (p. 175). Chisholm (2008) applies this notion of emerging from the past through her studies in feminist phenomenology, as the 'ascent' of women, a concept originally coined 'ascente' by de Beauvoir (1953) and that Chisholm (2008) states has "several definitions in French, including 'the action of climbing a mountain' and 'the social action or rising toward an ideal' (p.12). In the following chapter, I review the key concepts of phenomenology as a point of departure from which to describe the methodological structure of my study, and the importance of how the past has ascended to the present, through women and art.

### Chapter. 3

#### Methodology: Researching the Past through Qualitative and Arts-Based

#### Approaches

My methodological framework is rooted in phenomenology and arts-based research disseminated through textual and visual life writing, while working with a personal archive of artworks, photographs, a book of poetry, and published documents, through which I seek to presently understand the past and how it affects the future (Harootunian, 2007). I elected to adopt a mixed-methods approach in my study given the unique nature of my personal and public data sources, and the genealogical aspect of working with familial stories. Creswell (1998) describes how qualitative research is “an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material” (p. 13). While this portrayal is in line with the way I view my study, I would like to appropriate this description and metaphorically synonymize the “color” with “arts-based research.” My study is intricate, multi-layered, intertextual, and therefore, it is not one that can be a simple approach from one direction, nor by one method. The nature of my research question is both qualitative and arts-based; I question how my grandmother’s lived experiences through her art generated a tradition of creative practice, and how this is and is not reflected in my own art and lived experiences. Therefore, the methods that I use to come to findings regarding my question must be both qualitative and arts-based, and founded in experience, interpretation, and perception – textually and visually.

**Phenomenology:**

When initially beginning my research for this study, I turned to Creswell (1998) to provide an overview of different research methodologies that one can use to compare and contrast when attempting to match their research question and method of inquiry. In my case, I drew upon the research tradition of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a branch of qualitative research that is based in human social science and explores concepts, or phenomena, with a focus on lived experiences and how they connect to others. Creswell (1998) discusses different avenues in phenomenology, stating that his preferred manner is the ‘psychological approach,’ which has at its center individual experiences, rather than group experiences. I connected with this statement because although my question addresses both my grandmother and me, the research involves our individual lived experiences and how her experiences have affected mine. Specifically, I chose hermeneutic phenomenology because it is befittingly “the study of lived experiences,” in this case through visual/literary texts, which is central to my question. It is also comprised of a set of methods that facilitates the methods of arts-based research, demonstrated in Bresler’s (2006) article, and the research presented in Baxter, Lopez, Serig and Sullivan (2008).

The seminal work of Gadamer (2006) informed my understanding, in particular, deliberations on hermeneutics as both a practice and an art that is able to understand and explain the seemingly hidden. It requires skills in interpretation of language, text, and images, when the meaning of something is unclear, as well as skill in then relating the message in lucid terms. Gadamer (2006) refers to this process of interpretation as “that of translating something foreign or unintelligible into the language everybody speaks and

understands” (p. 29). For example, I applied this method when interpreting my grandmother’s poetry, and when analyzing visual metaphor in my grandmother’s paintings, which I then deliberated on through reflective writing. Modern humanistic hermeneutics involves a methodological consciousness that commands not only interpretation and translation, but justification as well. When hermeneutics are applied in qualitative research, as in this study, information and artifacts are analyzed, both individually and in relation to each other, to create a well-rounded and justified understanding of the subject and object. At the same time, I assessed hermeneutics and phenomenology with a lens informed by feminist mindset. As O’Neill (2007) notes of Gadamer’s approach, such work requires an attention to the criticism it has received from feminist scholars who “observe that his life’s work neglects feminine aspects of understanding, many of them essential to the creation of art and the integrity of educational inquiry” (p. 325). O’Neill invokes Virginia Woolf’s analysis of gender in *A Room of One’s Own* as an exemplar of feminist theorizing that challenges androcentric epistemology, as she revisits Gadamer’s hermeneutics. It was particularly important to consider feminist views towards hermeneutics within my study being that I am presenting MatriART as the phenomena of feminist genealogy and life teaching in art education, meaning the theoretical framework for my research process and subject are grounded in feminism. Lived experiences of women from one generation to another within a family can reveal patterns of feminist thought and actions, a particularly important factor to consider within my research that examines the legacy of creative traditions among women in my family.

Bringing this perspective to bear on my study, I explored my grandmother's personal artifacts by following a combination of Creswell's (1998) method of phenomenological data analysis, van Manen's (2001) hermeneutic methodological breakdown and most importantly, O'Neil's theoretical position. In addition to the body of artwork and book of poetry, there remained an extensive collection of slide reels ranging from the late 50's to the 80's, as well as a plethora of cards of correspondence with various family members and friends, personal artifacts, applications for various creative and professional ventures, as well as newspaper and magazine clippings. Creswell (1998) states that phenomenological data analysis "proceeds through the methodology of reduction," and in keeping with this method, I first sorted through all of her artifacts as "raw data," removing everything that did not fall in the allotted time period of 1965-1975 (p. 52). From there, I proceeded as Creswell (1998) suggests, "relying on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience" (p. 52). I read her writings, examined her visual art, and executed the reflective writing process of hermeneutic phenomenology, which exercises weaving my "phenomenological description against the existentials of temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), (and) sociality (lived relationship to others)" (van Manen, 2001, p. 172). Such reflective analysis underpins the phenomenality of MatriART and interplays with notions of feminism by considering what it meant to be a woman during that era, in the middle of the second wave feminist revolution, and more specifically, a forty-year-old mother of four returning to university after a twenty year leave, to finish her degree in the arts.

van Manen (2001) provided an in-depth theoretical and practical breakdown of hermeneutic phenomenology specifically for the field of education in which the researcher can adapt and apply when proceeding with their research. In my case, I found van Manen to be very helpful in explaining the premise of human science research, which I had not totally grasped from Creswell. van Manen was useful in gaining an understanding of the importance of the general, as well as the specific, of research. Being mindful of this was also helpful when I broke down my data into themed groupings for analysis. van Manen's (2001) methodological explanations, as well as systematic approaches to identifying, obtaining, analyzing and drawing findings from experiential data are very compatible with the different aspects, and many layers of my research. For instance, qualitatively, I am studying my grandmother's life as well as her lived experiences, and therefore must incorporate biographical elements of research as well. When analyzing her poetry, I referred to van Manen's (2001) method of using diaries, journals, and logs as data sources for lived experiences. I applied his approach to visual art as a data source, as well as thematic analysis, when I considered her paintings. When it came to the arts-based methodological aspect of my study, hermeneutic phenomenology supported my practice by being both sensitive to its tacit nature and complementary to its tactile qualities.

Bresler (2006) introduced me to hermeneutic phenomenology's close association with arts-based research. It was at this point that I felt I had truly situated my research question and methodology. Bresler (2006) discusses "the ways in which the arts provide rich and powerful models for perception, conceptualization, and engagement for both makers and viewers" as well as the potential to "cultivate *habits of mind*" (p. 52).

Bresler's (2006) description of the connections between qualitative and aesthetically (or arts) based research speaks to the visual and written nature of my inquiry and was a useful model when executing my research. She also discusses the "tri-directional" relationship that the researcher/artist must adopt with this kind of approach: the connection to the artwork (or phenomena), the dialogical connection to the self, and the connection to the audience (Bresler, 2006, p. 54). Therefore, I adopted Creswell's notion of individual experience, van Manen's attention to the details as well as to the whole, and Bresler's focus on the connection between the qualitative and the aesthetic in developing a "tri-directional" relationship in my research.

### **Arts-based Research:**

With a phenomenological lens bracketing my study of lived experiences, my own visual art practice served as another way into analysis, and brought a visual component to bear on my study. Baxter, Serig, Lopez and Sullivan (2008) highlight the capacity of studio art practice research in the field of art and design education to interpret cultural, social, and educational concerns, and question why despite the effective qualities of arts-based research, "studio art continues to be ignored as a site and source for research in art education" (p. 4). With this in mind, I created a studio component as a visual representation of data analysis process and findings (see Appendix). In Baxter et. al., (2008), studio practice is discussed as a way to provide "further insight into additional questions, research methods and limitations, as well as possibilities for analysis" (p. 8). It also acknowledges the importance of 'reflexivity as ongoing dialogue,' and presents art practice as "a flexible but robust form of inquiry" that embraces constructing new

knowledge as a creative and critical process (Baxter et al., 2008, p. 17). I believe that creation at the same time as qualitative analysis helped in bringing new data to light in my case by creating a space to visually juxtapose data from both of our lives. Through this process, I was able to more readily clarify already existing data, and from this data create new information in the form of generated themes that surfaced as a result of visual interpretations (Rose, 2007, 2013). This supports what Serig refers to as “the transition from results to findings” (Serig, 2008, p.12). Serig (2008), whose dissertation research explored a phenomenographic and arts-based approach to visual metaphor (relating very closely to my research), reflects on how meaning emerged from his continuous art practice and how his “reflective practices were an essential process of doing the research” (p. 13). We see that although hermeneutic phenomenological reflective writing is a very effective and useful tool in research that involves contextualizing lived experience, reflective art practice can be equally as fruitful when regarding procedure and data analysis.

From Sullivan (2010) I adopted an approach to build a research project around studio inquiry that acknowledged “the theoretical depth and breadth that artists take on through their art making as they assume a multiplicity of roles as meaning makers, cultural commentators, social critics, teachers, and the like” (p. 191). Sullivan (2010) states that artistic practices “explore experiences as a site for knowledge and understanding involve conceptualizing visual ideas and structures in various forms” (p. 195). This process of conceptualization “involves grounding ways of perceiving things and setting in place structures that serve as the interpretive lens we use to make sense of the world around us” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 195). This translates directly to my research as I

explored my grandmother's experience (hermeneutic), then conceptualized (arts-based) my perception visually and through life writing practices (arts-based and hermeneutic) as an interpretative relationship between her world and mine, in an effort to demonstrate the evidence of MatriART. This means that I used an aesthetically arts based (Bresler, 2006) method through which to interpret both the visual and textual properties of my grandmother's works and assessed meaning in my own visual art practice.

Through this framework, I realized that I have memories of certain paintings and poems from when I was a child, certain paintings that over the years I have grown to form relationships with, that I still connect with every time I see them on the walls of my childhood home. I revisited these art works and the memories I had with them, and asked myself if and how they have changed, how my perception has changed, or remained the same, over the years. Through questioning my perception of her work, I also considered that my interpretations could change as I moved through the other sections of her artifacts, or as I become older, mature as a woman, and gain new experiences in my life. Such considerations inform my research understandings and my interpretations. While asking all of these questions of my grandmother's experience, I also adapted them and asked them of my own experience. By doing this, I began to see the differences and similarities of our experiences, and how her experiences have, and have not, affected mine. For example, the images below illustrate an example of my grandmother's painting practice (left), and my own (right), and how I executed my analysis in this study:



Figure 5: (left) *Untitled*, Yolande Tomiuk, circa 1969-1974, 18'x24', mixed media on masonite board, and  
Figure 6: (right) *Untitled*, Erin McCarthy, 2006, 18'x24', acrylic on canvas.

I considered the visual characteristics of my grandmother's piece: composition, color palette, texture, and genre. I then moved to the contextual aspect: late 60's/early 70's, possibly an abstract of a flower, and what that meant from a second wave feminist standpoint? Perhaps it was just a flower with no further significance beyond the aesthetic appreciation my grandmother may have felt for her work. But when I correlated this information to examine my painting, I reassessed the similarities, differences, and with regard to MatriART, from a feminist genealogical lens, the relationships between the second and third wave perspectives. Based on such ongoing reflective practice, I established a baseline of how and why I perceive her story and my story in particular ways, and how the personal archive I hold of my grandmother's life informs my practice as an art educator.

### **Working with Archives and Researching within Collections:**

Using a combined phenomenological and arts-based research design, my study is further inspired by Stankiewicz (1982) and the process of historical research that

documents women art educators of the past through recounting their lived experiences. I believe, as a researcher, I must acquaint myself with a variety of resources to fulfill this study, and that my working with a small archive sometimes “resembles clerical work; at other times, it requires the detective skills of Miss Marple” (Stankiewicz, 1982, p. 96). In a related publication regarding the practice of *Working in Womens’ Archives*, Buss & Kadar (2001) present an excellent example of what my research regards as MatriART through a collection of essays that examine the processes of chronicling women’s personal histories. They examine women’s research experiments in the laboratory of archival collections of women’s writings, resulting in “the fortuitous coming together of feminist theory, the breaking of traditional limitations set by the idea of a literary ‘canon’ of great writers and the increased use of archives to rescue a female tradition of writing” (Buss, 2001, p. 1). Within the collection, Kerr (2001) draws a direct parallel to the foundation for my study in her article “Reading my Grandmother’s Life from her Letters: Constance Kerr Sissons from Adolescence to Engagement.” Kerr uses her grandmother’s archive as a collection of research that reveals her grandmother’s life, condition, and experiences. I am also using my grandmother’s archive as a collection of research to explore and reveal her life and condition, and how her experiences do, and do not, relate to mine.

Reflecting on the intersecting relationship between collecting objects and historical research, Snider (2013) states that collecting has always been a part of her life and role as an art educator, and that she has come to realize that “we often initiate research projects with the collection of bits and pieces of related material of interest to us” (p. 28). She relates her process of writing papers and how research on a subject, in

itself, can be viewed as building a collection of information. The collected information is then reprocessed, and the pieces of the collection fit together through the process of writing the paper. Snider believes that as collectors, “we are like storytellers or seers, knowing that somehow, some day, these things we collect will serve as placeholders in our memory” (Snider, 2013, p. 30). I am lucky enough to have this collection as a result of my grandmother perhaps having that same intuition that Snider (2013) speaks of and keeping her collected memories, which were then left in parts to my mother and her sisters. Also passed down to my mother was the collecting ‘bug.’ She will claim to this day that it is not her choice and that she always gets stuck with people’s ‘stuff’ when they move or pass away, but there is a reason why she keeps it all. I believe that it is in part because she does not want to be the one to throw away the boxes that contain a person’s life, and maybe she sees the potential in them to become something more. Perhaps she has passed this belief on to me and it has influenced me to make something more of my grandmother’s archive.

Ever since I was a child, the garage at our home had been filled with different collections of items such as, antique irons, wooden doors, glass bottles, and scrap pieces of wood, metal, and assorted materials that have made their way into my various art projects. This kind of collecting has long been foundational in my ways of being in the world. Similarly, examining the process by which, and reasons behind, my intuitive tendencies towards collecting, Pearse (2013) states that collecting “like research and art making, is a process, beginning in curiosity and wonderment – that spark of recognition when one notices that a thing or an object is worth keeping available for repeated viewing or contemplation but gradually requiring some sort of form or order and method of

presentation” (p. 8). In the basement of my mother’s house, there were more collections to explore: boxes and bins of old letters and photos, chests full of old clothing, and shelves arranged with material artifacts belonging to our French, Ukrainian, and Norwegian predecessors – it was my own personal museum of cultural history to explore at my leisure. Among this wealth of material information, was my grandmother’s archive, which conjured certain memories of the woman I had known for only a short time when I was young, and introduced me to the person that she was and the different aspects of her life, such as her art practice and academic pursuits. I had always known that she was an artist, but I did not remember ever hearing any stories about her returning to university as a mature student.

Taking up the conversation of memory within my study, I also considered Hirsch’s (2008) notion of ‘postmemory’ and the tradition of transgenerational transmission of lived experiences. She explains that within the dynamic of the family lies a site for communication that stretches beyond the confines of social and public norms of speech to “a form of expression that is both more direct and more ruthless” (Hirsch, 2008, p.112). In the case of my study, this research speaks to both the memory of my mother passed from my grandmother, but also to the third generation of postmemorial experiences passed on (my grandmother), and through (my mother), to me. Postmemory is characterized by trauma within relationship that the second generation take on from the preceding generation, and although my family history was not marked by the holocaust as in Hirsch’s case, there are aspects of the importance of artefacts and stories that can be extended to genealogical studies like mine, where MartriART chronicles the experiences and relationships between different generations of feminism, and specifically women in

my family. According to Hirsch, memory within families, and particularly between first and second generation, constitute “experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch, 2008, p.110). In a number of ways, I identify with this understanding when I think of my grandmother. For example, regarding the use of photography, and particularly family photography (Rose, 2003), as tool in the transmission of lived experience, Hirsch (2008) describes the medium as clarifying “the connection between familial and affiliative postmemory and the mechanisms by which public archives and institutions have been able to both reembody and reindividualize ‘cultural/archival memory’”(p. 115). When I revisited my grandmother’s boxes a few years ago while researching a paper during my first semester of my Master’s, the following images were two of the primary documents to spark my interest in this study because of the parallel they draw to my studies at Concordia as a connecting element in our life paths as women, artists, and academics.

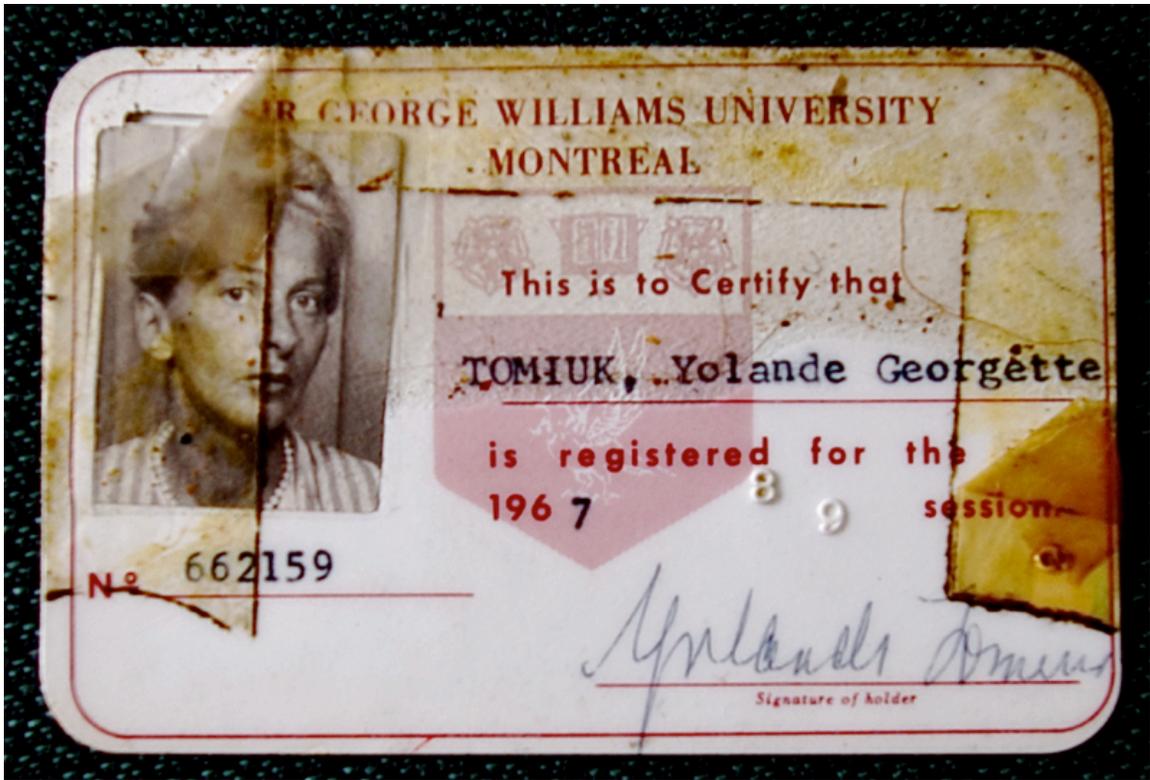


Figure 7: (1967). My grandmother's identification card for Sir George Williams (now Concordia University).



(Pearse, 2013, p. 15). Pearse (2013) concludes by suggesting that “for those who search for an artistic basis for their research, collecting is an obvious and solid model, indeed an actual process and practice” (p. 17). This approach made so much sense to me as both my grandmother and I were/are artists and our artwork is not only relevant, but also imperative, to this research.

In more fully exploring the relationship between the collector and the art educator, Pariser (2013) examines the role of things collected as representing the identity of the collector; the relationship between individual collected objects and the collection as a whole; and the effects of collections on memory as illuminating versus obscuring (p. 19). He suggests that, “it is the special interests and passions of the collector that animate the collection, and that the collection is, in effect a representation of the collector – a portrait made up of an agglomeration of related objects” (Pariser, 2013, p. 19). Pariser discusses the instinct of collecting and relates it to artists, historical and contemporary, who have utilized this instinct to portray ‘portraits’ of collections. He compares these portraits as a means of exemplifying how different types of collections function as visual representations of a certain emotion, an answer to a question, or capture a specific moment in time. Pariser (2013) states that, if organized properly, collections can serve as useful resources that can be navigated to facilitate curriculum. He continues on to say that this sort of identification “suggests a link between collecting and the practice of art teaching” (p. 25). In the following poem, I demonstrate how this link between collecting and art can be facilitated through literary arts, extracted from my grandmother’s book, *The Lemon Bite* (Tomiuk, 1970, p. 6):

## THE SCENE BEHIND THE SCENE

Behind that face  
Of lacquered door  
And entry to  
A polished floor-  
A decorator's dream  
That sweeps from wall to wall  
In red or gold or  
Velvet green.

I know there's yet  
Another scene-  
The one behind.

At Vertu Station-  
Hear the chug,  
Watch the stop.  
I've seen it all before-  
Or was it just a smile?

The porch in regulation  
6 x 4.  
A ladder hangs  
Against the red brick- the second rate,  
And in the corner garbage spills  
In pails, in boxes, bags at will.

Bikini sharing clothesline space  
With 2 black socks.  
Shadowy nylons dripping still  
And after dinner thought-

One, lone, red-checkered dish cloth.

An Upside-Downer guards the door-  
The faithful, graying floor mop.

Working with an archive of literary and visual art, I turned to Leavy (2009) who exemplifies the myriad of possibilities when combining the art of poetry with qualitative research. Leavy (2009) states that the use of poetry “in the production of social scientific knowledge has increased greatly in recent decades” (p. 63). She unpacks the emergence of poetry as a social research method, and the various methodological approaches to, analysis of, and dissemination through, poetic research. She highlights an area particularly relevant to my research on poetry as biographical research wherein she offers an example of how the researcher’s “process consisted of drawing out central images, words, and ideas from the whole” body of work, while still maintaining attention to the individual details of the study (Leavy, 2009, p. 74). This method runs parallel to van Manen’s (2001) importance placed on the general as well as the specific, and was applied to my grandmother’s book of poetry when regarding the entire publication and each individual poem. In this text, Leavy (2009) also demonstrates how poetry can “provide meaning, evoke emotion, and engage in reflective practice” (p. 71).

### **Poetic Inquiry:**

Further demonstrating the power and importance of poetic discourse by deliberating on five characteristics of poetry that he has come to recognize, Leggo (2004) believes that poetry is: ‘prophetic’, ‘healing’, ‘ludic’, ‘meditative’, and ‘full of truth’. In my analysis, I adopted these characteristics to develop my understandings and

interpretations that then inform how I construct my grandmother's life story with a phenomenological lens, and respond to her works through my own visual art practice. Leggo (2004) states that there are many other reasons for which that poetic language shapes and animates knowing and understanding, but that these five particular characteristics "contribute to an ongoing dialogue among language educators about the value of living poetry in our personal and professional lives" (Leggo, 2004, p. 2). When reading my grandmother's poetry, this statement was evocative because it speaks to the relationship between personal and professional lives and how one affects the other. In my grandmother's situation of home life versus scholarly pursuits, this dynamic was a huge part of her experiences and unquestionably manifests itself in her poetry. For this reason, I believe that poetic inquiry utilized in my study facilitates "understanding and promoting poetry as a discursive structure for informing, shaping, and guiding our living and learning experiences" (Leggo, 2004, p.2).

Borrowing further from Leggo (2005), the relationship between practice as a poet and a teacher, and how one informs the other to create a dynamic of 'living poetically' summarizes how I proceed into my methods of inquiry. He once again offers readers a list; this time, six ways to live creatively as students and teachers through a pedagogy of the heart. Leggo affirms that living poetically is to: 'live in language', 'to love', 'to know the backyard', 'to be still', 'to live with trust', and 'to laugh with indefatigable hopefulness'. I chose the above example of my grandmother's poetry to demonstrate the notion of 'living poetically'. In her poem, my grandmother writes about her everyday life – the everyday life that she here turned into poetry. The details of her life as a homeowner, homemaker, and creative woman are displayed in such a way that turns

chore into chorus. There is also a common holistic theme within Leggo's (2009) list, and these characteristics give insight for patterns to look for within grandmother's poetry. He states that in much of his poetry and research, he ruminates on "relationship, family, community, school culture, becoming human, and attending to silence" (Leggo, 2009, p. 147). He continues that hovering over these topics as an umbrella is the keynote of 'love,' that he listens, and looks, for in his pursuits of poetic living. This notion of love above all has resonated with me because there are so many different meanings of, and for, the word 'love'. For example, just a few variations given by the Oxford Dictionaries (2014) are "a strong feeling of affection, affectionate greetings conveyed to someone on one's behalf, a great interest and pleasure in something, a person or thing that one loves" (oxforddictionaries.com). For me, love is all of these things, and I feel that my whole study is in a sense driven by love: love for remembering the history of the women in my family, love for experiencing the processes of this research and what I continue to discover, and love of creating a literary and visual memoir and family archive that will exist in the future for others to explore.

## Chapter 4.

### Interpretations and Understandings: Arts Research across Familial Generations

Thus woman is related to *nature*, she incarnates it: vale of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the material beauty and the soul of the world. She can hold the keys to *poetry*; she can be *mediatrix* between this world and the beyond: grace or oracle, star or sorceress, she opens the door to the supernatural, the surreal.

(de Beauvoir, 1953, p. 248)

This quote is an example of the many facets of a woman, just as this research is important not only on a personal level, but to describe for others how a deeper understanding of the way we are affected by our lived experiences, as well as the lived experiences of others, including those who came before us, can define women's ways of being in the world as artists, teachers and researchers. This is particularly significant when we consider the different paths and waves of feminism, and how our foremothers, and in my case how my grandmother has been an inspiration and paved the way for me as a creatively resourceful and humanistic thinker. This study also exemplifies how art and creative thinking can be facilitated outside the classroom, or included in community and even home settings, where art practice can be a product of mentorship from a very young age and even from beyond the grave, as in my case, suggesting the integration of a feminist genealogical pattern from both a holistic and a critical theory approach. With regard to art education, O'Fallon (1995) discusses theoretical and critical perspectives, drawing attention to the

need to participate in public discourse regarding the future of the relationship between art and education. With underpinnings of lived experience and arts-based research, there is emphasis put on the virtue that we must be mindful that “as artists and as educators, we know that it is the way we act within the web of the human relationships that makes education powerful” (O’Fallon, 1995, p. 27).

Comparable to my mixed methods approach, as scaffolding for her study, Wilson Kind (2003) works within her grandmother’s archive to ‘(re)discover’ her mother and her grandmother, using a combination of life history, autobiography, and arts-based research. I related to her accounts of how art making was a way of making sense and constructing meaning in experiences, and that it was through “doing, constructing, cutting, tearing, gluing, reconstructing, and imaging” that the color shapes and images began speaking back to her (Wilson Kind, 2003, p. 17). I drew from this research as an example of MatriART as Wilson Kind (2003) was unveiling the connected life histories of the women in her family, and tracking her process through her art practice. As both a visual tool to map out my data and demonstrate the lines of likeness (Raymond, 1986; Reinharz, 1992) that parallel my grandmother’s life and mine, and as a creative expression of what this study ‘looks like’ to me, I created a series of four 14”x18” canvases in response to my interpretations of the data. This polyptych series, *Data Map*, 2014, was executed in mixed media on canvas, and acted as my ongoing ‘laboratory,’ where I used photographed clippings of my grandmother’s collections to ask questions, investigate notions and work to come to conclusions, and where my results became findings (see Figure 9). Bergland (2013) discusses the notion of using collections in visual studio practice, stating that each item he collects “enters the collection with an expectation that

it will serve multiple roles in an active studio setting” (p. 36). As I discovered through my process, and as Bergland (2013) notes, although each item and collection act as a separate entity, they integrate with each other and act “as agents of creative meaning within the studio journey” (p. 43). See Figure 9 on the following page:



Figure 9: Erin McCarthy, *Data Map*, 2013. Mixed media on canvas, four panel polypptych, 72”x14”.

Working with the archive, I found many data fragments about my grandmother, yet no cohesive story emerged about my grandmother beyond a general timeline and overarching themes. Also, it is important to note here that working within the limits of the timeframe being examined within this study, the findings and interpretations are restricted to specific sections that demonstrate the likenesses which parallel our experiences, and are not meant to provide full accounts of my grandmother's life. *Data map* is the culmination of these data fragments, found in the textual pieces, poetry, and visual art, with which I developed relationships throughout this study, and that I represent here as a visual artist's interpretation of two lives juxtaposed on canvas (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Muchmore, 2001; Rose, 2007, 2013) that demonstrate the presence of MatriART: feminist genealogy and life teaching in art education.

There are overall themes that can be seen across the four panels, which represent recurring images that I encountered throughout my research and data analysis process. Acknowledging the importance of evolution through 'ongoing dialogue', Baxter, Lopez, Serig and Sullivan (2008) highlight the capacity of studio art practice research in the field of art and design education to interpret cultural, social, and educational concerns. This helped me to identify with my position as the artist-as-researcher, and the possible effectiveness of arts-based research, presenting art practice as "a flexible but robust form of inquiry" that embraces constructing new knowledge as a creative and critical process (Baxter et. al., 2008, p. 17).

## The process and practice of my visual art inquiry



Figure 10: Detail, first panel from *Data Map*.

Moving from left to right, on the first panel, I applied multiple layers of paper from my own sketchbooks to represent the material that my grandmother was working with throughout the many drawings and multiple books I sorted through. There are images of her actual sketches that I applied onto the canvas, as these were images that particularly stood out to me, on the grounds that they reminded me of my own artworks. I saw a parallel in the theme of women being depicted, in their movement, in their emotive qualities. Two themes emerged as my eyes moved across the canvas: ‘women’ and ‘art’.



Figure 11: Detail, second panel from *Data Map*.

In the next panel I applied card stock and construction paper: the materials of both her bought and made cards. I also applied images of a card that she had designed, in which she describes her baked goods as created gifts for her mother. Above the image of the card is a picture of a cake that I crafted for my mother three years ago, as a gift for her birthday. I felt this drew a direct parallel to the way that my grandmother continually married her domestic and artistic qualities, and demonstrated the MatriART of a tradition of creative action through domestic process, passed down through the women in my family. The cake was created as an edible art piece and had both painted and sculpted irises and lilacs on it: flowers that both my mother and I love. In my grandmother's 'application to *Miss Chatelaine*', she refers to flowers as "a form of beauty and fragrance and nature combined," and in her biography details for her book of poetry, two of her

quoted interests are gardening and making floral arrangements (Roosen Sheppard, 1970, inside jacket cover). Therefore, the themes that this panel drew out were ‘flowers’ and ‘creative domesticity’. It would seem, according to her artifacts across all categories, that my grandmother had a true love of flowers and viewed making floral arrangements and gardening as creative practices, a tradition, I realized through this research, that she had passed on to my mother. In fact, as I reached this section of the study, I began to recognize the recurring presence and influence of my mother in my interpretations of my grandmother’s artifacts, as well as the role that she played in connecting our three lives and lines of likeness (Raymond 1986; Reinharz, 1992) regarding feminist genealogy and MatriART. Despite this realization, it was important for me to remain within the guidelines that I had set for this study and, therefore, keep the focus on the relationship between my grandmother’s life and mine.



Figure 12: Detail, third panel from *Data Map*.

In the third panel I used newspaper pieces from both *Le Journal de Montreal* and *The Gazette*; I felt that it represented her bilingual status and French roots, as well as her stories of history in the city of Montreal as moments in time (Dodgshon, 2008). I applied an image of her convocation day shown in the *Montreal Star*, and another clipping from a poem of hers that was published in the school paper, in 1968. The visible theme in this panel is ‘paper’, and the way that the different variations of it flow from one canvas to the next. The reason for this is that it represents my constant and continuous feeling of being buried in various sorts of papers, as well as it being metaphor for the feeling that no two parts of my grandmother’s life were separate, they were all connected – through art. Connecting my story with hers, to the right of the image of her published poem, is an

image of one of my paintings that was published in the Concordia magazine, in 2011. This represents the theme of ‘education’ and demonstrates MatriART through an academic and socio-historical timeline of visual and literary art connecting our life histories.



Figure 13: Detail, fourth panel from *Data Map*.

In the fourth panel, I applied office paper on this canvas, as it is the contemporary version of the paper used to type my grandmother’s application for *Miss Chatelaine*. I also added various images of pages from her application, as well as the clipping from the magazine that announces her as one of the runners up. In comparing my life and path to hers, and with regard to imagines of feminine identity, I juxtaposed an image of another artwork that I made of a Barbie doll with a sculpted and painted cake skirt. I feel that this image speaks to the similarities in the representations of “Miss Chatelaine” and “Barbie”, as

well as the fact that this again highlights the relationship between our domesticity and creativity. This brings forward a theme of ‘feminism’ with regard to our domestic responsibilities and our art practices: my grandmother as part of the second wave when women were taking a stand against notions of ‘women’s place in the home’, and me as part of the third wave, situated in a veritable twenty-first-century renaissance in domesticity among contemporary women, that stands between opposing third and post feminist beliefs (Genz, 2008; Kinser, 2004). To demonstrate this dynamic, the two sets of dots which can be seen stretching across the entire field, running parallel, and at points intertwining and crossing, represent my grandmother’s path, and my own, across the journeys of our lives, through waves of feminism, and MatriART. One of the sets of dots is applied in data coding stickers, and the other in paint of the same colors, symbolizing how we are the same, but different.

### **Finding Independence through Domesticity: Mrs. Chatelaine**

When I explored my grandmother’s archive, I came across her application for a contest in a magazine in which women were being judged on their homemaking skills. This bothered me because I had always seen my grandmother as a strong, independent thinking woman, who would never be the ‘type’ to enter such a competition that showcased ‘women’s position in the home,’ as the application states. However, as I began reading the document, a smile formed on my face as I thought to myself, “I should have known better.” My grandmother did not apply for this competition as a submissive domestic, but rather, as an artist with a homemade museum. In fact, I have come to consider the potential libratory qualities of this entry to the public forum through lenses

informed by both second and third wave feminism that suggests a more nuanced conversation is needed to assess such acts that extend beyond the conventionalized view of women in the public and private realm.

*Chatelaine* is a Canadian woman's magazine that has been published since 1928. In 1961, *Chatelaine's* editor, Doris Anderson, held a nationwide contest to search out and crown the first "Mrs. *Chatelaine*", asking female readers to participate in an extensive questionnaire listing their "household chores, how often they entertained and outside hobbies or community projects" (Glassman, 2011). Doris Anderson was a strong feminist in her own right. Born in 1921 in Calgary, Alberta, she became one of Canada's most influential and powerful editors, showcased by her years at the helm of *Chatelaine* magazine. Also a pioneer in the Canadian second wave feminist movement, Anderson was an "early advocate of day care, the pro-choice movement, pay equity, and sexual liberation, (and) went on to work with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women" (Anderson, 1996, p 70). From a historical perspective, at that stage in the feminist movement, the contest was a notable shift from the home to the public sphere, and it was on a topic most women could relate to at that time and place. I like to believe that my grandmother acknowledged Anderson's actions and for this reason, wanted to be a part of something that "communicated with Canadian women in an honest, gutsy way that was revolutionary at the time" (Hannam, 2008, p. 45).

6. In a changing world, I would say that my mother has tried to instill in us the need for independent thinking so that we would not feel the need to follow any particular group in order to feel that we "belong".

She has a strong distaste for the "pecking order" that she finds so common in industry, as well as for the "connection-oriented" means that have been shown to be stepping stones for getting ahead. She finds it a pretty sick situation and for this reason is still trying to convince my brother that he should pursue a profession, rather than remain in industry.

Life being such a temporary thing, she clearly indicates that everyday should be lived to the fullest, with as much as possible to show for its having been, when the day draws to a close.

That no matter what - the criteria for judging oneself is to be able to look in the mirror and to be honestly glad for being oneself.

She believes in being able to differentiate between good and evil and to her honesty, kindness and sobriety and the prime requisites for living.

As for love, she feels that it's a shame most people either don't take the time or are ashamed of expressing honest emotion.

Figure 14: (left) Application to *Mrs. Chatelaine* contest, 1970.

# Mrs. Chatelaine RUNNERS-UP across Canada

Each wins a 3-piece set of Supreme "50" Stainless Steel cookware



### Newfoundland

Alice Walters, age 43, of St. John's; mother of six; although separated from her husband and on welfare, returned to school beginning at grade 8 and is now in university.



### P.E.I.

Isabel Wilson, age 32, of Cornwall, mother of two; is finishing high school at night. She helped pioneer the Junior Farmers whose purpose is to improve rural standards.



### Nova Scotia

Gertrude Swim, age 41, of Lockeport, mother of six; helped start the local area development association to encourage tourism; sews, sketches, paints; active in IODE.



### New Brunswick

Lina Gallant, age 28, of St. Mary's, mother of two; works full-time as a nurse; active in church in fund raising for church suppers.



### Quebec

Yolande Tomiuk, age 46, of Chomedey, mother of four, works as a copywriter, recently got her B.A., writes poetry, and has just had her first book published.

Figure 15: (right) Results from the *Mrs. Chatelaine* contest, Yolande Tomiuk is a runner-up, 1970.

Applicants also had to include their menu details of a typical family dinner, their philosophy for being a good homemaker, and a “hand-drawn floor plan of the family’s living room, complete with furniture arrangement and colour scheme” (Glassman, 2011). In 1971, my grandmother decided to apply, however, as an applicant, one was not to write their own application, but instead have someone else vouch for them. My grandmother’s application was written by my aunt, who was a high school art teacher at the time and later went on to complete her Master’s of Art in Art education at Concordia, graduating in 1984. Being an art teacher with an attention to artistic detail, my aunt highlighted how creative my grandmother was with the décor of the home, while working with a small budget. Mention was made of how my grandmother created a veritable art piece with carpeting on floor by using tile-size sample pieces to achieve a quilt-like pattern. She went on to discuss how my grandmother painted, loved gardening, floral arrangements, and cooking, wrote modern poetry, and planned to pursue her Master’s and teach. Throughout the document, themes of creativity, efficiency with time and money, and the connection between her artistic and domestic practices were made. Aware of the fact that, historically, such values were connected to domestic science, where in Canada this was referred to as “manual arts (for girls)”, I began to further consider this avenue as a potential site of resistance to the subjugation of women and personal autonomy for my grandmother (Irvine, 1975, p.8). In effect, my grandmother found a venue to move to the public sphere despite the restrictions that shaped her life day-to-day, a containment that is hard to imagine today. Making this application, let alone being a runner-up marks a significant point of departure in her life as a feminist, and her position in the facilitation of MatriART.

Reinterpreting the conventional understandings of art and domesticity from a third wave perspective (Brunsdon, 2005; Molesworth, 2000), I view this application as a demonstration of how my grandmother turned domestic duty into creative emporium. In turn, Lackey (2003) discusses the close relationship between art and domestic science in relation to Martha Stewart's role in society, and whether she can be viewed as art educator. Comparably, my grandmother facilitated this kind of social pedagogy that embraced art and domestic education as one to her children, generating a tradition of creative practices in everyday life. Moreover, my aunt states in the application form that my grandmother had "tried to instill in (them) the need for independent thinking." I believe that this combination of facilitating creative, social pedagogy and independent thinking is one of the defining characteristics of MatriART that she passed on to my mother, and in turn, to me.

### **Memories of Sentiment: Greeting Cards**

This relationship between art and domestic life (Brunsdon, 2005; Molesworth 2000) was a recurring theme as I explored my grandmother's extensive collection of greeting cards. This anthology of holiday memories consisted of neatly kept Christmas, Easter, Birthday, and Mother's Day cards, addressed from my grandmother in Montreal to my great grandmother in New Jersey. At first I questioned why the cards would have been preserved with such care for all of these years, but after having gained some knowledge from the other artifacts and data about my grandmother's social, domestic, and artful practices, I felt that I was beginning to understand her patterns. Taking all things prior into consideration, I recognize my interpretations are always partial at best,

but I surmised that perhaps the cards were kept for their aesthetic value, as art pieces in their own right. Some of the cards did not even have any personal message written inside, simply a signature. One potential of this detail from my perspective is that this would insinuate that, in turn, the value of the card would shift to be measured by visual quality. As mentioned in her application for *Mrs. Chatelaine*, my grandmother loved gardening and making flower arrangements. Images of flowers were found on almost all of the cards, which fortified my notion that they were kept for their aesthetic beauty. Among the compilation was one card that she had made herself (see Figure 16), decorated in a red, white, and green abstract motif that was painted onto a clear plastic sheet, and then glued on cardstock as a Christmas card.



Figure 16: Yolande Tomiuk, Christmas card front cover, date unknown, mixed media on card stock.

The cards that did have personal messages inside discussed a common theme of baked goods that my grandmother would send to her mother on special occasions, as gifts. This revisited the theme of my grandmother employing manual (in this case culinary) and visual arts, collaboratively, by using the art of baking as her medium to create edible, ephemeral gifts. She talked about her creations in the cards and referred to them as “goodies”, a term that I recall my mother using when I was a child, referring to indulgent food and sweets.

### **A Woman in the Public Sphere: Hardly Traditional**

I found further evidence of my grandmother’s perspectives and independent thinking, particularly highlighted in a clipping from the Montreal Star on Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970 (see Figure 17), entitled “Hardly Traditional, mother writes poetry” (Ferrante, 1970, p. 68).



Staff photo by Paul Lagace

Yolande Tomiuk, mother of four, found time to study for BA and publish poetry.

# 'Hardly traditional,' mother writes poetry

ANGELA FERRANTE  
It was your laughter  
at the sight of me  
your laughter —  
the peeling of dry plas-  
ter  
the old new  
coming through

men made me feel good," she laughs. But marriage at 19 and, later, four children forced her to stop working.

But life as a housewife did not satisfy her. She returned to the labor market 10 years ago as a correspondent for Avon, where she wrote almost 60 letters a day to her

medal winner, Yolande went from "the old 18th century poetry form to a freer, more honest form."

A collection of 34 of her poems titled *The Lemon Bite* will be published by Dorance and Co. later this month. Yolande now is working on a second collection.

Quebec's chic lady, Andree Bourassa, arrived a little late arriving today morning to Salon de la Femme's Universe exhibit at Placard Hall at Place d'Entente.

But, she was none for the officials who decide where to put her bonnet she later cut.

After finally snatching a white band and ribbon bouquet of flowers, she left Bourassa walking through the area by the line Vezina, produced show, and Jean-Jacques Bault, president of the jury.

The premier's wife Cook's tour of Quebec women will see at their leisure from a.m. to 11 p.m. until

She stopped here to shake hands and answer exhibitors' questions.

Mrs. Bourassa saw furniture, artists' fashions, theatre booths, exercise exhibits, part of a fashion show and a kitchen and media personalities.

Admission is \$1.10 for adults, 75 cents for children.

Staff Photo by Paul Lagace

The first of two articles of life in Israel, as the current situation grows and more complicated appears in the Life section of THE MONTREAL STAR on Monday. In the article is Raphael Rothstein, New York correspondent of the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz. Rothstein is also co-author with Joshua Tadmor of "The Silent Warriors" book about spying in the Middle East, published by the MacMillan Co.

Figure 17: My grandmother featured in *The Montreal Star*, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970.

The author, Angela Ferrante, introduces the article with an excerpt from one of my grandmother's poems, followed by an enumeration of her engagements at the time including "writing modern poetry, painting and studying psychology and sociology," (Ferrante, 1970, p. 68). Ferrante (1970) states that these are "hardly the activities of a 'traditional' mother," and then capriciously adds, "but then, Mrs. Yolande Tomiuk is hardly traditional" (p. 68). The author continues to describe my grandmother as a woman of the times who balances her home life with her school and work, about to attain both her undergraduate degree from university, graduating in the same class as her twenty-six year old son, as well as publish her first book of poetry. Ferrante (1970) questioned my grandmother on her position towards feminism and on women's position in the home. My grandmother replied saying that "the feminist movement should be continued", and that a "woman with potential should not be stopped" (Tomiuk, in Ferrante, 1970, p.68). During a time when second-wave activism had first introduced feminism into the academy (Gillis & Munford, 2004), and a sexual revolution was happening in the province of Quebec (Vacante 2005), the Sir George Williams Fine Arts department was founded, and during the groundbreaking *The Sir George Williams Poetry Series 1966-1974*, my grandmother was a trailblazer who set an excellent example for both women, and adult education. Below is an image taken the day that she graduated from University, in the same class as her twenty-six year old son (see Figures 18 & 19):

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peasible with her daughter Polly. Her first concern was to teach comparative litera- ture.

to Canadians to win such award. She will continue her studies at McGill University.

studies at night, and on the weekend, I didn't have much time for leisure," she said.

Mrs. Bokross also has a few firm beliefs about student activism.

She argues that students — all ones too — have no business trying to run a university.

"Students should have nothing else to do but study. Most students want to be told what to do," asserted Mrs. Bokross.

She added that more students should try to learn from the "establishment," rather than try to overthrow it.

Now that university is over for the year, Mrs. Bokross

When 26-year-old Olaf Tomiuk gets his arts degree from Sir George Williams University, his mother won't be there to take pictures.

She will be there to collect her own arts degree.

Mrs. Yolande Tomiuk started her course in 1966, taking two night courses a week during the winter and three nights a week in the summer.

Now she's going after her masters degree.

It has been hard work for the last four years, but she said the rewarding experience has been worth it.

"The first year was murder. The old brains were pretty rusty," said the 45-year-old mother of four children and fulltime copywriter for a large cosmetic company.

While her particular study interests are sociology and psychology, Mrs. Tomiuk takes an active interest in poetry writing.

"So much so, that a book — Lemon Bite — of 36 of her poems will be released shortly by an American publishing firm.

"My nights at the university have broadened my horizons and permitted me to get to know the younger generation better," she said, adding that today's generation is "way ahead" of her generation.

But when it comes to student power and student politics, Mrs. Tomiuk said students should allow "the older generation to run the show" at the university.

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VELVET EXTERIOR SUPER WHITE

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WHAT, ME WORRY? NOT ANYMORE!

says MRS. C. COLLETT,

Not since I started reducing at the Stauffer Salon and came down from

Mom-son grads sports happy grins

(Gazette, Aussie Whiting)

Jet pact

BRASILIA — (AP) — Brazil and Italy signed Friday a contract for the manufacture of 112 Italian jet airplanes in Brazil.

W . . . on

Figure 18: My grandmother featured with my uncle in *The Montreal Star*, 1970.

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W . . . on

Figure 18: Detail of clipping from *The Montreal Star*, 1970.

This clipping is one of my favorite items in my grandmother's archive. It is wrinkled and faded, weathered by time, yet a veritable moment in time (Dodgshon, 2008). Returning to the notion of material culture (Bolin & Blandy, 2003) and cultural history (Grassby, 2005) discussed in chapter.2, the imagery of the advertisements for a weight-loss program for women and a new specialized swing-set paint juxtaposed against the image of my grandmother graduating from university with her son acts as a visual metaphor (Grassby, 2005) for her relationship with the public sphere despite a woman's domestic duties such as taking care of the house (paint for the swing) and maintaining an attractive appearance (weight control program).

### **Comparing Art Practices: Finding Art in Everyday Life**

As I further ventured into my grandmother's belongings, there were certain images, words, and even color patterns that began to stand out more than others. It was as though I recognized them, and while reflecting on where and how I was 'recognizing' these artifacts is when I truly began to make connections between my grandmother's experiences and my own: the artifacts were familiar to me because they resembled elements of my personal accounts. My interpretations have been further guided by questions of my replication of her themes, my response to her through my artworks, and/or if this artful connection is a form of conversing that has emerged because of my research study. van Manen (2006) states that reflection "is possible in those moments when we are able to think about our experiences, about what we did or should have done, or about what we might do next" (p. 510). I draw on Mitchell, Weber, and O'Reilly-Scanlon (2005) too, who write about the experiences of educators, the result of a "group

of doctoral and masters students at McGill University in the department of Integrated Studies (whom) all defended dissertations related to autobiography, self-study and teaching, and life-history research” (p. xvi) to inform my position. Paramount is the notion that through re-living real and personal moments of creating and experiencing various forms of art, one can gain a deeper understanding of the role that art, and in my case specifically MatriART, plays in their life. As a guiding principle, the practice of reflexivity aids to “better understand the ruling relation between the researcher and researched” (Mitchell et. al., 2005, p. 233).

I separated the familiar artifacts and then paired them with the personal counterpart that I had attributed to them (see Figures 20-27). These pairings of data fortified and expanded my already established themes of ‘independent thinking’ and ‘blending domesticity and creativity,’ and each emitted a different light to my interpretation of my grandmother’s experiences, and the increasing number of likenesses (Raymond 1986; Reinharz, 1992) I recognized in our lives as points of intersection. van Manen (2001) refers to this as ‘balancing the research context by considering parts and whole’, highlighting the importance of gaining an understanding of the general, as well as the specific, of the research. This means, for instance, looking at the details on each panel of the *Data Map* and then identifying the larger themes that the details generate. Regarding my grandmother’s artistic practices, I compared them to my own endeavors and looked for patterns that we shared as women artists that could be defined as characteristics of MatriART. Creswell and Miller (2010) employ this “systematic process of sorting through data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas” (p. 127). Furthermore, this process facilitated a discussion of how this study is

woven between the pillars of feminist theory and art education, as well as qualitative, and arts-based, research.

## **Drawing**

The theme of drawing is significant in this research because my first artistic practices were in the form of drawing, and in my grandmother's archive I found three sketchbooks filled with her drawings. This was an exciting find for me because I had never seen any of her drawings before: I was only familiar with her painting practice as a visual artist. The first thing that I noticed of her three sketchbooks was that they were all the same brand and size, and they were also all signed, numbered, and dated. They were very neat and orderly, only one side of the sheet was drawn on, and images were always centered on the paper. All of these details suggested to me that these were sketchbooks from art school. The uniformity of their characteristics reminded me of similarly assigned sketchbooks for my drawing classes throughout university. In my drawing classes for my undergraduate degree (BFA), we were given sketching assignments to capture the human form and condition. Looking at my grandmother's drawings in her sketchbooks, I recalled sitting on the bus and metro, to and from school, watching other passengers, trying to capture their poses before they moved – hoping their 'stop' wasn't next on the line.

Her sketches were mostly of women, with a few floral and still-life studies, and there was a noticeable emphasis on movement, as well as her having a particular eye for detail. For example, rather than classic, static model poses, she drew an image of someone lifting their foot while tying their shoe, or reaching to change the channel on the

television set. In the image below (left), she captures a woman (possibly my mother) sitting on the sofa, putting on her lipstick with the mirror in one hand, and the lipstick in the other (see Figure 20). Her legs are crossed and the sandal on the foot of her crossing leg appears to be slipping off. The next image (right) in the sketchbook is the detail of the foot with the slipping sandal in which she strikingly captures the stitching and buckle of the sandal, the veins that meander between the ankle bone and the heel of the foot, and the reactive upward flex of the toes in an effort to prevent the sandal from falling.

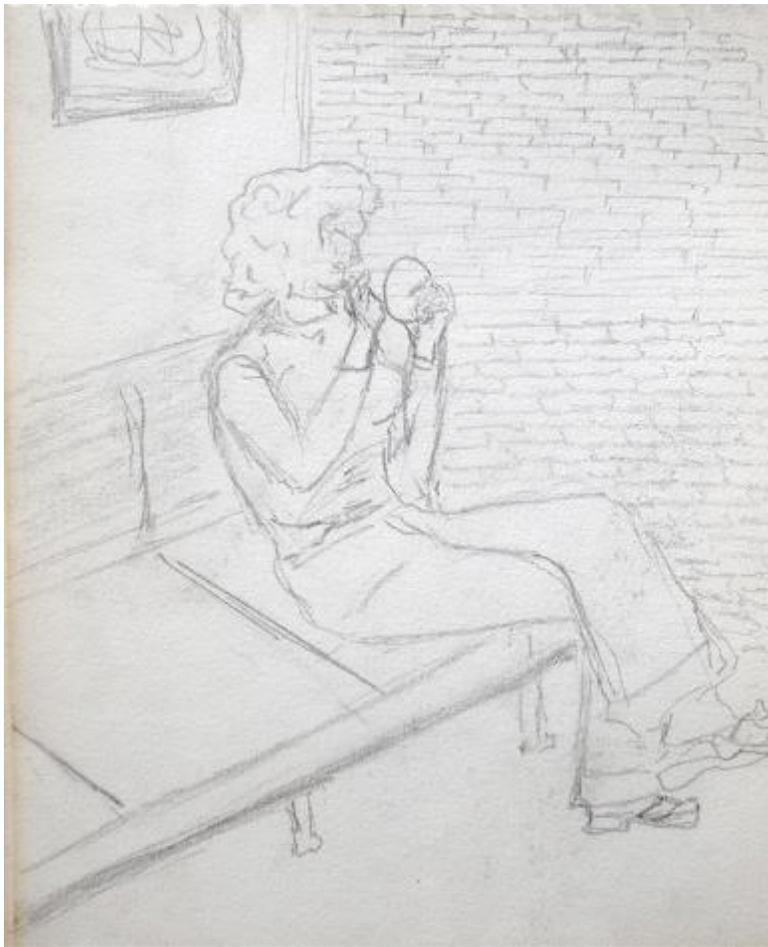


Figure 20: (left) Yolande Tomiuk, untitled pencil drawing from sketchbook, 1972.

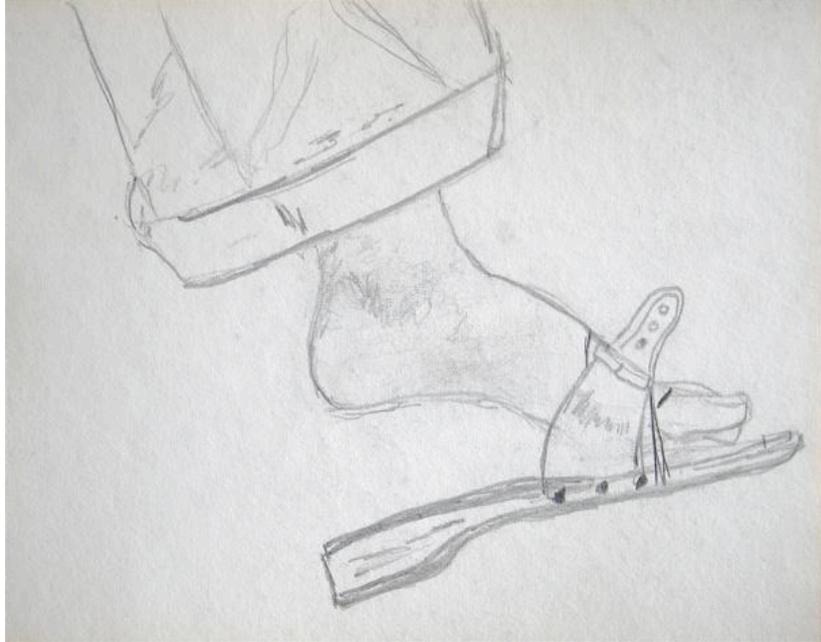


Figure 21: (right) Yolande Tomiuk, untitled pencil drawing from sketchbook, 1972.

In all three of the books, I was able to recognize numerous images of my mother, and her two sisters, which lead me to believe that she was carrying out the majority of her sketches at home. I found this to be very interesting because it demonstrated my grandmother's reality of being both a mature student and active artist, and consequently having to balance work while maintaining her home and family, the scaffolding to the essence of MatriART. Griffiths (2002) examined mature women students who were also mothers and investigated "the extent that women students could draw on their experiences as mothers to have positive effects in their training, combining public and private spheres" (p. 267), as well as inquiring whether domestic responsibilities interfered with course training, and to what extent 'crossing boundaries' affected either realm, positively or negatively. I considered the extent to which she must have had to adapt to balance home and course workloads, and the fact that most of her sketching was being done at home must have been one of the solutions and, therefore, results of this situation.

It was, as she needed to be, practical and efficient. With four children and a husband to feed and manage, and a house to maintain, she also had to master the art of multitasking.

In turn, I also face the reality of having to juggle different aspects of my life, such as pursuing my academic studies full-time, teaching art part-time, working in a restaurant full-time, being a first time homeowner (more than full-time!), and not to mention a new wife and mother to be, and still performing my roles as daughter, aunt, niece, cousin, and friend, to the people that I love (see Figures 22 & 23). This myriad of relationships and associated experiences manifest in much of my artwork with an attention to, and appreciation for, the credence that art is present in all aspects of my life. In the images below, the figure on the left depicts my bedroom closet, and the one on the right portrays an area in the backyard of the house where I grew up, and where my mother still lives. I paired these two images with my grandmother's sketches because both sets exhibit an interwoven relationship between the domestic and creative aspects of our lives (Brunsdon 2005; Molesworth 2000).



Figure 22: (left) Erin McCarthy, charcoal sketch on paper from the series *Relational Drawing*, 2011, 11'x14'



Figure 23: (right), Erin McCarthy, charcoal sketch from the series *Relational Drawing*, 2011, 11'x14'.

These drawings were conceived as part of a series entitled, *Relational Drawing* (2011) that I completed in a studio inquiry class for my Master's degree. The series consisted of twenty drawings that showcased objects, places, and surroundings with which I have artful relationships (Barry, 1996; Cole & McIntyre, 2001; Stroud, 2011). They demonstrate the notion that one can have emotional, meaningful relationships with environments and objects, as with people: a theme that is prevalent in the practice of women artists informed by feminist perspectives (Hutchins & Horodner, 2010; Qualls, 1994; Wark 2001). My bedroom closet is filled with different colors, patterns, and shapes that I compose into assemblages each day to represent my inner emotions and exhibit my creativity. A veritable 'cabinet of curiosities' (Bergland, 2013), it holds prêt-à-porter souvenirs from trips to Thailand, Italy, Spain, Ireland, New York, and the associated memories of experiences collected while both acquiring and wearing them. The backyard of the house where I grew up is equally filled with artful and educational experiences. My mother used to walk me around the grounds and teach me the names of all of the different flowers and plants in her various gardens, and as a result, as I grew older, I began photographing flowers and different forms of foliage and studying them. The smell of lilacs in the month of May is still one of my all time favorite, and most evoking, sensory experiences. This dynamic is an example of what I refer to as 'life education,' inspired by my grandmother in ways I continue to develop today.

Comparing our two drawing practices, I see differences in techniques and in styles. My grandmother worked in graphite pencil, and I work mostly in charcoal. I enjoy charcoal because it is fast, dramatic, and smudges easily for shading. It also seems that my grandmother did not use a range of hard and soft grade pencils to achieve dimension:

the outlines were detailed, but it looked as though she repeated lines and pressed harder at times to attain a denser angle, rather than shading with a '4B' or sharpening with a '4H'. I wondered whether this was because she was unaware of these techniques, or because she had to be quick and efficient with her sketches and switching back and forth to different pencils wasted time, or perhaps it was a money issue and there was only enough funds for very basic supplies? I could not find a conclusion to this query, as it was a question that only my grandmother could have answered. I wished that we could have shared that conversation, among many others.

## **Photographs**

In searching through my grandmother's multiple slide reels and accompanying stack of photos, the image below (left) struck me because it was the only photo that I came across of her where my grandmother was posing, as the artist, with one of her paintings (see Figure 19). Due to the fact that there was no specific date on the photo, I employed a researcher reflexivity approach to validate my understandings through personal analysis and interpretations, as well as reflecting on 'social, cultural, and historical forces' that may have played a role in the photo (Creswell & Miller 2010; van Manen, 1991).

When I asked my mother about the photo, she did not remember it, but she was able to tell me that the image in the background was of a mural my grandmother painted on the living-room wall of the family home. The fact that the mural was situated in her home immediately resonated with me and reinforced both my notion of her fervor for blending domesticity and creativity, and the dynamic of family photographs in domestic

spacings (Rose, 2003), as well as being efficient by bringing her practice home.

Acknowledging that this was a main theme that was constantly reappearing throughout my analysis, I began to think about how and why this relationship she had created between domesticity and creativity had come to be. Moseley (2008) discusses the return to domesticity that occurred after WW2, and continued into the late 1950's and 1960's. During those years, my grandmother was raising four children on a very fixed income. As mentioned before in her application to *Chatelaine*, she carpeted a floor with tile-size sample pieces. This was a result of my grandfather working for a company called "Uniroyal" that supplied latex for the carpeting industry. My grandfather would often bring home samples, and my grandmother used her creative vision to utilize free materials for her family's domestic needs. Also mentioned in the application was how she sewed cloth napkins together to make a full tablecloth, and created a whole bathroom curtain and shower ensemble, complete with fringed edging, with material that she bought at an extreme discount price. I believe that the family's financial situation was in large part what catalyzed my grandmother's practices of blending domesticity and creativity, and that it became her way of doing things.



Figure 24: (left) My grandmother standing in front of a mural she painted in her home, circa 1965.  
Figure 25: (right) I am standing with my painting, at an exhibition I was part of in 2010.

The mural was a landscape painting, with mountains, a body of water, and a road that leads the viewer's gaze into the distance. My grandmother stood in front of her creation, brush and palette in hand, wearing a white smock. I also noticed that the painting seemed finished, the brush bristles were straight, meaning they were not applying pressure on, or touching, the canvas, and my grandmother's eyes were directed at the camera, rather than her painting. Gadamer (2014) believes that relatives are never the best judges of portraits because, "a portrait never tries to reproduce the individual it represents as he appears in the eyes of the people close to him" (p. 148). Although I never knew my grandmother past the age of three years old, I began to see the photo as not one, but three images: a portrait of my grandmother in her home, a portrait of my grandmother as an artist, and an artist's self-portrait. Brilliant (1991) states that, "the oscillation between art object and human subject, represented so personally, is what gives portraits their extraordinary grasp on our imagination" (p. 7). Being a clearly posed photograph, I wondered whether my

grandmother had any one of my three interpreted intentions in mind when she stood for the photo, or maybe all three.

The other reason why I chose this specific photo of my grandmother was the uncanny resemblance between the image of the mural, and the painting that I am standing beside in the image on the right, taken in 2010. I had never seen an image of her mural before, but with our photos side by side, it was as if I had recreated it. The image that I painted is near Saint-Sauveur, in the Quebec Laurentians; the image that my grandmother painted is also most likely influenced by the local landscape, and as Langford (2001) states, “one shoreline in the Laurentians looks pretty much like another” (p. 7). I could also not ignore the similarity in our composition and perspective techniques (Cosgrove, 1985; Garoian, 1998; Read, 1965). Perspective, which is classically taught in any formal art lesson, in the context of vision and visual perception, is the way in which objects appear to the eye based on their spatial attributes. I considered the fact that we were both formally trained in perspective, but that her training came so much later in her life than mine did. Furthermore, not only was she being formally trained in her forties: she was a woman, in art school – in the late sixties. This notion suddenly became very exciting to me, as I reflected on how her social environment might have affected her art practice, specifically her painting.

## **Paintings**

My grandmother’s paintings were essentially my first encounter with art, and this encounter took place in my mother’s home as one of my first lived experiences of MatriART. Her paintings were what I now recognize to be abstract, but when I was

younger I understood them for what I saw: colors. I loved how rich and bright the colors were, and that the longer I looked at her paintings the more colors I would find. They were dramatic, full of life, and they captivated me even at a young age. When I revisited my grandmother's paintings while selecting the data that I worked with for this section, one piece stood out to me because visually the color palette was nearly identical to one of my paintings, and both of our compositions, although visually different, seemed to share characteristics of art informed by feminist perspectives (Hutchins & Horodner, 2010, Qualls, 1994; Wark, 2001), as well as sexuality and expression of self: the naked female body, the flower as metaphor for female genitalia, the pink, red, and underlying bluish hues that represent the flesh, blood and veins of the body.

The image of my painting on the following page (see Figure 26) is visually characteristic of much of my work: the female body, usually headless or faceless, extremities cut off, and without identity – just a body: this acts as a visual metaphor for female objectivity, over sexualized imagery with no content, and despite all of this negativity, the beauty that still remains the female body. I also channel the access that historically women were denied in art education, to study from the human model (Pollock, 1987). From the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century, the nude human was the central basis for history painting – the most highly regarded in the Academy. During this time, women were restricted from many forms of art education, but particularly from anatomy classes that used nude models (Pollock, 1987). Due to such discrimination, women were “constrained to practice exclusively in the genres of still life, portraiture, and landscape, genres considered less prestigious and thought to demand less skill or intellect” (Pollock, 1987, p. 7).



Figure 26: (left) *Untitled*, Erin McCarthy, 2006, 18'x24', acrylic on canvas.



Figure 27: (right) *Untitled*, Yolande Tomiuk, circa 1965-1974, 18'x24', mixed media on masonite board

Figure 27 is a mixed media piece that my grandmother composed during the late sixties to early seventies, coinciding with the years during or surrounding her studies at Sir George Williams. McKeon (2003) states that the “end of the sixties and commencement of the seventies were decades aspiring to social transformation and political action” (p. 9). According to Concordia University’s website, in September 1966, the first students entered the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at Sir George Williams. The same year saw the “official opening of the SGW Art Gallery on the mezzanine of the Hall Building, and first major show of the Art Collection (226 items at that time) which was initiated by Samuel H. Schechter in 1961” (Concordia University, 2014, website). During this time my grandmother would have been studying under pioneers in the Montreal art, and art education, field such as Alfred Pinsky and Leah Sherman. Alfred Pinsky joined Sir George Williams University in 1959 as a part-time lecturer in Fine Arts. In 1960, he became a full-time lecturer and chair of the Department of Fine Arts, and by 1969 he was promoted to professor. Leah Sherman was the first full-time arts professor to be hired, in 1960, by Sir George Willams himself. Sherman taught courses in art education, studio art, and art history.

I took this information into consideration when analyzing my grandmother’s painting. The shape and descending, tightening pattern resembled that of the inner blossom of a flower, and then combined with the pigment depiction. I felt it could perhaps be a rose or a peony. I found it quite serendipitous that part of the reason why I was able to make this observation was because of my consciousness regarding MatriART, resulting in an interpretation that associated my knowledge of flower species used to analyze my grandmother’s paintings with the garden tutorials that I experienced

in my mother's backyard. Contextually, I immediately thought of Georgia O'Keefe's expressions of 'self' that, "reflected her thinking about her female identity and creativity, particularly through representations of openings, their possibilities, and the dangers to them" (Gadt, 1994, p. 174). I believe that my grandmother, after having raised four children and now being able to concentrate more on her life, was expressing and asserting her 'self'. Perhaps, like O'Keefe, painting was for my grandmother, an embarkation "on her own personal journey seeking what she, as woman and artist, wanted and needed, listening to her mind and body, her passions and depressions, maintaining an abiding link between 'self', 'art', and a woman's 'life work'" (Gadt, 1994, p. 174). I imagined the liberation she might have experienced through painting, similar to the way that I feel when I am engaged with my practice, and I wondered as I moved to the next section of data how this could have translated in her poetry?

## **Poetry**

Another mode of expression, and an important part of this era in my grandmother's life, was her poetry. Her love affair with poetry flourished when she studied under George Bowering, poet in residence from 1967-1972, at Sir George Williams University. According to *SpokenWeb*, an online archive run by a team of literary scholars, designers and librarians based at Concordia University in Montreal, and engaged in a four-year federally-funded SSHRC IG project that showcases *The Sir George Williams Poetry Series 1966-1974*, Bowering's "early connections with the Black Mountain Poets and the relationships he made with Canadian poets from Vancouver across Canada to Montreal have been essential because he bridged the gap of distance

and made new types of poetry available to young poets” (SpokenWeb, 2014). My grandmother published her book of poetry, *The Lemon Bite* (1970), in large part as a result of her experience with Bowering at Sir George Williams University, which exposed her to the diverse poetic experimentation that was taking place across Canada and the U.S. at the time (Farkas & Norris, 1977).

I have read all of the poems in my grandmother’s book over and over, and I still find much of them to be quite cryptic. Knowing pieces of her personal past, I have made educated assumptions regarding certain wording, but I feel that if I wrote about those intimate parts of her life that I only know fractions about, I would not be doing her, or her poetry and life stories due justice. Therefore, with respect for my grandmother’s ‘voice’ (Gillis & Munford, 2004; Green, 1979; Haigwood, 2013; Tamboukou, 2010) rather than trying to interpret her words, I instead looked for ones that I recognized and that acknowledged the connectedness of our lives. I have chosen to showcase an excerpt from my grandmother’s book entitled, “THE LETTER”. For me this particular poem demonstrates her everyday struggle turned into creative prose, and the Montreal tapestry that situates her life, and precursors mine, culturally, genealogically, and historically:

“THE LETTER”

From Place Ville Marie-  
The Main Post Office?  
St. Antoine, corner Peel,  
The Station Agent says.  
Down two, across two-  
sure, your letter will get there.  
I fence the foul and frenzied

5:30 P. M. traffic  
down to Lagauchetiere.  
Where is St. Antoine?  
A mini-skirted pair giggles-  
who's to know or care?

Across Chateau Champlain  
another's "bubby" shakes her head.  
Down along  
the side of the Chateau,  
man with an attaché case-  
Please Sir, you must know!

Following in the down direction  
the ripe, grey building  
looming just ahead,  
bags loaded to the door.  
What of a single letter?  
The guard is mouthy bold.

General Delivery?  
I'm not looking for my mail!  
Hold up my stamped envelope.  
A few steps east- the box.  
I watch the letter slither  
down the rusty chute.

Raise a tired hand,  
hop a cab, light a cigarette.  
Through the smoke, I see tomorrow.  
You are leaving, but for a moment



Figure 28: My grandmother sitting at her typewriter, circa 1970.

You MUST think of me  
as you read- my letter. (Tomiuk, 1970, p.21-22)

This poem first stood out to me because I was able to recognize the physical sites and social descriptions through street names and areas of Montreal. I was actually able to envision her bustling around, trying to deliver the letter, zigzagging through the maze of streets, battling the 5:30 p.m. traffic of those who had just swiped their punch cards for the day and were flooding into the streets. I felt her urgency and sense of frustration. Her rich descriptions transported me into her experience by the way that she named all of the streets, depicted the individuals she encountered, expressed each feeling as it would rise in her, and then brush it off because she had no time to fret. They are descriptions that are filled with hermeneutic lived experiences (van Manen, 2001), and I, the reader, can relate to those experiences having walked the same steps 40 years later. What I enjoy so much about this particular poem is the contradiction between subject and act: the frantic tone versus the time spent sitting and writing. Leggo (2001) refers to this time spent writing as ‘long’ time in a quick world. I believe my grandmother was in fact applying a form of inquiry then that we now accept as a method of research: poetic inquiry. Prendergast (2009) believes that poetic inquiry is, “a way of knowing through poetic language and devices; metaphor, lyric, rhythm, imagery, emotion, attention, wide-awakeness, opening to the world, self-revelation” (p. xxxvii). Below is an excerpt from my artist’s statement for the Series *Relational Drawing*, 2011, mentioned earlier in the “sketches” section. It explores my relationship with people, objects, and environments, and examines my lifelong relationship with my drawing practice, which I elected to express in poetic form:

Drawing, practice, captured moments in time.

Time observed, time remembered, time created - portrayed.

As a child, an escape, sometimes busy work, often alone.

Being babysat, sitting on the plane, in school classes, while talking on the phone.

At mom's desk, waiting for her to finish her work - ten more minutes 'til summertime!

The indication of creative talent, art lessons, art school - where I am today.

Money - it makes me money for an image that I convey.

With pencil, charcoal, and willow, layered with the oils from my skin.

It is a part of me, an extension of self, expression of life.

Don't have to think, don't have to try, comes to me naturally, stream of consciousness.

Mind to hand, hand it glides, and manifests just like that.

So, schools of thought, why now the questions and separations?

What is the definition of drawing? Art?

What is art? I hate that question.

But what is drawing to art, in relation?

In relation to the classroom, the studio, the gallery, the museum.

Relationships between art, education, art education, drawing – drawing maps in my mind.

I employed poetic inquiry to conceive my artist's statement as homage to my grandmother. When I wrote this poem, I had recently begun to realize the impact of grandmother's life on my own life's journey, and my contemplation of these possibilities informed my interests early in the Master's program, in part, as I considered my stories in relation to art education. I realized my grandmother's journey was a cornerstone of my story too, that we have indeed shared a path traveled along the way through the institutional history of Concordia University, and as women who have lived the socio-cultural evolution of Montreal as a city over a period of the last 50 years. Considering the

nature of this project is based on artistic, educational, and life experiences, I felt it necessary to research the visual, literary, and relationship-based history of my life, which then propelled me into my grandmother's archive. Cahnmann-Taylor (2009) states that "the literary and visual arts offer ways to stretch our capacities for creativity and knowing, creating a healthy synthesis of approaches to write in ways that paint a full picture of a heterogeneous movement to improve education" (p. 25). Through this interpretation, my poem made me realize that art has always been a part of my life, and that I have grown with and through it. I have revealed that this too was the case in my grandmother's life, and that in our experiences we have created our own versions of what Leggo (2009) refers to as 'living poetically' in ways that converge and diverge, with our values and beliefs as feminists, and artists, of different waves and generations of MatriART.

## Chapter. 5

### Placing My Research in relation to the field of Art Education

As I share my stories and inquiries it opens spaces for students to share theirs. Teaching then becomes a reciprocal act and narratives become a common meeting ground. Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others, and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character... (Wilson Kind, 2003, p.19)

This excerpt from Wilson Kind (2003) captures the essence of where I feel this project is placed within the field of art education. Some of the most memorable moments that I have had in my teaching practice have been those conversations at lunch, during recess, and after class, when my students share their personal stories with me. Whether it is teenagers in a high school setting, or seniors in a community setting, and everywhere in between, it is those ‘off the clock’ occasions when I have learned the most about my students’ lives and experiences. This study has changed the way that I teach and that I see the art of teaching: I find myself asking my students, people in general, more questions. I encourage the senior citizens in community and the youth that I encounter in the public school sector to share stories of their past if they feel comfortable doing so, to introduce their experiences, and in turn, with this information, I try to build a curriculum that in some way acknowledges every member of the group and where they are coming from. As a teacher, I have learned the importance of students recognizing artful experiences in

their lives and then being able to connect them to both personal and social histories, cultures, and genealogies. This study has taught me to seek out stories, to listen to stories, and to participate in creating stories for the future through art and lived experiences of the past. I believe that if we, as art educators, are able to experience more of these moments as a group, with our students, this dynamic would foster a community that participates in a shared learning environment. When I speak of the term ‘learning environment’, I am referring to a myriad of different possible educational settings that may take shape in the form of: a classroom, a community centre, a walk in the woods, or at your kitchen table. In terms of ‘art educators’, ‘students’, and ‘community’, these relationships are seen in institutionalized contexts, but can also occur between friends, coworkers, family, and in the case of this research, through the archive of a matriarch who set into motion traditions of independent thinking and the blending of domesticity and creativity, which have influenced generations of women in my family. I conceive that acknowledging where I am coming from both informs and strengthens my practices, as an artist, educator, researcher, and woman. Historical research of past experiences, feminist waves, and artful events, MatriART, through a combination of methods and theory related to the field of art education can lend to professional practice and is an important part of creating a well-rounded curriculum that “explains where we are and is grounded in everyday life (Korzenik, 1985, p. 125).”

This study has enlightened me to the incredible ways in which the past has influenced my path, and present life. The blending of creativity and domesticity that my grandmother practiced as a way to merge her private and public lives enabled her to juggle managing a home, four children, a husband, academic pursuits, and a multi-faceted

art practice. She in turn passed this tradition, this MatriART, on to her children, and it became my mother's practice to educate me on her creative expressions through our garden, as well as her eclectic home décor and engineering skills with furniture, color palettes, and unusual accessories that were constantly part of a different visual equation. When I look back, it was like I was living in a gallery with an installation artist in permanent residence. To this day, I can confidently say that there is something different every single time I walk into my mother's house: whether it be the reorganization of a whole room, a lamp that has migrated from one bedroom to another, or new throw pillows on a couch. Although this tendency of hers drove me crazy while I was growing up (and still does now, to be honest), in retrospect, it has enabled me to look at spaces, places, and situations as constantly evolving, versatile, and abstract. This kind of thinking has influenced many aspects of my life, including my domestic endeavors, my academic pursuits, my teaching practice, and my artistic expressions, as well as my research design for this study. I looked to resources that reflected and contributed to all aspects of my life because I believe that, as in abstract painting, when general rules are to avoid creating a focal point by harmonizing colors and forms, the composition of a study that is centered around the lived experiences of women artist educators requires a multidisciplinary balance of epistemology and methodology. In turn, this approach has produced evolving, versatile, and abstract results that generate themes which facilitate an opportunity and platform for dialogue and reflection, rather than providing closed-ended, finite answers. At the same time, over the course of this journey through my research, the concept of MatriART has grown, broadened, and evolved. Originally developed as a term to describe the journey of this study, defined by the relationship between my grandmother

and me, and the lines of likeness (Raymond, 1986; Reinharz, 1992) between our lives and lived experiences, for me, MatriART has become a way of thinking, a consciousness, “a way of tracing genealogy rather than an (exhaustive) account” (Reinharz, 1992, p.226) of female relationships.

As an artist, part of my practice is to “use reflexivity to engage in a dynamic cycle of creating art to make meaning, to make sense of the world and (my) place in it” (Serig, 2006, p. 236). I believe that creation as analysis aided in bringing new data to light, as well as clarifying already existing data, what Serig refers to as “the transition from results to findings” (Baxter et al, 2008, p. 12). By taking up this method, I also invoked the traditions of thinking informed by feminist perspectives and creative practice, that have been passed on from my grandmother to me, further exemplifying the intertextuality of our lifeworlds (Creswell, 1998, van Manen, 2001). Bresler (2006) refers to these connections as “dialogical relationships” and suggests that not only can arts (or aesthetically) based research bridge this gap, but that it can also provide a third dimension in the connection to the audience, which is referred to as a *tri-directional* relationship. To demonstrate this third dimension, as a synopsis of the information that proliferated from my analysis and findings, I have created a realization piece that I have entitled, *Seminarium, 2014*, which represents my visual interpretation of MatriArt: Feminist Genealogy and Life Teaching in Art Education (see Figure 29).



Figure 29: Erin McCarthy, *Seminarium*, 2014, mixed media on canvas, 30"x30".

The title for the piece, inspired by Leggo (2005), refers to his third rumination on living poetically: ‘to live poetically is to know the backyard’. Discussing his experience of teaching a doctoral seminar and incidentally searching the etymology for the term ‘seminar’, he reveals that it originates from the word ‘seminarium’, “a seed plot or nursery or garden” (Leggo, 2005, p.182). This notion influenced Leggo to consider experiences associated with gardens and backyards and how they contribute to shaping our connections with spaces from as early as our childhood (Leggo, 2005). This

resonated with me because of my memories and creative associations with my childhood backyard and my mother's garden, but with regard to my piece, the title speaks to the term 'seminarium' and the notion of 'knowing the backyard' in multiple ways. In addition to Leggo's (2005) deliberation on the term, I also regard the characteristic of a seminarium as a 'seed plot or garden' as drawing a parallel to the female uterus as a vessel for insemination and growth. In this sense, my art piece portrays a conservatory of women's traditions and the fruition of genealogical pollination. The term 'backyard' is defined as "a garden behind a house (and also referred to as) a place close to you... a situation that you are directly involved in" (Macmillandictionary.com, 2014). The scene is set in my mother's backyard: the garden behind my mother's house, a place that is very close to me, and discussed subject matter in my art practice and thesis research.

The piece is comprised of acrylic paint and collaged photographs of flowers and plants that are part of my archive of photos taken in her garden over the years, as well as representations of the feminist genealogical presence in my family and this study. I chose this particular setting because it reflects the likenesses (Raymond, 1986; Reinhartz, 1992) between generations of women in my family through the theme of 'blending domesticity and creativity' found throughout this study. I also employ the term 'backyard' as a metaphor for the content of one's personal history, that which is behind us, in juxtaposing, through collage, each character where they are situated within my study. I engage the medium of 'collage' as Vaughan (2009) defines as "an original composition in any media that brings together previously independent components" (p.4). Each independent photograph as a discussion point (Liebenberg, 2009) representing separate moments in time have been brought together in a historical montage, complemented and

contextualized with acrylic paint on canvas, and stylistically invoke the narrative traditions of feminist artists such as photomontage artist Martha Rosler (Pachmanova, 2006; Wark 2001) and photosurrealist Sandy Skoglund (Cole, 1992; Qualls, 1994).

Starting on the lower right side is an image of my grandmother excerpted from the photograph of her in front of the mural she painted in her living room. I included the paintbrush extending from her hand to suggest that she has played a role in painting the scene that she stands before. Moving in a counterclockwise rotation, as a metaphor for going back in time, around the Spirea Shirobana bush that grows in my mother's backyard and that acts as a dial at the center of this visual timepiece, the next character is my mother. I chose this image of my mother sitting in her lawn chair because the original photo was also taken in the backyard, in a different area of the garden. The backyard is my mother's favorite part of her home and she sits in her sanctuary every day that she can, even if it sometimes requires a blanket or winter coat – it is where she is her happiest and most at peace. In this photo, my mother's hand gestures in a waving motion toward the viewer as if she is greeting them and welcoming them to her garden, and it is serendipitously angled almost identically to my grandmother's arm, in a visual path that leads the viewer to the next character around the bush: me. This photo of me was taken at an outdoor art exhibition that I took part in, where the artists were invited to create on site. The image is representative of the interrelated connection that exists between my personal history 'backyard' and my mother's backyard as having played a part in shaping my life and my creative practice. Symbolically, my head directs the viewer forward to a chair that sits seemingly empty, except for one flower blossom. This blossom represents the future of the past: the next generation of my family that is growing inside of me. I

found out that I was pregnant while in the process of writing this thesis, which brings this study full circle by creating an opportunity for me to now participate in the experience of passing on traditions and teaching creative and independent thinking. Finally, looking over the entire image as the researcher through the scope of a 'feminist informed lens' is an image of a self-portrait that I took on a trip to Thailand just before commencing my studies in Art Education, when I was metaphorically 'on the fence', about to embark on another chapter in my future, and incidentally, past.

In addition to being the expression of my findings, the act of research creation as realization enables the viewer, the audience, the classroom, to visually engage with the information, themes and history that this study has yielded (Rose, 1996). A dynamic such as this can provide a vital opportunity to discuss the knowledge involved in artistic thinking and the process of "how mental images are given creative form" (Sullivan, 2005, p.124): a process that Sullivan (2005) believes still remains somewhat ambiguous in current art research. Attention to this process is critical because it demonstrates that "the knowledge product of art research cannot be considered separate from the researcher's psychic process" (Holmes, 2012, p. 2). Within the field of art education, this conversation among learning communities can address, and perhaps help to answer, certain queries that persist with regards to the validity of art practice as research (Biggs & Büchler, 2008; Frayling, 2006; Mottram, 2009). On a holistic level, discussing the relationship between an individual's thoughts, experiences, and emotions, and how these elements manifest into creative form, facilitates authentic learning through art and visual culture that engages viewers, students, and peers in "communicating, reflecting, and responding to the meaning of their lives" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002, p. ix). Authentic learning in art

education is based in thinking that teaching and learning should be about seeking to make meaning in our lives. This notion directly relates to my study in that the shared goal is to communicate the human experience, “to tell our human stories, to help us know who we are and how and what we believe” (Anderson, T. & Milbrandt, M.K., 2002, p.xxiii).

In my particular case, my research has been a journey of revealing the significance of the past, weaving the connective tissue, the lines of likeness (Raymond, 1986; Reinharz, 1992) between the generations and waves of women in my life and in turn, negotiating who I am and where I stand within MatriART, as a woman artist educator. Kinser (2004) situates herself as ‘mid-wave’ in that she grew up in an era, that was informed by the second wave, but that she belongs to a generation that is associated with the third wave. I, too, share this feeling of not identifying with one specific wave. Through the study of my grandmother’s lived experiences, my mother’s position as being raised in the second wave and then raising me in the third wave, and taking my generation into consideration, I have come to realize that I reside in an intergenerational space between second and third wave feminist informed perspectives.

I grew up in a house where the pin in the image below (see Figure 30) was wedged into the wood frame of our bathroom mirror: every time I looked in the mirror, I saw the pin, and incidentally spoke the words in my head, “Why Not!”

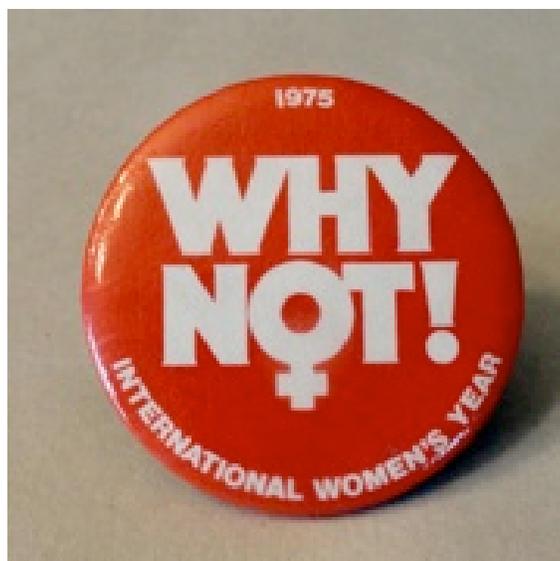


Figure 30: “Why Not!” Commemorative pin for International Women’s Year, 1975.

This pin was released in 1975 to mark International Women’s Year, which initiated March 8<sup>th</sup> as International Women’s Day every subsequent year. When I was young, I had no idea what it was, or what it stood for. My biggest concern about the pin was why it was asking a question, but was punctuated with an exclamation point. This made no sense to me. However, it was my confusion that made me take notice of it and repeat the words every time I saw them. In retrospect, I have no idea why I never asked my mother to clarify the wording for me, or what her reasoning was for putting the pin in that particular place, but I am thankful for my memory of it, and for the way that my perception of its meaning developed as it did, over the years recognizing: the “O” with the cross at the bottom as the Venus emblem which symbolizes woman power, that the wording was meant to be a statement of assertion rather than a submissive question, and finally, the significance surrounding the pin itself within the second wave feminist movement as standing for social recognition and equal rights.

This same pin holds meaning for me within third wave perspectives regarding sexuality and identity, being in the world, being female in the world, and “looking for more: more sense, more liberation, more room to stretch what feminism means” (Kinser, 2004, p. 125). How did seeing the pin as a response every time I looked in the mirror affect the image I was faced with? What did it mean for my self-image to be uttering the words “Why Not!” while looking at myself as a child, teenager, young adult, and in retrospect today? How does this pin factor into my journey with MatriART? I suppose I did not consider these questions when I was younger because I did not have the knowledge or research experience to trigger such inquiry. However, I can now say that having these memories demonstrates that my encounters with the pin, the wording, and our juxtaposed images in the mirror have affected my thoughts and self-perception in the way that I am now able to utilize my experiences with feminist influenced thought to express my understanding of MatriART, the likenesses (Raymond, 1986; Reinharz, 1992) between my grandmother and me, and where I am situated within feminist perspectives as an artist, teacher, and researcher. In fact, the pin, *Seminarium*, and this entire study have all contributed to my appreciation of the past, my understanding of the present, and now, my excitement for the future.

**Final thoughts:**

The process of this research has been very enlightening and I am thankful for the experience. I have been able to build a relationship with my grandmother that I would have never had without this project. I have gained a stronger and broader understanding of MatriART and the relationships and likenesses (Raymond, 1986; Reinharz, 1992)

between women, as well as the history of feminist theory and feminist art history that informed my grandmother's life and practice, and that continues to influence my daily experiences from a second and third wave standpoints. I am now able to recognize my mother's creativity, how her garden and domestic practices were a reflection of her upbringing and in turn my upbringing, and the essential role that she played in MatriART as the connecting force between my grandmother and me. My mother has always said that she does not have a creative bone in her body and that everyone else 'got the artistic talent', but I would like to think that she will see herself a little differently, and give her creative bones a bit more credit after reading this ode to our family.

That being said, I have also learned what a delicate and complex business working with a family archive can be. This project was much larger than I could have ever anticipated and with every artifact came a responsibility to honor every life that it had touched. This made it very challenging for me to keep the study within the confines of my grandmother's life and my life, while paying respect and remaining sensitive to the presence of other important people in each of our lives, as well as those who have connected our lives. This also complicated the process of breaking down the categories of data and choosing which artifacts to use, being that some items had stories attached to them that were imperative to their context, however telling the story would have strayed from, and possibly compromised, the main focus of the study. This was definitely the most arduous aspect of my journey with this thesis. Looking back, it may have been easier on me if I had narrowed down the timeframe within which I was working from ten years (1965-1975) to five years (1965-1970), or to perhaps just focus on the year that my grandmother graduated from university (1970). That way, I would have had less material

to work with and more opportunity to explore and elaborate on specific items. Although, without the experience of sorting through that volume of data, I might not have created the visual experience of the *Data Map* which was a defining moment for me in my research.

The creative process and studio aspect of this study enabled me to compartmentalize the breadth and depth of the information that I was absorbing through the creation of *Data Map*, and then to summarize my discoveries through the revelation of *Seminarium*. Throughout the course of my arts research, I felt as though my grandmother and I were working collaboratively through the use of collage. Our separate lives and artistic practices came together to share the same surface, and in turn, create new art. This visual component not only fortified my research by visually representing the outcome of the project, but it now also exists as a visual archive for the future: a reference for any study that has at its core the same goal as the field of art education: to bridge together art and education. On a personal note, this triangulated dynamic also provided a very comprehensive and rich experience for me throughout my journey with my research. Moving forward, I will adopt this approach in my future projects as it enables me to conduct research and practice art simultaneously, creating a more meaningful, enjoyable, and authentic relationship with my research that acknowledges, and is representative of, the different aspects of my life. With this outlook, whereas I initially thought that this part of my thesis would be the conclusion to my research journey and with it I would be gaining a sense of closure, what I actually feel is that this place that I have come to lays the groundwork for my next chapter of life, research, and the evolution my relationship with MatriART. What about the other women in my

family? Who did my grandmother learn from and how were her lived experiences and art practices influenced by her past? How will this study influence the future of my own little artwork that I am sculpting inside of me right now?

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Appendix:

**Visual Data Analysis**







