Learning in the Third Age: A Look into the Community Art Studio

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the perception of learning by third age participants at an unprogrammed community art studio (Timm-Bottos, 1995) in Montreal known as an 'art hive' (Timm-Bottos, 2012). Third agers are defined as participants between the ages of 55-75 (Laslett, 1989), and participation is defined as making art. A case study research design was used, and 11 participants in the third age at the art hive known as 'La Ruche d'Art: St Henri' were interviewed about their learning experiences. Emergent themes suggested learning was heavily influenced by the structure and facilitation, as well as the social aspect of the art hive. Perceived learning included instrumental skills such as artistic skills, techniques, and social skills. Embodied and transformative learning experiences included learning how to freely express oneself, learning essential meanings and life lessons, learning new or broadened perspectives, and learning the healing power of art making. Learning was perceived to occur simultaneously by observing others and through self-initiated and directed processes. Many of the reported learning experiences were perceived as transformational, and led to experiences of personal growth, empowerment and profound fulfillment. This study points to many implications for the art hives and other community art studios to have a significant impact on the well-being of aging populations, as they offer opportunities for participants to express themselves creatively, build self-efficacy and autonomy, as well as feel welcomed to belong to an inclusive, loving community.

KEYWORDS: Art Education; Art hive; Third Age; Informal learning; Transformational learning

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Dedication

I dedicate this text to Sarah, the initiator and long-time facilitator of the seniors' studio at La Ruche d'Art, whose commitment to encouraging older adults to engage in the creative arts is inspiring and unmatched.

I also dedicate this project to all of the senior participants who attend the art hive: Your zealous presence was the inspiration for this project, and your insight is what made it happen. Thank you for inviting me into your world and sharing it with me. It has been a joy to get to know each of you, and a pleasure to tell your story.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As an art therapist and art educator experienced in working with adults and older adults in arts-based community and clinical settings, I can attest to the powerful agent for expression and reflection that art making can be. Since completing my diploma in Art Therapy in 2010, I have been working in a variety of community and private sector settings that cater to the consideration and care of older people, including seniors' centres, retirement residences and a palliative care hospital. In these spaces, I ran art programs for seniors in the form of open studios, where participants were invited to make art however they wanted using materials provided. Throughout my experiences as such a facilitator, I have witnessed recently retired folks to older adults of all cognitive and physical capabilities, transform their perspectives and attitudes toward personal growth, healing, building self-esteem and creating a sense of belonging for themselves and others, through the act of art making together. It was through these experiences that I realized the potential of arts programming to positively impact the quality of life for older adults, as well as my passion for working with older populations.

Upon moving to Montreal, I became acquainted with the network of community art studios that shared my values for freedom of expression and accessibility known as the 'Art Hives.' An 'Art Hive' (or, in French, 'La Ruche d'Art') refers to a community art studio that welcomes everyone as artists, and essentially operates as an unprogrammed (otherwise known as an 'open studio' model, in which participants are not directed or formally taught, but instead are self-directed in their creative processes) art space where participants are invited to drop in during opening hours and make art using available materials (Timm-Bottos, 2012; What's an art hive?,

n.d.). According to the Art Hives Network, there are currently more than 25 registered Art Hives in Montreal, and more than 100 registered internationally (Art Hives, n.d).

'La Ruche d'Art: Community Studio and Science Shop' is the full name of the first of many art hives to have developed in Montreal, through the sustained practice research of Art Therapy professor, Dr. Janis Timm-Bottos of Concordia university (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2015). This particular studio is commonly referred to as 'La Ruche', 'La Ruche d'Art', 'the art hive', or 'the studio', and will be referred to as such throughout this study. La Ruche d'Art is located in the south-west working-class neighbourhood of Montreal known as Saint Henri, which is close to Concordia University. As a university-community partnership, La Ruche d'Art simultaneously serves the community and students of Concordia University: The site invites the community to gather and make art for free, while also serving as an alternative classroom for university students to experience 'engaged service learning', or learning directly within communities, in programs focused in the arts, education, or community development (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2015). This means that students are often present at La Ruche, participating, observing, assisting and learning. The annual rent of the space and cross-listed summer course is paid for by Concordia University's Faculty of Fine Arts, while daily operations and facilitators are funded through local governments and local and national private funding organizations (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2015).

La Ruche d'Art is a welcoming, and inclusive space for members of the community from all walks of life, including those who are marginalized. The studio hosts the community and various community groups nearly every day of the week. It is open to the whole community on Friday and Saturday afternoons. Other days of the week the studio hosts special interest or closed groups: Monday afternoons the studio is occupied by a cancer support group, Wednesday

mornings the studio is open for seniors, Thursdays the studio hosts a drop-in group for the homeless, and on Sundays the studio hosts open studio time for participants working with fibres and textiles. Sometimes, one-time or short-term projects are hosted at the space.

I remember my first visit to La Ruche d'Art. On a beautiful, sunny and crisp weekend in late September of 2014, I decided to check out the studio. Just a short walk from the Saint Henri metro station, the storefront studio was more non-descript than I had expected, considering it is a hub for community creativity (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The front façade of La Ruche d'Art: Community Studio and Science Shop
Photo: Carmen Despres, 2017

There was no obvious sign, or indication on the façade with the name of the studio. Instead, in the large window taking up most of the façade, there was a stage – much like one you would expect in the window of a clothing store, that would be used to showcase mannequins wearing the latest fashions. Here, the stage (about 3 feet up from the ground) held up an installation of art pieces intermingling with swooping fabrics hanging from the ceiling and draping around various objects. The door to the studio, set to the left and inward from the window by about 2 feet, was nestled in a small alcove. On either side of the door rest two bright blue wrought iron gates that swing to meet in the middle and connect with a lock. The gates were clearly hand crafted, made in a playful, swirling design, which softens their presence for security. On the door hung a colourful hand painted sign on a cardboard box lid: "Ouvert".

Upon my entry into the space, the room seemed to expand beyond the apparent limits of the small façade. The space was large and open, with high ceilings and white gallery walls covered with paintings, drawings and other forms of artwork. The studio was full that day, hosting upwards to 40 people, scattered among tables and couches, making art and chatting. I was immediately welcomed by one of the facilitators and given a tour of the space. I moved through the entrance, lingering among the exhibition, then marvelled at the studio's workspace (see Figure 2): set back from the gallery were two long tables filled with artists and makers, then smaller tables scattered around the space. Behind all the people, along the back wall and wrapping around the east wall up to a large sink were shelving units stuffed to the brim with various art materials, mediums, tools, found objects, textiles – you name it, it was there. The facilitator gestured toward the material wall and told me I was free to use anything I wanted. My mind raced in wonderment, as everything I saw inspired something new – ideas began to flood my consciousness – I couldn't wait to create.

Figure 2. A view of the studio workspace and available materials at La Ruche d'Art. Photo: Carmen Despres, 2017

"One more thing…" the facilitator invited me to follow her through the workspace, toward the back door and outside into a beautiful, expansive garden (see Figure 3). The garden was somewhat organized by the structure of various raised beds, but it was also clear that like the studio itself, the garden had a fluid life of its own. I wandered through the garden noting the plants I could recall by name, and appreciating the sculptures and art pieces that had been placed, installed or offered to the garden. Old shoes now filled with creeping sedums poked out among the Rudbeckia, woven woollen mobiles hung from the tops of bean poles, along with painted CDs that glistened when catching the light of the sun. A few people were working away on plastic bistro tables scattered throughout the garden, set up with painting materials, knitting and mugs of tea or coffee. To me, La Ruche d'Art embodied everything I considered important in my own life: art making, expression, gardening and connection with community.

Figure 3. A view of the backyard garden at La Ruche d'Art, seen from the backdoor of the studio. Photo: Sarah Tevyaw, 2016

Since my discovery of this art hive, I attended the open studio whenever I could, revelling in the distance the space gave me from all other duties and responsibilities in my life. This was a place where I (and anyone else) was welcome to come and create art for free. After many visits, I inquired with the facilitator about volunteering with the Wednesday seniors group, and she readily welcomed me. I have since spent a year and a half volunteering regularly with the seniors group, helping to prepare participants' work for exhibitions, assisting participants in executing their creative ideas, helping with dishes and clean up, and of course making my own art alongside them.

Over time, I noticed the senior participants' artwork varied in style, medium and technical ability, and some exhibited more advanced artistic abilities and a comprehension of technical skills and concepts. I began to wonder about this group; What level of arts education

had they had in the past? How did they learn such varied artistic techniques? What brought participants to this particular studio, and what are their reasons for continuing to participate?

As I continued meeting weekly with the group, I recognized the importance of this studio for the regularly attending participants, noting their loyal attendance and rigorous creative output. It reminded me of the similar creative and regular participation of the seniors I facilitated in other art making groups in Vancouver, BC, that shared the open studio model: it was obvious those art groups were important for participants, as they attended regularly over many years, continuously making art. But in what ways did participation affect participants? What aspects of the open studio model are appealing to older adults? What do participants get out of regular participation? What effect could an unprogrammed open studio like an art hive have on seniors' learning? More specifically, what were they learning at La Ruche d'Art? I became interested in learning about how older participants perceived the importance of the open studio model, and the ways their participation at such a site served them. Specifically, I became interested in the following question:

'What is the perspective of learning from those in the third age, who participate in an unprogrammed community art studio?'

I define those in the 'third age' to be between 55-75 years old (Laslett, 1989), and 'participation' as making art. Investigating the experience of learning for participants in the third age will shed light on the open studio model of the art hive, and on the act of spontaneous art making as potential vehicles of learning. This investigation will further my understanding of the learning needs and desires for those in the third age, which will influence the ways in which I will work with older adults in the future to facilitate arts-based strategies for effective and even transformative learning.

Review of the Literature

What follows will be a review of the relevant literature surrounding the emergence of the third age and what it means for our changing society; the importance of learning throughout the lifespan; the changing functions and sites of knowledge creation for aging populations; the effect of creativity and art making for older adults; and the community art studio as a site for informal learning. The review will move toward a summary of the relevant learning theories and perspectives related to informal learning, and will conclude with an outlined theoretical framework for this study. Further relevant literature to the emergent data will be explored in the data analysis.

The Emergence of the Third Age

In industrialized nations, the vast majority of people can expect to live for a significant number of years after retirement before facing serious limitations due to declining health (Carr & Komp, 2011). This phenomenon has been identified by Neugarten (1974), who brought attention to what she called the 'young-old': those between the ages of 55 and 75 who were active, healthy, affluent and free from conventional responsibilities of family and work, thus occupying more leisure time. This period has been defined as the 'third age', which is characterised not by age itself, but by personal choice to engage in leisure (Laslett, 1989). That is to say, the third age is more representative of those with positive perceptions in later life, who look at aging through a lens of opportunity for meaningful engagement and personal growth (Carr & Komp, 2011; Rowles & Manning, 2011; Rubinstein, 2002). Laslett's perspective has however earned some critical review, suggesting his outline of the third age assumes a middle class financial classification, the presence of social support, and is focused on the assumption of male privilege

in retirement (Findsen, 2006). Nonetheless, the emergence of the third age has since encouraged researchers in gerontology and the social sciences to more attentively consider the need for engagement and activity in the forms of continuing education and meaningful community participation for those in later life (Carr & Komp, 2011; Neugarten, 1974; Thornton, 1986; Weiss & Bass, 2002).

Aging in Canada

The latest statistics on the aging population in Canada report that on July 1st of 2015, 16.1% of Canadians were at least 65 years old, and the percentage is expected to rise to 20.1% by July 1st, 2024 (Statistics Canada, 2015). More specifically, population projections show that in Montreal alone, 20.3% of the total population were expected to be between the ages of 55 and 75 in the year 2016 (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2014). It is projected that the number of people between the ages of 55 and 75 in Montreal will increase by 6.7% by the year 2021, and increase by an additional 1.2% by the year 2026 (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2014). Statistics Canada (2006) also reported that older adults were at a higher risk for social isolation and potentially lacked opportunities for meaningful connection and social support. With the estimated drastic increase in the aging population, it will become increasingly important to offer services and spaces for aging adults to retain a quality of life which is meaningful to them, and that maintains their physical and mental health (Chapin Stephenson, 2013).

Lifelong Learning

The changing demographics highlight the increasing prevalence of educational programs focused on lifelong learning from the perspective of increasing one's quality of life. Learning in

later life helps older adults experience self-satisfaction and enjoyment, and keeps their minds active (Jenkins, 2011). In a quantitative study aiming to identify the effects of learning on wellbeing for adult learners, Jenkins (2011) found that participation in the arts, music, or evening classes had a significant positive association with changes in life satisfaction. Furthermore, Talmage, Lacher, Pstross, Knopf and Burkhart (2015) found that continuing education course topics and how they were structurally arranged significantly predicted enrollment for third agers; the most popular courses enrolled were about microsocial, as well as global and international issues, religion and philosophy. Moreover, the success of lifelong learning programs such as Elderhostel in North America and the University of the Third Age in the UK suggest the study of the humanities and liberal arts appears to be valuable for third agers (Ardelt, 2000). It is evident programs for lifelong learning are becoming more prevalent, but just how effective and meaningful are they for participants?

Opportunities for learning and engagement should cater to the changing needs of knowledge for third agers. The freedom from work, familial and social responsibilities means gaining factual knowledge for practical application is less needed and hence considered less important (Ardelt, 2000; Moody, 1986; Weiss & Bass, 2002). This freedom also allows for more free time, creativity, and the opportunity to expand one's sphere of experience (Rubinstein, 2002). Thus, the learning objectives in later life become related to personal interest, active participation, integration with modern society and sociability (Hafford-Letchfield, 2009; Escuder-Mollon, Esteller-Curto, Ochoa & Bardus, 2014; Talmage et al., 2015). Moody (1986) suggests it is unnecessary for older adults to acquire more and more information, rather the necessity becoming to reduce the complexity and quantity of information learned, in favor of processing deeper, more essential meanings. This notion is echoed by Thornton (1986), who

claims the goal of education in childhood is mastery, in adulthood is it competence, and in old age the goal is wisdom.

Wisdom

Wisdom is knowledge acquired through life experience, self-awareness and reflection, and the transcendence of one's individual reality (Ardelt, 2000; Beatty & Wolf, 1996). Author and educator Joan Erikson (1988) characterized wisdom as understanding the complexities of living with non-possessive attachment: "The wise old man or woman learns to go lightly, receive gratefully, release easily, in order to feel as unfettered as possible. Loss is inevitable, so holding on is defeating" (p. 186). Ardelt (2000) distinguishes between wisdom and other forms of knowledge: 'intellectual knowledge' is quantitative, practical knowledge needed for application to modern day concepts or procedures, and which leads to the mastery of one's external environment; whereas wisdom-related knowledge is qualitative, interpretive knowledge, focused on the "rediscovery of the *significance* of old truths" (p.774), and which leads to mastery and acceptance of one's inner world. In this sense, unlike intellectual knowledge, wisdom is not at risk of becoming outdated, as its meaning transcends time and space (Ardelt, 2000). Wisdom is grounded in life experience, thus developed through the aging process, however, older is not necessarily equated with wiser (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Merriam and Caffarella (1999) see wisdom as consisting of the ability to shift from absolute truths, think reflectively and make reasonable judgements related to our day to day existence.

Researchers claim the third age offers an opportunity for transforming knowledge into wisdom and self-fulfillment through developing more reflective modes of thinking, contemplating life's meaning and acknowledging and accepting one's past (Ardelt, 2000; Baltes

& Baltes, 1990; Erikson, 1963; Rowles & Manning, 2011; Settersten, 2002; Thornton, 1986; Weiss & Bass, 2002). Discovering wisdom allows for the reflection and change of the inner world of the knower, allowing for acceptance of impermanence and limitation, and for fostering the ability to cope with uncertainty and the unexpected (Ardelt, 2000; Erikson, 1963). In this way, the third age offers an opportunity to experience life in a way in which reaching Maslow's (1943) highest-order need of 'self-actualization' is viable (Rowles & Manning, 2011).

This means that programs and centres of learning and engagement should consider this notion, and offer programming for aging adults that fosters wisdom-related knowledge versus more practical, intellectual knowledge. Besides some important exceptions, programs traditionally listed under 'continuing education' and 'lifelong learning' mainly encourage the acquisition of facts, or intellectual knowledge rather than encouraging more reflective modes of thinking (Moody, 1986; Thornton, 1986). As an exception, Chapin Stephenson (2013) reports on an arts-based open studio program for older adults held at New York University that straddled and permeated the boundaries between art therapy and art education, offering a unique model of unstructured art making with older adults. Some notable goals of this program included promoting artist identity; encouraging motivation; providing opportunities for building connections with others; fostering reflection of the self and one's life experience; and the movement toward a perspective shift to peaceful acceptance (Chapin Stephenson, 2013). This shift toward acceptance is exemplary of Tornstam's (2011) theory of gerotranscendence, which suggests that "human aging includes a potential to mature into a new outlook on and understanding of life" (p. 166). The theory implies a shift in perspective from a rational and materialistic outlook on the world, toward a more transcendent and spiritual one (Tornstam,

2011). Thus the goals of Chapin Stephenson's (2013) arts-based open studio program place importance on building wisdom in a supportive and social environment.

The Arts and Aging

Looking more closely to the arts, much of the research done on the effects of art making on older adults has been under the theoretical framework of interventions for 'successful aging' (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Fisher & Specht, 1999); enhancing health and subjective well-being through creativity and meaning making (Adams, Leibrandt, & Moon, 2011; Cohen, Perlstein, Chapline, Kelly, Firth & Simmens, 2006; Greaves & Farbus, 2006; Liddle, Parkinson, & Sibbritt, 2013; Reynolds, 2010); or promoting gerotranscendence (Chapin Stephenson, 2013; Nyman & Szymczynska, 2016). Notably, Davies, Knuiman and Rosenberg (2016) made the first recorded attempt at quantifying the 'dose-response' relationship between engagement in recreational arts and mental well-being in adults (i.e. how much engagement in the arts is necessary for positively influencing mental health). They concluded that two or more hours per week (100 or more hours per year) of arts engagement may potentially improve mental well-being (Davies et al., 2016). While the above are necessary and important discoveries on creativity and aging, scholars insist these frameworks for 'positive aging' are incomplete when it comes to considering and understanding the complexity and diversity in experiencing the third age: A more thorough understanding would include the consideration of societal processes, physical and political environments, and perceived place within one's communities (Liang & Luo, 2012; Holstein & Minkler, 2003; Rowles & Manning, 2011).

The Community Art Studio

Considering the social aspect of art making in a group, the act of creating art together in community art studios has been recorded as sharing similar positive outcomes for those that frequent them. Allen (1995) claims that making art around others breaks down personal barriers, allowing participants to be more open. One of the central tenets upheld by many community art studios is the encouragement of relationship building, whether that be with oneself, one's family and friends, or one's greater community (Barndt, 2008; Lowe, 2000). These spaces offer participants an opportunity for cultural interaction which encourages members to get to know one another, building a sense of belonging to a community (Chapin Stephenson, 2013; Lowe, 2000; Lowe, 2001; Pacific, 1998). Many community arts projects have goals oriented in community collaboration, offering participants opportunities to come together over shared interests, building solidarity, fostering helpfulness and support and having fun (Chapin Stephenson, 2013; Lowe, 2000). As such, the community art studio provides a catalyst for community development, serving as a setting for building individual and collective identity (Lowe, 2000).

Similarly, Dewey's (1934) work on art and its meaning, claims the community art studio is a symbol of creative expression and the artwork created there is representative of the community itself. This idea fosters inclusivity and solidarity, and supports the tenet that participants at community art studios are considered artists, and art is and can be used as an instrument for creating social change (Allen, 1995; Lowe, 2001; Pacific, 1998; Timm-Bottos, 1995). The use of simple materials and a collaborative space ensures inclusivity and makes art-making accessible to anyone who comes into the studio, regardless of previous art education (Allen, 1995). In this way, the community art studio may also serve as a protective factor in the

community, noting that the likelihood of deviant behaviour in individuals corresponds directly to the (lack of) strength, or severed social bonds (Lowe, 2000).

The Open Studio Model as Community-Based Learning Opportunity

Looking more closely into Chapin Stephenson's (2013) open studio program for seniors, it becomes difficult to categorize as either therapy or education, as the program was designed to increase wellness for older adults, but also to master their skills for the sake of building self-esteem. A common feature of community art studios is to engage participants in an iterative process of creative expression, reflection and connection (Barndt, 2008). Beatty and Wolf (1996) claim that learning for older adults is a nonlinear process of personal transformation, which enables adaptation to new or changing environments, and offers the realization of personal potential. This recognition of personal potential can have a great effect on one's self esteem and motivation (Chapin Stephenson, 2013).

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, 'therapeutic' is defined as "having a beneficial effect on the body or mind" (Therapeutic, 2017). In this way, if contributing to wisdom-related knowledge, perhaps the act of learning for third agers has a therapeutic effect. To qualify this claim, more research is needed on the learning experience of third agers, particularly in self-directed learning situations that foster the building of wisdom-related knowledge (Rowles & Manning, 2011).

As well as serving to build more connected communities, the open studio model seen in community art studios demonstrates a model of experiential and self-directed learning that reflects the learning objectives of older adults discussed in the literature. Scholars claim that most learning actually happens outside of educational settings, and instead through engaged

interactions between learners and psychological, social and material environments or experiences (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Boud & Walker, 1990; Dewey, 1938; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The level of personal engagement will gauge the effectiveness of learning, requiring a level of personal autonomy and a willingness or desire to learn (Beatty & Wolf, 1996).

Informal learning opportunities for older people are typically less structured, flexible, and grassroots in nature as they are more receptive to localized needs (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Furthermore, community-based learning opportunities are often focused on social action or change for the improvement of some aspect/s of a community, and cater to willing participants who engage in the program with the intention and desire to learn particular skills or tasks (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These learning opportunities support the idea that education can be a powerful tool in assisting learners to take control over their own lives (Friere, 1970; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). In this way, informal learning situations are opportunities for individuals to take control of their own learning, building autonomy and self-efficacy.

Findsen (2006) supports the claim for engaged interaction, finding that the co-creation of learning experiences by facilitators and third age learners led to the most effective learning situations for third agers. This could possibly explain why most learning for third agers happens outside of structured institutions: third agers will choose and commit to engaging with and learning about topics of personal interest, and of greater importance to building wisdom versus practical knowledge (Boud & Walker, 1990). In this way, the process of learning from experience is dependent on individual foundations of experience and the learning intent. Individual experience is the foundation for most learning, and the reflection and analysis of experience is fundamental in the process of consciously extracting and forming meaning (Ardelt,

2000; Dewey, 1938; Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Boud & Walker, 1990). Thus, in the 'experience-reflection-learning' triad, 'reflection' acts as the necessary keystone.

Reflection and Self-Directed Learning

The importance of reflection in education builds on the ideas of educational philosophers from centuries past. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1966) believed in the virtues of reflection upon trial and error of concrete experiences, claiming the purpose of education was to develop citizens who were free thinking, creative and highly moral. Rousseau's vision for free thinking and creative citizens relates to process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead's (1936) theory on being and becoming. Whitehead declares how an entity becomes, constitutes what the entity is (Whitehead, 1936). In an educational sense, this means how one is educated directly affects what they become; thus the importance of self-directed learning and reflection upon experience for the fostering of a free thinking and creative individual.

It would seem self-directed learning and reflection also fosters a more personal and deeper engagement with experiences. John Dewey's (1938) educational philosophy highlights the importance of student-directed learning for the purpose of igniting and maintaining active engagement and emerging capacities. Similar to Dewey, Candy (1991) warns that learners who feel incapable of moving forward in learning a task or concept without direction are simply victims of a system of education that has deprived them of the opportunity to direct their own learning. Allowing learners to choose their own direction in learning will likely lead to engaged and motivated learners, as they will be pursuing a learning process that they had personally determined (Candy, 1991). These tenets of self-directed, experiential learning are supported in – and even seen as essential to – many informal learning situations.

On a more political front, Paulo Freire (1970) advocates for an educational system that emphasizes learning as a means of liberation for all (and especially marginalized and/or oppressed) people. Gelpi (1979) takes this philosophy further and suggests that self-directed learning in groups or by individuals is an act of resistance to repressive forces, in that it challenges the control of such forces. Similarly, Maxine Greene (1995) advocates for the freedom and potentiality of all people through self-directed experiential education that is based in imagination, the arts, and that which considers multiple perspectives. Greene's (1995) philosophy of education reaches far beyond formal learning institutions, encouraging citizens to live with intention, with wakefulness and awareness, and through a lens of emancipation, to critically make changes in their own lives and in the living bodies of their communities. Greene's (1995) work not only resonates deeply with the goals and outcomes of experiential and reflective learning, her emphasis on the capacity for such learning to occur, nay, to *thrive* outside of formal educational institutions makes her work particularly resonant with this study.

Context for This Study

As discussed, the population of those in the third age is rising in the city of Montreal and throughout Canada, and it is becoming increasingly important to offer opportunities for meaningful engagement and learning. The contributions to society by third agers are often undervalued, but they are absolutely vital for building a democratic, learned society (Findsen, 2006). To create effective opportunities for learning and engagement, it is imperative to understand the experience of self-directed, informal learning for third agers in settings in which they willingly participate. Carr, Wellin and Reece (2009) claim that arts-based research in gerontology has the potential to highlight the societal and personal benefits that third agers

provide through artistic engagement. Furthermore, it is important to consider that lifelong learning is important for everyone despite socio-economic status, and engaged learning opportunities for the least financially positioned and/or marginalized should be thoughtfully considered (Findsen, 2006).

As noted by Chapin Stephenson (2013), determining the effectiveness of health-promoting wellness models of learning engagement for third-agers is difficult due to the subjectivity of wellness, and the lack of tools to measure it. This is where qualitative research inquiry can offer insight and meaningful representation: Rowles and Manning (2011) assert qualitative inquiry is well positioned to offer a robust foundation for understanding the experience and perception of the third age, due to its methodological flexibility and creative potentiality to reveal intentionality and essential meanings and values. Talmage et al. (2015) too suggest future research on the third age experience should be qualitative in nature, focusing on individual experience and perspectives. A qualitative case study on third age participants will seek to provide an understanding about their experiences of learning at a community art studio, and how the open studio model and spontaneous art-making can be seen as potential ways and means of learning.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework of informal learning will guide this study. Informal learning is one of the most common models of learning for adults in the third age, likely because learning takes place in the settings and social situations in which they are engaged, and as discussed, most often those settings are not formal educational institutions (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Boud & Walker, 1990; Dewey, 1938; Findsen, 2006; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). According to Carliner (2012), 'informal learning' refers to the situations that involve some combination of the purpose,

location, process, and content of material to be learned are determined by the learner, consciously or not. Beatty and Wolf (1996) claim that "learning can be incidental to the process of living…permeating the totality of our lives" (p.36). As such, informal learning recognizes the contribution of one's prior knowledge and life experience to their learning process (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Currently, there is no single perspective or approach that appears to adequately provide a comprehensive account of the many manifestations of informal learning across the life span (Beatty & Wolf, 1996). As such, learning theories and perspectives that recognize self-directed, experiential, and reflective approaches are considered in informal learning situations, and will thus be considered as contributors to this theoretical framework (see Figure 1). As outlined by Figure 2, this framework draws from the influence of the reviewed perspectives, but will focus on the constructivist perspective, including transformational learning and enactivism as the primary sources of reference. Drawing from aspects of the following considered approaches, this review of contributing learning theories and perspectives ends with a clearly defined theoretical framework for this study.

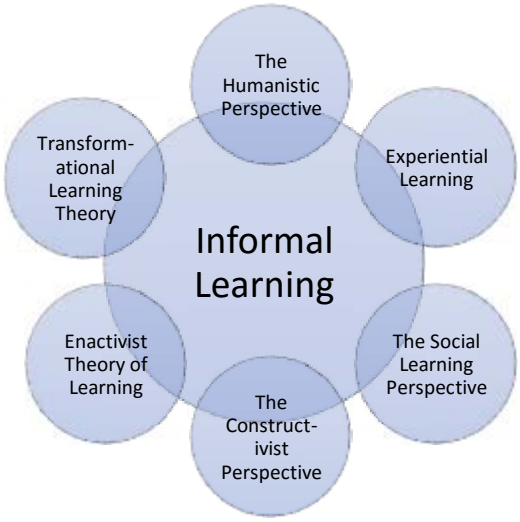

Figure 4: The contributing perspectives and theories to the theoretical framework for this study.

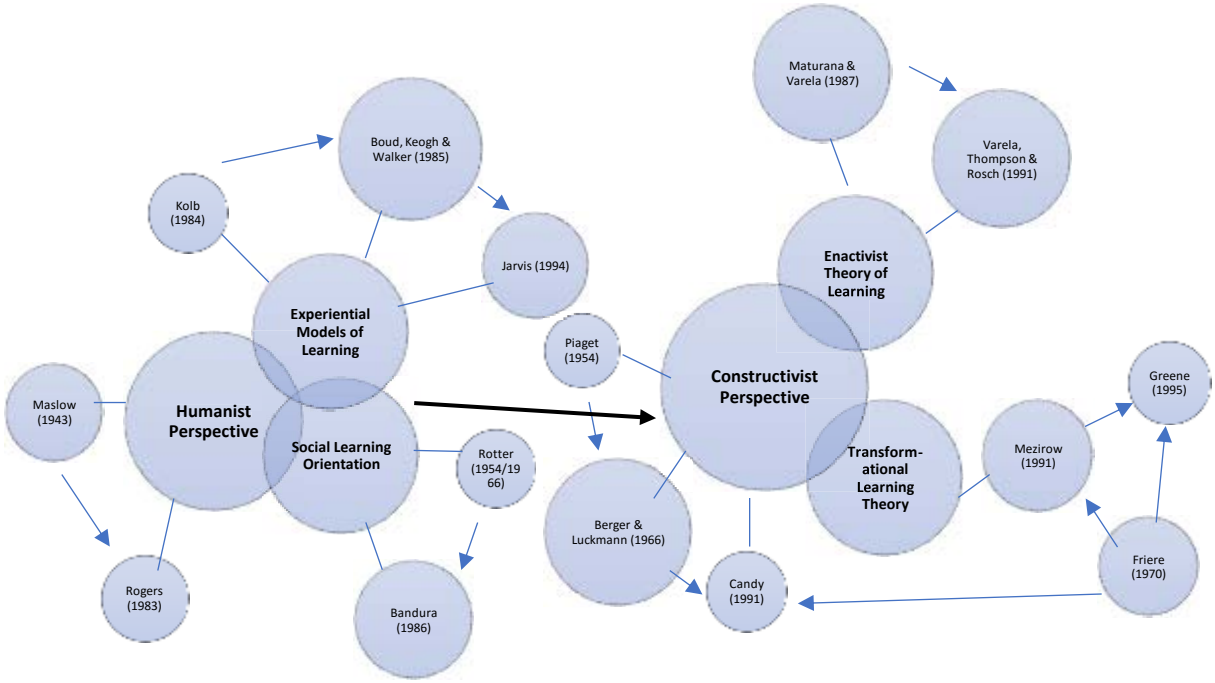

Figure 5: A map displaying the connectedness of the learning perspectives and models that have influenced this theoretical framework.

The Humanistic Perspective

The humanistic orientation of learning is important to consider, as it focuses on motivation to learn, and is one of the first perspectives to consider how learning affects the whole person. This perspective is centred on experience, and considers the totality of the whole person, including values, emotions, motivation and aspirations (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The founder of humanist psychology, Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation based on a hierarchy of needs, outlines the final need of self-actualization, which is a person's aspiration to achieve one's capacity of becoming. Like Maslow, Carl Rogers

(1983) considers how experiential learning can lead to personal development and growth. Rogers' (1983) theory of learning is characterized by 'total personal involvement' and personal discovery, pervasive re-shaping of attitudes and assumptions, self-evaluation of the process, and a recognition of meaningfulness of the experience. The humanist view of learning considers that learning is a function of personal motivation and self-directedness through experience, involving total engagement, which shapes the individual's sense of self and capability (Rogers, 1983).

Experiential Learning – The Foundational Models

Models of informal learning have been built on the theories and constructs of experiential learning. David Kolb (1984) wrote of 'experiential learning' which he defined as: "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). He suggested a model for experiential learning that includes four phases: a) Concrete experience – our perception of what happens; b) Reflective observation – thinking about what happened; c) Abstract conceptualization – drawing conclusions; and d) Active experimentation – testing the lessons or concepts resulting from the previous phases (Kolb, 1984). Criticism of this model arose around its linear nature, which does not accurately reflect that sometimes learning goes back and forth between stages instead of a constant forward progression (Davies, 2008).

The work of Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) builds from Kolb's model, stating experience (including ideas and feelings) and reflection (including the necessity to clear obstructive feelings) connect iteratively until an outcome (seen as an intention, which is then available for use in the future) is attained. Although not quite a flexible model, Boud et al. (1985) at least consider learning to be a back and forth process. In this theory, the most significant factor

in the process of learning is the nature of the individual: their individual characteristics and aspirations (Boud et al., 1985).

Considering the previous two models, Peter Jarvis (1994) outlined an informal learning model that demonstrates the multiple ways in which experiential learning can occur, and lead to various outcomes. Jarvis (1994) sees all learning as stemming from experience, and moving through a complex web of possibilities (including memorization, evaluation, experimentation) that funnel through two routes; one for practical learning, the other for cognitive learning. This model considers a spectrum of transformation in the individual by an experience, through a level of conscious reflection and engagement: the person may be hardly affected, mildly to moderately affected, or totally transformed by the experience, depending on how they respond to an experience (Jarvis, 1994). Like Dewey's (1938) philosophy on experiential learning, Jarvis' model emphasizes the *potential* for learning from experience, however recognizes that not all experiences will necessarily lead to learning.

The Social Learning Perspective

The social learning orientation brought the focus away from the individual's psychological factors, and considered how environmental and social contexts affected learning. Julien Rotter (1954) proposed a social learning theory centering on the idea that an individual's expected outcomes of a behaviour (founded through observation and experience) will determine future behaviour. Rotter (1966) also proposed the theory that an individual has a locus of control that can be either internal or external. Growing out of Rotter's (1954; 1966) work, Albert Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory posited that individuals can learn from observation without imitation, and further that learning could be vicarious: "The capacity to learn by

observation enables people to acquire rules for generating and regulating behavioural patterns without having to form them gradually by tedious trial and error" (Bandura, 1986, p. 19). Here, learning is seen as a function of the reciprocal interaction between a person, behavior and the environment, and variations in learning under identical circumstances are attributed to idiosyncratic personality traits and levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Through this reciprocal relationship, Bandura (1986) acknowledges that people can influence their environment, which in turn has influence on their behaviour in the environment. Bandura's theory also considers reflection on experience as a function to derive knowledge about the self and the environment, allowing an individual to gain understanding, as well as evaluate and change their assumptions and perspectives (Bandura, 1986). This perspective has greatly influenced the emergence of constructivism.

The Constructivist Perspective

The constructivist view on learning holds that learning is a process by which meaning is constructed by individual learners from their experiences (Candy, 1991). The cognitive process of making meaning is considered both an individual mental process and a function of socially interactive exchange (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Emerging from the work of Piaget (1954), individual constructivism posits that meaning creation is dependent on an individual's current and previous experiences and knowledge structures. Social constructivism on the other hand asserts that knowledge is constructed through an individual's engaged social interactions through conversation and activity around shared interests, problems or tasks (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The social constructivist approach involves learning various culturally shared means of understanding, including acquiring the idiosyncratic symbolic meaning systems appropriate to

individual societies, as well as actively participating in changing those meaning systems (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The constructivist perspective on learning is reliant on self-direction, considering its emphasis on the interchange between active inquiry, the social environment, and the individuality of the learning task (Candy, 1991). Common criticisms of constructivism include the notion that constructivism isolates learners from each other: the external world is considered to be separate from the learner, though the learner perceives all other learners to be part of the external world (Sumara & Davis, 1997). The constructivist principles generated many learning theories; two that are particularly relevant to this study are enactivism and transformational learning theory.

Enactivist Theory of Learning

Like the spontaneous emergence of knowledge that constructivism offers, enactivism is a theory of experiential learning that considers learning to be a co-emergent process between the learner and the environment in which the learner is interacting (Maturana & Varela, 1987; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). The enactivist perspective considers knowledge to exist within learners, and emerge though the embodied interactions of learners and their environments, instead of the notion that knowledge exists outside of the learner, and is something to be acquired (Sumara & Davis, 1997; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Varela et al., 1991). This perspective is rooted in the idea that each learner's idiosyncratic understandings between the self and their environment are entwined with those of other individuals, and as such, individual and collective knowledge co-emerges (Sumara & Davis, 1997; Varela et al., 1991). Centered on the notion of 'embodied' knowledge, enactivists claim cognition depends on the sensory, lived experiences that come from the various sensorimotor abilities of the human body that are

embedded in biological, psychological and cultural contexts (Maturana & Varela, 1987; Sumara & Davis, 1997; Varela et al., 1991). As such, enactivism embraces many insights constructivism has offered, but does not assign the individual as the sole truth-determining authority (Sumara & Davis, 1997). Viewed through the notion of 'embodied' knowledge and learning, enactivism is thus appropriate for considering learning that happens through creative and artistic experiences that often involve embodied participation.

Transformational Learning Theory

Transformational learning theory also grew out of constructivism, and is also deeply rooted in the life experiences of the learner. Transformational learning theory is influenced by Friere's (1970) philosophy on education, emphasizing critical reflection. For Friere (1970), education can only be liberating if one's consciousness undergoes "a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality which shapes one's life and of one's capacity to transform that reality" (p.27). Developed by Jack Mezirow (1991), transformational learning theory is based on the premise that all human beings have an inherent desire to understand their experiences, and it considers how adults interpret experience. The theory goes beyond understanding meaning making, and suggests critical reflection can lead to dramatic and fundamental change in the way an individual perceives themselves and their environments (Mezirow, 1991). Reflective learning is transformative when assumptions or premises are discovered to be inauthentic, disorienting, or otherwise invalid, and re-assessment of those assumptions allow a more discriminating, inclusive, permeable and integrative perspective (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) acknowledges that the transformation of perspective is a highly cognitive process, and not all learning is deemed transformative. The transformational learning approach to adult learning

emphasizes the importance of critical reflection to initiate change (or transformation) in assumptions, beliefs, biases and values.

Considering the Perspectives

The discussed theories all consider self-direction, experience and reflection as essential aspects in learning, particularly in informal learning situations. Informal learning asserts learning can happen anywhere and anytime if one is interested and actively engaged in an experience (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Candy, 1991). To clearly define the theoretical framework from which this research is based, I drew from the above approaches and perspectives to consider how informal learning may be manifesting at the art hive. I define informal learning as a self-directed situation (be it in an individual or social setting) in which one learns (to an instrumental or transformational means) through infinite back and forth iterations between experience (including creation), interaction (including with others and one's environment) and reflection (including individual and social). Informal learning can be intentional or not, and learning can occur consciously or not. In an unprogrammed community art studio, informal learning is the most likely model for learning, as the studio is a space for self-directed, spontaneous creation.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

The research design of the case study made the most sense to explore my inquiry. As Stake (2000) suggests, the case study is a choice of what to study (the case), and not a methodology. Creswell (2013) suggests the case study design is an appropriate approach if the researcher has a clearly defined case within parameters, and seeks to present a comprehensive understanding of the case. Yin (2009) describes case study as an appropriate research design if the research question is asking 'how' or 'why' about a contemporary situation, of which the researcher has no control over. I define my case as the current participants in the third age at La Ruche d'Art, thus making this a single case study (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, my inquiry about what and how third agers learn at the studio, and why they choose to attend involves investigating factors of which cannot be manipulated by the researcher, thus deeming this an appropriate situation to investigate under a case study research design.

Moreover, Stake (1995) acknowledges the single case being studied is seen as unique, but also shares commonalities with other cases. Thus case studies remain important in the scientific field of knowledge creation, as they can be generalizable to theoretical notions, though not to populations or environments (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Stake (2000) emphasizes the importance of the intent of the study, asking the underlying question, "What can be learned from the single case?" (p. 436). The intent of this case study is to understand third agers' learning in an unprogrammed community art studio (also known as an art hive). As such, this is an instrumental case, meaning the chosen case is examined for the purpose of providing insight into an aspect or issue, in which the primary interest is the issue, while the case itself is facilitating our understanding of that aspect (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2000). Studying a real-life case that is currently

in progress allowed me to gather accurate data without the risk of it being lost by time (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009).

I acknowledge there are challenges to conducting case study research, and any qualitative inquiry for that matter. Rowles and Manning (2011) assert it is important to recognize and accept the inconsistencies of the human experience, as well as the possibility that there are experiences beyond knowing for the individual. Moreover, the problem of interpretation is ever present in qualitative research. It is important to acknowledge other interpretations will always exist outside of the researcher-participant relationship. The researcher's written interpretations will likely be emphasized over any other participating party, however it is the qualitative researcher's difficult task to preserve multiple realities and interpretations, including different and even opposing views (Stake, 1995).

It is important to make transparent my theoretical position as a researcher. Among the many roles of the case researcher (as teacher; as advocate; as evaluator; as biographer, and as interpreter), I identify with the interpretive research approach, believing in social constructivism: reality is socially constructed (rather than discovered) and cannot be presumed separated from those that make up that reality (Stake, 1995; Urquhart, 2013). This approach to research calls for the researcher to provide readers with substantial descriptive raw material to make their own generalizations (Stake, 1995). In an effort to produce an effective case study, I researched the topic broadly and abundantly before beginning the study; asked honest and specific questions; was as objective as possible and remained open and adaptable to the information I received (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Stake 2000; Yin, 2009).

I acknowledge the inherent bias that I hold as a researcher, community member and advocate for the well-being of older adults. In my position as a well-known volunteer within the

Wednesday seniors' group, I acknowledge the potential positive bias that participants could have toward me and my research study. I am also aware that the participants interviewed will likely reflect favourably on their experiences at the art hive, because they choose to regularly attend. This case study will therefore not address those who have visited the art hive but prefer other places, or for some other reason did not continue to attend. I am aware that bias cannot be completely avoided in a research situation such as this, but a continuous, conscious awareness of the potential bias has helped me to avoid perpetuating my assumptions, and remain open to the data and to interpretation.

Data Collection

Principle values of the case study are to obtain and understand the descriptions as well as interpretations of others (Stake, 1995). After proposing to interview participants at the art hive to Concordia's Office of Research, the research ethics board granted my proposal acceptance (see Appendix A). In accordance with Creswell's (2013) maximum variation sampling, I invited all third age participants to engage in an interview about their perception of learning at the studio. I chose to invite all participants within the third age to participate to acquire as many perspectives as possible, for a broad, most accurate representation of the case. Creswell (2013) suggests including at least five units of analysis in a single case study, as this number should offer plenty of opportunities to identify themes and conduct cross-case analysis (triangulation) of those themes. Out of approximately 25 third agers who regularly attend the studio, I interviewed 11 participants who wished to participate in the project (see Table 1).

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Number of Years Attending	Attends on Wednesdays - Seniors' Open Studio	Attends on Weekends - Intergenerational Open Studio	Attends on Sundays - Intergenerational Textile and Fabric Group
Kathy	67	2	Regularly		
Irene	75	4	Regularly		
Deena	62	3	Regularly	Regularly	Regularly
Barbara	66	2	Regularly		Regularly
Judy	67	4	Occasionally	Regularly	
Florence	75	1.5	Regularly		
Annette	67	1.5			Regularly
Eileen	67	3	Regularly	Regularly	Occasionally
Hendrik	71	4	Occasionally	Regularly	
Gabriel	77	4	Regularly	Occasionally	
Celia	71	1.5	Regularly		

Table 1: Interviewed Participants' Age and Level of Participation at the Art Hive.

All interviewees signed a consent form, acknowledging their informed consent to be interviewed for the purposes of this research project. The interviews were open ended and semi-structured, comprised of the same seven questions (see Appendix B). The questions asked respondents to share their personal history in art education, lifelong learning goals, and level of engagement at the art hive, as well as in other educational and recreational institutions and programs. Each interview was conducted privately, in either English or French, in person at the art hive, and each lasted for about one hour. I am cognizant of the power dynamic inherent in the process of interviewing, and recognize the need for interviewees to have equal power in sharing their stories and experiences. As such, I took a postmodern approach to interviewing, recognizing that both the interviewer and interviewee work collaboratively to complete an interview, resulting in data that is as much a product of the collaborative interview as was the experience being considered (Fontana, 2002). The interviews were conducted in an iterative process, whereby each interview was noted and qualitatively coded for initial codes before

continuing to the next interview. This process helped me to tune in to potential themes shared between participants, and easily recognize differences, of which I could ask more follow up questions for a better understanding of their perspective.

Data Coding

To remain as open to the data as possible, I engaged in an initial qualitative coding phase, whereby I broke down the data into many discrete parts, comparing their similarities and differences. Throughout this process I recorded my personal memos, which included assumptions, predictions, hunches and questions for future consideration. As recommended by Saldaña (2009), I did not rush through this process, but instead, I took time to reflect on each interview and their initial codes, noting that the codes were indefinite and provisional.

After all the interviews had been conducted, noted and coded for initial codes, I went back through the data and conducted a second cycle of coding, focusing on comparing the codes within each interview, and across participants, organized by question. This cycle of comparative focused coding created categories which connected all initial codes. I then organized the categories, ranking them by participant for occurrence and prevalence (see Appendix C). Throughout this process, I recognized and noted that some initial codes would belong to more than one category, and further, that new codes were needed to better represent the data (see Appendix D). As described by Saldaña (2009), this aspect of focused coding allowed me to compare the newly constructed codes across each dataset, which allowed the data (and not my assumptions) to more accurately dictate the emerging core categories.

After all codes had been categorized and re-organized based on the focused coding cycle, I again compared the categories and the codes within them, making a mind map that demonstrated how each code and category connected (see Appendix E). At this stage, similarities and differences around themes became clear and outliers emerged, but overall polarizing experiences were not expressed in regards to learning at the studio, only small differences were found. As such, this process determined theoretical saturation, whereby no more new information emerged through the coding process, and all emergent concepts were well developed, thus new information was not to be sought (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

This led me to the process of aggregative interpretation, where my conclusions were drawn from the act of processing the coded data (Stake, 1995). Based on the data and the organization of the codes through the iterative coding process, I discovered the core category to be "Appreciate studio abundance and structure". This means that all other codes will connect back to this central category. The most prominent categories that emerged were related to the studio structure, community connection, and perceived processes of learning.

CHAPTER 3

Data Analysis

After breaking down the data to examine relevant themes and categories, the proceeding task was to weave it back together in the context of my research questions. In my pursuit to discover the perceived experience of learning at the art hive for third age participants, I reflected on the themes and categories of my coded data, and how the personal anecdotes that participants generously offered, beautifully illustrated their perspectives. Due to the abundant information I gathered from each of the eleven interviews, I found it most effective to explain the case findings by relevant themes instead of through whole personal narratives of each of the participants. The following interpretation will be broken down into three main sections, which will outline the three most prominent categories, and include all relevant themes therein: 'Studio Structure'; 'Community Connection'; and 'Learning at the Art Hive'. This interpretive discussion attempts to provide an understanding about perceived learning for third age participants at La Ruche d'Art, and how self-directed, spontaneous art making in a community art studio can be seen as a potential vehicle for learning.

Studio Structure

All participants discussed the importance of the studio's structure for their continued participation. Participants explained the importance of both the physical layout of the space, as well as the way it is facilitated, as sources of inspiration that directly influenced what and how they create and learn at the art hive. Barbara has been attending the studio for over two years, regularly participating with the Wednesday seniors' studio as well as with the Sunday textile and

fibre group. She discussed the importance of the 'messiness' of the studio as an invitation to create, recalling the un-butted floorboards filled with beads, sparkles and tiny scraps of material from creations past:

> Some people might think [the studio] is dirty and not cleaned, but it is so much more than that… it's more of an invitation to make art in the ways you need to, which might include being a bit messy.

Kathy also discussed the importance of the physical layout and established norms of the studio space. She has been attending the Wednesday seniors' studio for two years, and expressed the established norms of the studio allow her to disconnect from the difficulties of her daily life, and take time to be creative: "I come here for a very specific reason: for the quiet. There is no technology here, there [are] only things to make art." These statements are reminiscent of Maslow's (1943) second level of needs (safety) in his hierarchy of needs: before one's behaviour and thought processes can be influenced by higher-order needs, one must feel physically and emotionally safe in one's environment. This is also harmonious with Mezirow's (1991) writings on effective educational settings: such spaces are to be safe and comfortable enough in atmosphere for learners to feel they can test out new ideas and roles.

The Abundance of Materials

The layout of the studio and the abundance of available materials at the art hive were cited by all participants as a point of inspiration for beginning new ideas, processes and artworks. Florence is 75 years old, and has been attending the Wednesday seniors' studio for over a year. When asked about what continuously brought her back to the studio, she said the physical layout of the space was a constant source of inspiration. She discussed the importance of being able to

see all of the materials that are available, and the ability to use whatever you wanted: "There are many different materials, all on view, and you can use whatever you want. There is something for everyone!"

Eileen also described the inspiration she gets from the abundance of available material. Eileen has been attending the studio on weekends and on Wednesdays for the past three years. She recalled her first visit to the studio with fondness and enthusiasm:

> I couldn't believe that there was a place that existed like [this]; I was so happy, I was dancing! It kind of triggered my brain, because I would sleep at night, and I would see things [in my mind] that I would see [at the studio], and I would dream about things I could do [at the studio].

The materials at the art hive are primarily supplied through generous donations from the community. These donations come from many sources around Montreal, including from libraries, schools, neighbourhood families, commercial businesses and participants themselves. The abundant donated material inspires participants to recycle and re-use found objects, containers, used art materials, fabric scraps, beads, leftover yarn bits and even pieces from old board games and office supplies. Irene has been a regular participant with the Wednesday seniors' group for the past four years. She has created many works at La Ruche d'Art inspired by recycled material, and brings in donations on a regular basis:

> A week has not gone by that I didn't find something to bring to La Ruche, thinking 'Can someone make use of this?' I love the reinvention that happens here. I have become sensitive to [the] potential for something to be what it isn't yet, or at least [for it to be] used again.

Irene's realization about creative re-use and recycling shows how recycling materials can foster creativity, and spontaneous art making can lead to unexpected surprises and continued inspiration. This idea is reiterated in Irene's statement, "most great ideas come out of play". In this way, creative processes at the art hive are often influenced by the interaction between the materials, the participants and the environment itself.

Due to the abundance of donated material to the art hive, La Ruche d'Art began operating a donation hub called the Creative Re-use Centre in the spacious basement of the studio (see Figure 6). Donated material goes directly to the Creative Re-Use Centre to be sorted and organized. The organized material is then available to be shared between the many established and emerging art hives across Montreal.

Figure 6: The Creative Re-use Centre in the basement of La Ruche d'Art.
Photo: Carmen Despres, 2017

Deena (age 62) discovered the studio in 2014, and has been attending regularly on weekends and Wednesdays ever since. Referencing the donation hub, Deena described her bewilderment when visiting the Creative Re-use Centre:

> Here is it very inspiring because I can go downstairs and there is this 'Alice in Wonderland' [feel]. People give us just about anything! I will say, 'Gee, I didn't know this [donated material] existed!' There is just everything here.

Deena spoke of the unconventional materials often sparking her creativity, leading to spontaneous creation:

> Here there is abundance of material, and it is so inspiring – I need this to feed my mind, because I am always starving for ideas. I like to make things from nothing, and I enjoy always finding something different to do here.

The changing supply of mediums and materials provides a constant buzz of inspired spontaneity at the art hive. At 67 years-old and recently retired, Annette is a prolific knitter and seamstress. In January of 2015 she discovered the Sunday textile and fibre group and has been attending ever since. "What I like about here, is that when I come, I never know what I am going to do. Often I would bring my knitting, but [I would] work on something else." Judy also expressed feeling grateful for the spontaneous atmosphere at the studio. She discovered the art hive in 2013 and has been attending on weekends and Wednesdays ever since, whenever her health will allow. "I always bring my pens, but mostly I don't use them. I never know what I am going to do here, or who is going to be here."

The spontaneous nature of the art hive leads to unexpected and surprising experiences, which often influences the direction of participants' creative processes. The unpredictability allows participants to work fluidly, following their own processes, while simultaneously reacting to and interacting with the studio environment itself, and the activity from other participants. This exemplifies the enactivist notion of embodied learning, which recognizes that knowledge is co-emergent between the learner and the environment, and that learning is dependent on the

experiences of the body, including sensorimotor capacities that are embedded in psychological, biological and cultural contexts (Varela et al., 1991).

The abundance of materials at the art hive also provides a certain sense of hospitality to the participants. Hendrik, a 71 year-old artist, reported feeling grateful for the free use of abundant materials, citing it has inspired him to work in new ways unfamiliar to him. When discussing why he attends the studio regularly, he recalled a memory at the studio when the facilitator showed him the roll of canvas tucked away in the basement:

> I asked [the facilitator], 'How much canvas can I use?' And he said, 'As much as you want'. So I cut off five feet of canvas, went the hardware store [located around the corner from the studio], brought the wood back to make a frame, made the frame, attached the canvas and started painting. Just like that.

Hendrik's spontaneous self-directed experience of stretching a canvas and painting demonstrates how the art hive's inherent hospitality offers participants an opportunity to stretch beyond their limits of comfort, be inspired by new materials, experiment with what is available and try new ways of working. This variety of self-initiated and directed creative play is vital for the adaptation and continued growth and learning of individuals and societies (Candy, 1991; Rogers, 1983). The abundant materials available to participants offer the potential for opportunities to be inspired and try new ways of making art, which can expand one's sphere of experience and lead to significant learning.

Accessibility

Many participants discussed the importance of accessibility to and at the art hive. Most participants do not live in the studio's neighbourhood, but find it easily accessible by public

transportation. The studio is a short walk from a metro station and bus stops on prominent bus routes. However, the most important accessibility aspect of the studio perceived by participants is the fact that it is free to attend and they are free to use any material available. The free cost sets an inclusive tone in the space. Six of the 11 participants interviewed named the free cost as an important aspect of the studio's structure and reason for their continued participation. At 75 years-old, Irene has been retired for many years, but shared with me that she still feels the pinch of financial stress from her retirement. Living paycheck to paycheck without a disposable income, Irene expressed her appreciation that the studio is still accessible to her: "You live on what you have, and something that isn't going to cost you to re-create your heart, soul and mind is very precious. This place is a blessing." Deena also reported the importance of the free cost of the studio, an aspect that makes the studio accessible to her: "This place is free, which is very important for me. If it cost money, I wouldn't be able to come."

At 66 years old, Barbara is a more recent retiree, and is beginning to feel the insecurity of her financial situation as well. She too expressed appreciation for the free cost of the studio, claiming that this aspect not only makes the studio inclusive, but also sets a relaxed tone: "Unfortunately, money is a necessity, but at La Ruche we can just make stuff without the expectation of having to make money from it." This freedom from the capitalist system creates an opportunity for participants to make and express what they want and need. Such freedom does not fit under the 'successful aging' philosophy (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Rowe & Kahn, 1997), which revolves around the capitalist notion of 'fighting aging', and promoting a standard of success based on activity level and health. Holstein and Minkler, (2003) and Liang and Luo (2012) recognize the problem with basing a philosophy of aging well on the goal of agelessness, achieved by the ability to 'fight' aging through consumer products, retaining independence and

continuing production. Instead, Liang and Luo (2012) call for a dismantling of the 'successful aging' framework, and replace it with a conceptual framework of aging based on individual needs and acceptance. More akin to Barbara's sentiment, this alternative framework focuses on the eastern notion of 'harmony', which gives emphasis to achieving balance between attending to the different needs and circumstances of each person, particularly focusing on the body-mind relationship, as well as considering the individual within the larger societal context (Liang & Luo, 2012). Freedom from the pressure to value creative work and processes only in terms of money is an aspect of the art hive that truly makes it accessible and even liberating.

Access to Nature

Another important physical aspect of the art hive cited by participants is the expansive backyard and garden located behind the studio. Irene shared her appreciation for the garden, citing it as a space for reflection and processing:

> La Ruche becomes a place to reinvent yourself and figure things out…I can come sit out on this chaise lounge and look at the trees in the garden, watch things grow, see the birds. It makes me feel better.

Hendrik too described his experiences in the garden as an important space for reflection:

> I liked to go out in the garden and sit when there were piles of people in the studio. Just sit there and listen to the traffic, and the neighbours, what's happening here and inside [the studio]. It was relaxing. I needed to do nothing, [I needed] the space.

The participants' sentiments of relaxation and 'feeling better' when spending time in the garden corresponds with the recent research on the importance of being in natural spaces for the promotion of well-being (Dadvand, Bartoll, Basagaña, Dalmau-Bueno, Martinez, Ambros,

Cirach, Triguero-Mas, Gascon, Borrell, & Nieuwenhuijsen, 2016; Finlay, Frank, McKay and Sims-Gould, 2015; Jakubec, Den Hoed, Ray, & Krishnamurthy, 2016; Morton, van der Bles, & Haslam, 2017). Experiencing nature is most often authentic, embodied encounters, activating the body's multiple senses, and providing opportunities for deep reflection and reinvention of the self (Jakubec et al., 2016). Finlay et al. (2015) found that experiencing nature promoted feelings of restoration, renewal and spiritual connectedness for older adults. Furthermore, exposure to environments that resonate with an individual's sense of identity has a positive effect on their cognition, increasing the quality of performance on tasks that are intrinsic in motivation and that require short-term memory (Morton et al., 2017).

In a dense urban environment, many people do not have private access to backyards or natural spaces. Seven of the eleven participants cited the access to nature at the art hive as being an important part of their participation at the studio. Judy expressed appreciation for having access to the natural space: "A big factor for me coming here, was the fact that I could sit out here in the garden under the blue sky. I don't have a backyard or even a balcony, so I treat this one as my own." Research has found that public green spaces in lower income neighbourhoods appear to be used more frequently and thus are more highly valued and maintained than those in more affluent neighbourhoods (de la Barrera, Reyes-Paecke, Harris, Bascuñán, Farías, 2016). In this sense, shared green spaces offer places for community gathering, where individuals can express identity and cultural practices, share responsibility and ownership, building a sense of community and belonging (de la Barrera et al., 2016; Morton et al., 2017).

In the mild and warmer months of the year, the garden at the art hive has certainly become a social space in this way. With many places to sit at communal tables or wander between garden beds admiring the flora, spontaneous interaction among individuals about the

natural environment is common. This is congruent with recent research that describes public green spaces as vital for promoting community connection for older adults, suggesting these spaces offer opportunities for multi-generational social engagement and interaction (Finlay et al., 2015, Jakubec et al., 2016; Morton et al., 2017). This can be particularly important for adults who live alone, and have moments of feeling isolated or lonely.

The Lack of Hierarchy

The unprogrammed nature of the art hive also offers an alternative structure when it comes to the role of the facilitators. As a community space designed for spontaneous art making, the facilitators offer individual direction and support (which may include assistance with materials, media and technique) but do not formally teach lessons, skills or techniques to the group. Seven of the 11 participants noted that the structure of the art hive created a lack of hierarchy, which they regarded as unique to the studio, and an important contributing aspect to the inclusive and self-initiating nature of the space.

When asked why she continued to attend the art hive, Barbara described the importance of the lack of hierarchy in the space, seeing it as equalizing: "When someone is working on a project or having an experience we haven't, I don't see anyone as the teacher and anyone as the student. It is very equal." Eileen also reported feeling a lack of hierarchy in the space, and explained how this affected the role of the facilitators: "There is no law here. The facilitators are very subtle – usually people will go to them to ask what they think. It's direction, but not staying and overlooking. [The creative process] is self-directed."

As Eileen noted, the lack of hierarchy at the studio encourages self-direction. This aspect of the informal learning situation is congruent with the view that the responsibility of learning is

solely the individual's, and others can only assist in encouraging and facilitating the process (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Rogers, 1983). In self-directed learning situations, Candy (1991) claims the learner will likely pass through phases in a learning experience, and as such, will need varying types of assistance. For instance, there are occasions when direct input and technical or subject matter expertise are needed, and occasions when the learner requires encouragement and emotional support (Candy, 1991). The facilitators at the art hive attend to individuals' needs in this flexible and unobtrusive way, making themselves open and available to offer assistance, direction or thoughtful encouragement.

Gabriel, a retired jeweller in his late seventies, has been attending the Wednesday seniors' studio for over four years. He expressed his appreciation for the generous and kind-spirited attributes of the facilitators at the studio: "All [of] the people who have worked here are nice people…it takes a certain kind of person to do the job." Gabriel's insight relates to Candy's (1991) suggestion that successful facilitators in self-directed learning situations are good listeners and effective communicators, who can treat self-directed learning situations as "an act of sharing, marked by warmth, empathy and authenticity" (p. 201). Beatty and Wolf's (1996) ideas are congruent with this notion, suggesting facilitators of older adults in informal learning situations should act in ways that celebrate, respect and support their efforts, and to encourage continuation to their own individual capacities.

As such, the facilitator is a collaborative learner, who demonstrates empathy, models self-reflection and encourages the consideration of alternative perspectives (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 2003). The facilitator's role is to help learners connect new-found self-insights with social norms, establishing a sense of solidarity and group support in realizing dilemmas are shared (Friere, 1970; Greene, 1995; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 2003).

Beatty and Wolf (1996) suggest connecting with learners should never mean 'taking over': "Connecting is a co-contributing way of responding and approaching in which the helper receives and learns as well" (p. 75). As collaborative learners, it is imperative for facilitators to continue to break through their own established walls, continuing to arouse curiosity and exploration in their own creative processes (Greene, 1995).

Furthermore, to facilitate deeper learning for older individuals, transformational learning scholar Mezirow (1991) suggests facilitators do not assume leadership roles, but instead model critical reflection and help learners assume leadership roles within their own learning, helping them to gain a sense of personal autonomy. This resonates with Friere (1970), who suggests breaking down the hierarchy in education can empower learners to take more control of their own education for the purposes of liberating themselves from systems of oppression. Democratizing leadership roles in a learning environment invites participants to develop an 'internal locus of control' (Rotter, 1966), or in other words, a sense that one is capable of influencing what happens to themselves through their own actions. While the facilitators at the art hive quietly attend to participants' processes and the environment as a whole, they simultaneously make art alongside or collaboratively with participants. Having facilitators model art making and creative working is a way to break down traditional hierarchies in learning spaces, and an essential aspect of facilitation at the art hive.

The Atmosphere

The lack of hierarchy at the art hive, and the way the facilitators manage the studio likely contribute to the friendly, inclusive atmosphere that is void of competition. Gabriel, declared that over the four years that he has been a regular participant, the structure of the studio had not

changed, and that is one of the reasons why he continues to attend: “There is absolutely no tension here. In some places, you see people being pretentious and trying to be better than others, but there is no competition here, everybody does their own thing. This is a very unique setting.” Barbara also acknowledged feeling a sense of openness from other participants in the space: “I sense a lack of competition here. It’s nice to be somewhere where most people have a good portion of their walls way down.”

An inclusive atmosphere void of competition is an ideal environment for personal learning to flourish. Significant learning best happens when one’s sense of self is not under any perceived threat, and instead, when individuals feel supported in relating to their environment in constructive and non-defensive ways (Maslow, 1943). This is akin to the characteristics of Mezirow’s (1991) ideal learning environment that if present, can result in fostering transformational learning: freedom, equality, democratic participation, reciprocity and safety. Successful learning communities involve a mutual sense of solidarity among members that requires the identification and acceptance of the communities’ values (Mezirow, 1991). In a self-directed learning environment such as the art hive, these values arise organically and over time within the studio, through the regular, engaged participation of its members.

The egalitarian relationship of trust and support between participants and facilitators contribute greatly to the studio’s lack of hierarchy and supportive atmosphere, providing an ideal site for informal learning. Candy (1991) asserts the success of self-directed learning situations is largely dependent on the amount and type of engaged assistance that learners perceive they obtain, as well as on the quality of relationships that establish between the learner and those who help the learner: “The quality of relationship is a function of the perceptions and expectations of

both partners, within a context of shared interests and mutual liking and respect" (Candy, 1991, p. 200).

Annette described feeling the lack of hierarchy in the space was unique to the studio, and because of it, felt empowered to both ask for help and offer her own knowledge more openly:

> There is a lot of knowledgeable people here, in many different ways. Everyone is so eager to share their knowledge, sometimes you don't even have to ask! I have never seen that before in other knitting groups I have been a part of. If you have questions, you just ask people around you, and someone has done it or knows how to find [out].

To better explain the openness of others at the art hive, Annette recalled a moment when she was unsure about a specific stitch needed for a knitting project, and she openly asked the people in the studio for help: "I asked if anyone knew the stitch, and one of the participants went on YouTube to show me a video. People are so helpful here!"

In the same spirit, Hendrik described the lack of hierarchy as an inviting way for him to socialize:

> I guess I was more of a spectator at first. I don't know what happened, but somehow I started making [art] here. I started to talk with others, and then help them out with projects. I'm good with technology, so I end up helping others with that aspect.

The structure of the art hive has created an atmosphere in which participants feel supported, open to be creative, and empowered to help others. In this sense, Friere (1970), Candy (1991), Mezirow (1991), and Beatty and Wolf (1996) would consider the art hive to be ideal as a site for informal, self-directed learning.

The Art Hive as a Public Homeplace

The unique structure of the art hive has evolved and developed through the engaged participation of the community that attends. As we have seen, participants recognize the lack of hierarchy at the studio, finding the egalitarian atmosphere refreshing and empowering. Timm-Bottos and Reilly (2015) recognize the art hive as a 'public homeplace' (Belenky, 1996), which is considered to be a safe space, protected both physically and psychologically from harm, and that which encourages individuals to recognize, engage, and express their unique potential, fostering confidence and leadership, particularly among those considered vulnerable or marginalized. Building on the work of Friere (1970) and transformational learning, Watkins and Shulman (2008) offer ideas and direction for bringing about 'liberation psychology', a philosophy of transformative learning based on self-directed and experiential learning for the emancipation of the marginalized and oppressed. Watkins and Shulman (2008) describe public homeplaces as places for constructivist knowing, where the witnessing of and engagement with diverse perspectives can contribute to building communities where expression and dialogue can lead to new understandings. In this way, public homeplaces offer individuals places to simultaneously be themselves, build a sense of autonomy and also connect with others in authentic ways.

This can be seen at the art hive: the openness of the studio promotes autonomy and community simultaneously – both in ways of working and in social connection. Six of the eleven participants acknowledged the importance of the freedom of social contact at the studio. According to Gabriel, over the four years that he has been attending the studio, the structure has not changed and that is one of the reasons why he continues to attend. Gabriel likes to keep to himself, but enjoys being in the presence of others: "You have as much or as little contact as you

like. And it's fine, everyone seems to be happy – there is no tension, [or] hierarchy in any case – everyone seems to accept each other." Annette also acknowledged the sense of freedom of social contact: "At La Ruche, it is up to us to develop links or not." For Judy, the freedom of social contact was personally empowering: "La Ruche is so open. I have the option to be with a facilitator or other people, or I can go in my corner and do my thing. I don't go to art therapy, I go to the art hive." Here, Judy's empowered expression of autonomy illustrates how the openness of the art hive has created a space where she can feel accepted as she is in a public community setting.

Eileen also recognized the culture of acceptance at the art hive: "It's ok to be alone, or part of the group. You can see some people come here just to be in their own space – even kids and adolescents." She continued to tell me about an older man she met at the studio on a weekend who was curious to hear about the Wednesday seniors' studio:

> He asked if the Wednesday group was all the same people every week, and it seemed to please him to hear [that] it often was. He was kind of depressed, and he said his heart was hurting. I think he is going to come on Wednesdays to be in a more fixed environment, which seems like something that he needs.

In this way, La Ruche d'Art invites participants to create and/or take what they need, including space and/or social connection. In Eileen's words, "it has become a culture of giving and receiving."

In addition, the self-directed act of spontaneous art making in a public space can provide individuals with new insights, emergent breakthroughs and opportunities for further connection. This is reminiscent of the psychoanalytic theorist D. W, Winnicott's (1989) concept of 'transitional space', which he saw as a time and place for play, cultural production and creativity,

where one can recognize their individual and shared potential for learning and transformation. Kathy expressed the importance of the art hive in her life, declaring it as a place she has personally invested in:

> I will continue [coming] here, even if I pick up other things…it might not be as often due to my schedule, but I have invested too much in here. I have developed friendships here, and things I like to do, and I couldn't walk away and turn my back on [all of that].

In public homeplaces and transitional spaces, individuals are constantly relating between themselves, others, their environments and their state of emergence or becoming, enacting a continuous process of embodied learning. In this way, through rupture and innovation, public homeplaces like the art hive are potential sites for transformative learning (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2015).

CHAPTER 4

Community Connection

As a community art studio facilitated as an open studio model, La Ruche d'Art serves as a rich setting for the community to socialize. All of the third ager participants described the social aspect of the space to be one of central importance for their continued participation. Florence has been attending the studio on Wednesdays for almost two years, and described the importance of the art hive in her weekly routine:

> This studio gets me out of the house and meeting new people. It has become part of my weekly routine, and I like that. I don't know many of the people, but I get to know them, and become inspired by their work.

Similarly, Judy described the social aspect of the studio to be one of vital importance for her. She suffers from chronic illness that can often have a debilitating effect on her physical health, and a negative effect on her mental health. She stated: "It is a socially important place. I have met a lot of really nice people here – acquaintances – we have never really developed full friendships, but it saved my life from deep depression." Judy explained the importance of being able to connect with people of all ages and generations, as she does not have any children, grandchildren, or younger relatives living in her vicinity:

> When I discovered the seniors' group, I found it interesting. Suddenly, I was able to connect, and there were a lot of really smart ladies – the women – I could connect with them, but I didn't want to be around just one generation. It's nice, just like in a family to touch base with all different ages. I come to both [the seniors' studio and the weekend days], but if I had to choose [only one], I would come on the weekend.

The intergenerational atmosphere was also important for Eileen, who enjoyed getting to know the children in her neighbourhood, and watching them grow up:

> With the kids, I feel like a mom sometimes. The kids, I would see them on the street and they would say hello. One time I saw them at the swimming pool and they were all excited! It's like a little family that changes all the time. It's a family movement. And that feels very good in my life.

The social intimacy and deep connections participants have made with others in their community is evident in the powerful words they use to describe the social aspect of the art hive as being 'family like'. This aspect of social connection seems to be important for the sustained wellness of older people (Chapin Stephenson, 2013). As a studio that encourages community connection, the art hive can be considered what Findsen (2006) calls a 'social institution': a place where older adults are portrayed as actively contributing to society, and where learning intersects informally with the function of socializing. Adams et al., (2011) found that social participation in informal situations has a consistent positive relationship with an increased sense of well-being in older adults. In fact, the potential for social intimacy found in certain activities appears to be the most significant aspect of engagement that has a positive influence on the well-being of older adults (Adams et al., 2011). Posited reasons for this relationship may be that social activity reduces isolation, providing opportunities for emotional intimacy, support, reinforcement of one's self concept and sense of being valued by others (Adams et al., 2011).

As the studio is primarily about art making, some of the participants only recognized the importance of the social aspect of the studio upon reflection. For example, Irene described being surprised by the realization that she was actually attending the art hive to connect with others:

> I didn't realize, but I was really coming here to be reattached [to others]. I am very asocial, I have limited social skills. You wouldn't think that of [someone who worked as] a teacher who is in front of people all the time, but networking and building around and thinking about how the world really works is quite a ways away from what my focus has been [in teaching].

Irene described her discovery that the work in her profession had become too focused and narrowed, which left her feeling there was a void of authentic social relationships in her life. She shared how her participation at the art hive began to fill that void:

> La Ruche has been – just like many of the projects we make, a way to open up the kaleidoscope again. It is a different way to come to the human family. La Ruche [has] become a place to come and vent and discuss. There is a lot of conversation that happens here.

The social aspect of the art hive is a big contributor to how the art hive acts as a third space: conversation and collaborations offer participants opportunities to continuously shape their identities, and broaden their perspectives and worldviews (Timm-Bottos 2016). Maturana and Varela (1987) claim the only possibility for coexistence is to broaden one's perspective to include the possibility of other worldviews so that all parties fit in the generation of a shared world. They go further to suggest the biological function of all social phenomena is 'love and acceptance', and without those aspects, social processes and expressions of humanness would not be possible (Maturana & Varela, 1987). This relates to what Greene (1995) advocates for in public spaces that express the ability to strengthen communities: "it ought to be a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming" (p.39). Furthermore, Watkins

and Shulman (2008) call for building safe 'liminal spaces' that allow individuals with varying perspectives and experience to share in cooperative encounters, fostering acceptance and openness. Through the open studio model that allows for unstructured, free interaction, the art hive both nurtures and stimulates participants to connect with one another, making room for each perspective in the shared world of the studio.

A Sense of Belonging

The social and inclusive atmosphere of the studio has fostered a strong sense of belonging for regularly attending participants. Reflecting the sentiments of other participants, Barbara reckons the social connections she has made in the studio to be like 'instant family." Kathy has been attending the Wednesday group for over two years, and discovered it was the social aspect of the studio that brought her in: "La Ruche allowed me to develop new and meaningful friendships. Then it allowed me to be creative, and to share my creativity with others in a non-judgemental environment." She continued to describe a strong sense of belonging to the Wednesday group: "It's not a sense of community that we have here, it's in between community and family – its stronger than community." This strong sense of belonging felt at the art hive embodies Greene's (1995) notion of how a sense of community is created: "Like freedom, [community] has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common" (p. 39). Greene (1995) goes further to suggest that open and respectful social relationships based in mutual regard can offer opportunities for looking differently at the world and broadening understandings and perspectives. While encouraging a sense of solidarity that is in a constant state of emergence, the fluid and open

structure of the art hive ensures the sense of belonging remains open and inclusive to any newcomers.

Considering oneself a member of a creative community is particularly meaningful to many of the participants. Barbara said, "I didn't know many people my age who are creative, and I really need that. [Creativity] is something I didn't make time for in my past, and now it is time." Barbara's sentiment acknowledges her readiness to explore her own creativity and adopt an artist identity. Expressing creative imagination may be a way of decentering, boldly accepting, exposing and sharing in one's sense of self with the world (Greene, 1995). Chapin Stephenson (2013) suggests carrying an artist identity can provide opportunities to reflect on one's life experiences, bring one a certain status in a community, and leave a legacy.

Irene also expressed appreciation for belonging to a community of artists:

> We have done so many art shows – it's really motivating. Being a part of the art community here is a real perk, because I didn't get a degree for it, nobody told me I had to meet a certain standard, no one said I had to have so much production – it's just free!

Irene's comment brings up the notion of accessibility in belonging to a creative community. Before becoming involved at the art hive, this kind of membership seemed out of reach and far too exclusive for Irene's perceived level of practice, education and experience as an artist. Fostering an artist identity can be empowering and offers a sense of purpose, self-confidence and self-acceptance (Chapin Stephenson, 2013). A central tenet of the art hive is to welcome all participants as artists (Timm-Bottos, 1995; What's an art hive?, n.d.), thus setting a tone of inclusion, allowing artists to come together as a creative community.

As we have seen, the social aspect of the art hive is considered important for many third age participants. The social aspect may also have a positive effect on learning capacities in older adults. Although creative learning pursuits are often considered independent and self-directed, adults are more often successful in continuing the pursuit if seeking the activity with others or in a group (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). However, simply doing an activity together does not necessarily always offer engaged socializing as well. Barbara recalled her experiences taking a few workshops and fine arts classes elsewhere, and explained how the art hive differed:

> When I compare La Ruche to classes and other arts workshops I have done, it's very different. [In the workshops] there is competition for material, and people seemed focused on what *they* want and what *they* need. When you pay for a class, there is commonality in the project that you are working on, but people are not that interested in going out for coffee afterward that often. It was never a social thing, as La Ruche is.

The environment and atmosphere of the art hive offers participants opportunities to explore their own creative and artistic activities, abilities and practices, but also encourages participants to make meaningful and authentic social connections with one another. This latter notion is a big aspect of what makes the art hive different from other arts-programming. It is consistent with research on the social aspect of community art studios: they offer the opportunity to experience positive social interactions that create a sense of belonging (Lowe, 2000; Lowe, 2001). Looking more closely at the experience of older adults, Moody and Phinney (2012) found that social inclusion was more deeply felt for older adults when arts programming involved making art that was meaningful

for participants, encouraging new connections within the community, and working toward shared goals.

Developing Self-Efficacy

Some participants discussed the importance of the bi-monthly non-juried art shows organized by the studio, and their ability to participate in them. At 71 years-old, Celia began her artistic practice at La Ruche d'Art, with a single drawing of a mug of coffee, and has since regularly attended the Wednesday seniors' studio to practice her drawing. Celia expressed her appreciation for being able to participate in the art shows, and to attend the exhibition openings (or 'vernissages' as we say in Montreal) to celebrate the artists and the artwork: "The vernissages we have are very special. I invite my friends and family. [The vernissages offer] a real confidence boost!" As Celia noted, celebrating accomplishments of increased performance and level of competence enhances one's sense of confidence and self-esteem (Mezirow, 1991). Bandura (1986) famously acknowledged that learning was tightly related to one's perceived belief in their ability, proposing the term 'self-efficacy', a self-assessment of one's competence in a specific environment. Productive activity for aging adults that offers a sense of satisfaction with outcomes, mental stimulation, a sense of purpose and an increased sense of self-efficacy has a positive influence on physical health and wellbeing (Adams et al., 2011). Similarly, Bandura (1986) argues that being involved in activities that contribute to a positive perceived self-efficacy helps preserve cognitive functioning and strengthens self-efficacy resilience as adults age.

As participants have described, feeling a sense of accomplishment, pride, and belonging to a group or community creates positive emotions. Positive emotions can have a positive effect on learning and psychological growth (Frederickson, 2001). Frederickson (2001) asserts positive

affect can inspire and encourage individuals to engage in various environments, take part in activities, and even broaden the momentary thought-action repertoire, expanding one's ability to learn and build enduring social and psychological resources. This is known as the broaden-and-build theory, which essentially suggests that when experiencing the positive emotions of joy, pride, interest, contentment and love, one's level of cognition is expanded, allowing for an increase in thoughts and actions to come to mind, encouraging more connections and opportunities for learning (Frederickson, 2001). Furthermore, the relationship between experiencing positive meanings and positive emotions is reciprocal. This means discovering positive meaning will trigger positive emotions, and through the broadening effect, positive emotions will increase the probability of finding positive meaning, thereby creating a cycle of psychological resilience (Frederickson, 2001). In this way, experiencing positive emotions through art making in a supportive, self-directed environment can increase one's learning capacity, and enhance emotional well-being.

CHAPTER 5

Learning at the Art Hive

As we have seen, the art hive offers third agers opportunities to engage in self-directed creative activity and practices in an environment that is supportive, inclusive and which encourages social connection. With these tenets in mind, the environment at the art hive is an ideal site for fostering informal learning. I will now discuss the pertinent findings regarding what and how participants perceive they learn at the art hive.

What do Third Agers Learn at the Art Hive?

As participants reflected on what they learned through their participation at the studio, a variety of answers followed. Some participants described learning specific artistic skills and techniques like drawing and weaving. Other participants described learning social skills and more existential meanings that unveiled new perspectives and attitudes toward seeing the world around them. I do not suggest that what follows is a full picture of the totality of what participants learn at the art hive, as it may be possible that some learning is unconscious and participants may not have been aware of, or able to articulate these unconscious lessons. However, what follows are the main themes of learning that have been discussed by participants.

Learning Skills and Techniques

Seven of the eleven participants said they learned skills and artistic techniques through their participation at the art hive, though these were not things participants discussed at length. Among many other things, Irene declared she learned how to make ceramic mosaics, something she had always wanted to try. Annette described learning new techniques in knitting and felting,

and particularly how to spin her own wool with handmade drop spindles. Judy shared she learned how to effectively use her hands again, a skill she had temporarily lost due to medical complications. Florence described learning new media at the art hive: "I learn to make with different media here, and with different materials. I learned to crochet with wool, how to weave, how to use different [quality] papers – the possibilities are endless." Deena described her thirst for knowledge led her to learn many things at the art hive:

> [At the art hive] I learn more and more about sewing, and really, everything that has to do with art, because I can always find things [at the studio] that I am not used to. I have a lot of initiative, so if I want to learn something new, I will.

Though many of the participants claimed to learn skills and artistic techniques, a few declared they have learned much at the art hive, but did not perceive to learn artistic skills and techniques. As a retired jeweller, Gabriel has been drawing all his life, and has a formal fine arts education from an arts and craft school in Zurich, Switzerland. He stated: "Learning about painting and drawing [at the art hive], I didn't really learn much." Kathy also cited learning many things at the art hive, but artistic techniques was not one of them:

> I don't think I learned anything. Nothing in terms of art at least. I watch people create magnificent things, but have I learned anything? No, I just watched them. I am totally inspired by them, but I haven't learned how to actually do their activity myself.

With a history of no education in the arts, Kathy expressed her desire to learn more artistic techniques: "I wanted to learn more techniques, which is why I registered for this [external drawing] course. And why I am now looking for more places to learn that are not going to cost me an arm and a leg." Kathy's desire to learn more technique suggests a sense of perceived incompetence and a low self-efficacy in her ability to express herself in the ways she wants. Both

Bandura (1986) and Candy (1991) acknowledge that self-directed learning involves a level of personal motivation and a sense that one is capable to take on a task. Kathy's desire to learn more artistic techniques and searching out those opportunities shows her commitment to her creative process, and proof that making art has had a strong effect on her.

Interestingly, a few participants cited the internet as their most effective site for learning artistic skills and techniques. Kathy described becoming interested in rendering objects to look 3D:

> I was obsessed with drawing gems, and getting the depth right, [but] I didn't understand it. With no education [in the arts], I didn't know how to make it 3D. So I found a video on YouTube on how to draw with depth – it was really helpful.

Annette also cited YouTube as a source she uses to learn various techniques in the arts: "Everything is on YouTube, and its very easy!"

Similarly, Celia described beginning her 'journey of drawing' at the art hive. After her first few drawings at La Ruche d'Art, she described being inspired to learn better drawing technique, and looked for opportunities for lessons elsewhere. After trying out a few courses at a community centre, and a private atelier, she expressed dissatisfaction in the instruction; it was either lacking or too fast for her: "The teacher was not teaching what I needed – it was too fast." She described finally finding good instruction online: "I found an online course with a DVD – this is when I knew what it was like to have a good teacher." Celia appreciated the thorough instruction, and said it was helpful to use the DVD because she could pause it and take her time, or go back if she felt she needed to.

It is not surprising that some participants do not perceive to learn artistic skills or techniques, as the art hive is intended to be an unprogrammed, free space, where learning is a

shared activity, initiated and facilitated through the interaction of participants and facilitators. Formal lessons in skills and techniques are not taught at the studio, rather participants help each other, and build artistic skills through self-directed practice. Thus, though not all participants perceived to learn artistic skills and techniques at the art hive, all participants cited the art hive to be a place of learning for them. This acknowledges that many different things are being learned at the art hive, not only arts-related skills and techniques. This could be because mastery of skills becomes less important in later life, and learning priorities for third agers change (Chapin Stephenson, 2013; Moody, 1986; Thornton, 1986). Desire for mastery in artistic skills is more likely found in younger stages of the lifespan, and is dependent on individual desires and needs, which means it is not necessarily a need for all people who wish to make art (Lindauer, Orwoll & Kelley, 1997; Reed, 2005). What's more, older artists seem to be more intrinsically motivated to make art for self-expression and engaging in the creative process than for more tangible goals (Reed, 2005). It seems most third age participants are not necessarily interested in mastery, but instead in having *enough* skills to express themselves in the ways in which they want and need.

Learning to Express Oneself

Some participants (five of the eleven) described how the structure and atmosphere of the art hive promoted freedom of expression, and how that affected what and how they created. Eileen has taken a few arts courses over the years, including in sewing and oil painting, and claimed most of her experience in arts education was regimented in learning technique. Eileen described how her artistic practice has changed since participating at the art hive:

> [My former art education] doesn't inform the work I do at La Ruche! I am in a stage that is free and I am detached from the result… [the artwork I create at the art hive] is more

spontaneous and free, and that is what I appreciate right now. Part of what I like about the unprogrammed nature of the space is that it gets your insides out. For me,

La Ruche has let me do that.

We have already seen an example of how some participants view the art hive as being different from other arts programs in the social sense. Here, Eileen continued to describe how the art hive offers her something different in terms of her artistic practice than other courses in the arts she has taken:

> If you go to a course, you are directed and that is the road [you take]. Here, you are bombarded with your own ideas and what you see around you, but you kind of let the feeling come to know what you are going to do that day. I am always getting surprised about myself and my creations now. It took a completely different road. I got into the symbolic things, I guess that is what needed to be expressed.

Eileen explained the change in her creative process, and how the atmosphere at the art hive has encouraged her to discover how to make art for a different, more personally connected purpose. This makes sense, considering the activities individuals choose to engage with in later life often reflect and express centrally held values and meanings of importance (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Setterson, 2002). Eileen has seemingly let herself follow her creative process instead of trying to control it, finding surprise and reward in her creations and her interpretations of them. This rich process is dependent on the learner's sense of personal autonomy and motivation to discover unknown aspects of the self, and realize personal potential (Bandura, 1986; Beatty & Wolf, 1996). Autonomy in this sense can only be achieved if one is free from internal and external constraints (Candy, 1991), thus Eileen must be ready for this shift in her self-directed creative process, and the site itself must feel free from restriction and threat.

From a constructivist point of view, John M. Dirkx (1997) considers how learning can nurture the soul: active, self-directed and experiential forms of learning marked by uncertainty and ambiguity invite deep expressions of the soul, and one can nurture the soul through learning by valuing expressed images and ideas, and continuously making them more explicit. This is fitting with the enactivist notion of embodied learning, which recognizes that not only is knowledge co-emergent, but it can remain unformulated; the knowledge that is constantly being created in the background as we move through our environments, but that which we have not yet made conscious interpretations of (Sumara & Davis, 1997). In this sense, Eileen's creations at the art hive are co-emergent through her entwined interactions and understandings of herself, the other participants and the environment itself.

Learning to Reflect

As we have seen, engaged reflection is an important aspect for learning in later life (Ardelt, 2000; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Greene, 1995; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Tornstam, 2011). Barbara expressed her desire to spend more time reflecting on her experiences: "When I used to get involved in a project, there wasn't much time for reflection. I would like to be looking at things more closely and with more time right now." Barbara acknowledges the notion of re-centering, taking more time to reflect and focus in on what is important to her. This is congruent with the literature on the transition into the third age. Time is acknowledged as valuable and activities must be considered worthwhile (Beatty & Wolf, 1996). Furthermore, third agers are more likely to search out creative learning opportunities that will offer breadth and depth, likely leading to the expansion of one's sphere of experience, instead of skill-based learning (Rubinstein, 2002; Talmage et al., 2015). A desire to spend more time reflecting, may

be an indication that one is ready to make deeper connections between experiences and one's sense of self, leading to the creation of deeper, essential meanings, or wisdom. The third age provides an opportunity to explore learning goals based on reflective modes of thinking such as contemplating one's purpose and the meaning of life, evaluating and re-evaluating past experiences, and considering one's spiritual nature for the continued growth and development of the person (Ardelt, 2000; Erikson, 1963; Liang & Luo, 2012; Tornstam, 2011).

As discussed, active reflection is essential for deriving meaning from experience (Bandura, 1986; Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Boud & Walker, 1990; Greene, 1995; Kolb, 1984;) and such action can lead to evaluations and alterations of one's thinking (Friere, 1970; Greene, 1995; Mezirow, 1991). Reflection in this way can lead to transformative learning, whereby one can reinterpret old or new experiences through a new or transformed set of expectations, offering new meanings and perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). Taking an opportunity to reflect on one's sense of self and surroundings can lead to the realization of cultural codes and social norms, which can also lead to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

This is congruent with Barbara's experience of learning at the art hive. After moments of quiet thought, Barbara further shared that her experiences at the studio led to learning more about herself, and about her role in the world around her:

> I think I learn to be more of me! There is time and space [here]. There is no pressure. You can just be, or you can respond, or you can just sit and think. I know through all of my senses that I am learning wholly, globally – like 360 degrees of learning.

Mezirow (1991) holds that reflection can lead to learning about aspects of ourselves that we were previously unaware. Here, Barbara describes an experience of embodied learning, an experiential knowing that depends on existing in a world, inseparable from

our bodies, language and social interaction and history (Varela et al., 1991). This form of enactivist learning is based on the concept of situated cognition, in which knowledge creation is seen as a co-emergent product of the endeavour, context and culture of the environment in which it has been developed (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In this way, reflection can lead to the transformation or broadening of perspectives.

Learning Life Lessons

Many participants described situations at the art hive that led to feeling empowered by learning deep existential meanings which broadened their perspectives. Specifically, four of the eleven participants said they learned how to 'let go' at the art hive. Irene described the art hive as a place to let go of the difficulties of everyday life. Similarly, Judy described learning to let go through her creative process: "I learned not to worry that everything has to be perfect, it can just be what it is. Basically, I learned how to be a kid again."

Eileen described building genuine relationships with university students who were at the time carrying out temporary service learning experiences at La Ruche d'Art. Through socializing and building relationships with the university students, Eileen described learning to let go:

> I like talking to the students who go to university that come here. They think the same way as me. For people who go to university, the big world is all open. And for me, even if I am 67, it is still a big world to discover! Through meeting the students at La Ruche, I learned to let go. It's nice to see them following their path. And I think at our age, we should follow our path too.

By building intergenerational relationships and fostering connections, Eileen recognized a renewed optimism and openness to the world. Exhibiting a sense of receptiveness to the world as

Eileen has described, allows for the possibility of affecting and changing our understandings, perspectives and sense of self (Sumara & Davis, 1997). Eileen continued to share what she referred to as some of her 'greatest lessons':

> [I learned] spontaneity. Before I was more concerned with what people were thinking maybe. I realized that I do not want negativity in my life; I learned that here. Everything crosses in life. I also learned that you can't help people who don't want to help themselves. That I learned many times. But I learned I like to bring positivity to people's lives, and I have [that] power, even though I have my limits.

Upon reflection on her experiences at the art hive, Eileen has made many connections between her experiences, and acknowledged learning many lessons about life. Imagination is necessary for gaining understanding of the unknown. Greene (1995) suggests imagination is what enables us to make connections with aspects of our experiences, but a consciously reflective transaction is necessary for making realizations. The more open and reflective one is to the perspectives of others, the more one can imagine alternative contexts for understanding (Mezirow, 1991). Barbara reported learning to engage critically and reflectively with her experiences at the art hive has led to a shift in perspective: "I am learning to ask, and learning to receive. I'm learning there is a difference between asking and demanding. I find I am able to observe more in the time and in the space."

As noted by Barbara, such perspective transformation requires time and space. This relates to Tornstam's (2011) concept of gerotranscendence, which suggests growing older offers the potential to a shift to a more peaceful, accepting and spiritual perspective on the world. This is in line with Ardelt's (2000) suggestion for sites of education directed toward older adults; they should offer activities that will lead to opportunities for reflection and life review so learners can

make sense of their lived experiences. Experiences of critical awareness are created at the art hive, as Irene pointed out, "This is a place to wake up again."

Learning New Perspectives

The spontaneous art making encouraged by the studio has led to participants working with new mediums and techniques that have resulted in the opening and broadening of perspectives. This correlates with the finding that art making in later life can leave artists more concerned, affected by and involved with people around them and events around the world (Lindauer et al., 1997). Irene shared her most memorable moments of revelation at the studio. Having not painted for 40 years, the spontaneous atmosphere of the studio inspired her to try it again: "What emerged wasn't what I thought I was making. It was there, you didn't have to work for it. It was so much fun! I couldn't remember the last time I had that much fun in 20 years!" Continuing with painting, Irene became inspired by stories in the newspaper and current events. In particular, a photo printed in the newspaper in 2014 representing refugees running out of Damascus inspired Irene to paint it:

> The more you looked at it, the more you could see the faces of the refugees down the road, and fire on somebody's t-shirt, or a hanging man on the edge of a collapsed building far, far away. By studying it, slowing down, being more deliberate, [painting became] a new kind of focus for me. The more I painted it, the more I saw. I was resolving a lot of my own islamophobia by noticing the pained looks on everyone's faces. Nobody there was happy, there was nobody there who was a terrorist. It made me able to really paint what I was looking at.

Irene worked on this painting for over 3 months, wrestling with the tone of the work, and trying to find a lighter side to it, then recognized that wasn't possible. "I never thought I would paint such a large picture, but I am glad I painted it. It was a growing experience – inwardly, not just on the canvas."

Irene's experience of perspective transformation exemplifies what Watkins and Shulman (2008) would consider to be a manageable rupture, "a kind of difficult but negotiable rupture that initiates a period of transformation and rethinking that in the end can be thought of as creating new strengths" (135). From a transformational learning perspective, this was an experience of reflective action, which is defined as taking action based on the insights that have resulted from reflection (Mezirow, 1991). Undoubtedly, Irene's experience of reflective action led to perspective transformation, whereby one comes to see reality more clearly, with inclusivity, considering the experiences of others and not just one's own (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning requires one to continually redefine one's values, sense of self, and feelings attached to perceived definitions (Beatty & Wolf, 1996). Through a level of critical reflection initiated by the intense level of focus required in painting, Irene was able to become aware of her presuppositions and how they came to constrain her perceptions and understandings about those in Damascus. From her painting experience, Irene was able to discern what she shared with those in the painting instead of only how she differed, thus leading to a change in perspective that was more inclusive, permeable, and integrative. Social spaces like the art hive that support the strengthening of dialogue, the fostering of critical consciousness, and the development of creative and imaginative practices exemplifies what Watkins and Shulman (2008) consider to be sites of liberation.

Learning Social Skills

Many participants discussed learning social skills and developing the ability to accept others through their regular participation at the studio. Barbara shared her discovery about her social anxiety and how her participation at the art hive helped her to be around others:

> I am learning to be with people. I tend to think of myself more as a loner…so as a loner you haven't really developed your socialization skills as others have. At the studio, I learn to interact. I am beginning to learn to listen, and to be a bit more sensitive to who and what people are; and not to nail them down in this ten seconds today and expect them to be that way tomorrow.

Gabriel also described he has learned to be social through his participation at the art hive:

> I learned to be with other people here, socially [the studio] is a very good thing. It's not a school here, you learn by yourself, by what you are doing, through the experience, but it is not a class. So you learn to be with other people. Actually, it's very easy because people are very easy-going, and there is no tension here.

Having had a teaching career for over 40 years, Irene discovered the studio gave her a new perspective on her relationships with others:

> I am not a social person. I surprise myself that I am kind of socially blind…[the studio] has been helpful for me to let myself appreciate people, and not worry about whether they are going to sufficiently respect me as their teacher. It is a different way to come to the human family. So socially, I am engaging in a continuing project – but I am not there yet!

The above statements demonstrate the importance of the open studio model of the art hive for fostering an environment that encourages self-directed learning, including learning social skills. Perhaps participants feel they learn to interact and socialize at the art hive because

of the informal context: participants come to the art hive with a primary focus to make art, but the environment is inherently social, and social activity (at the desired level for each individual) is an inevitable by-product of participation. In effect, informal learning contexts are where most learning for aging adults takes place, because these contexts *organize* our learning; they only need to be seen as sites where learning can take place (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Considering the art making aspect of the community studio, making art in a social setting breaks down personal barriers, fostering openness and curiosity (Allen, 1995). Chapin Stephenson (2013) suggests art making in a social environment is particularly empowering for older adults as it provides participants with expressive tools that allow participants to invite or deepen connection with others. This is congruent with Moody & Phinney's (2012) findings on community engaged arts programs positively affecting a sense of social inclusion for older adults.

Just as the facilitators model spontaneous art making in the studio, they also model welcoming, friendly, respectful and inclusive behaviour. This modeling of behaviour contributes to the established norms of the studio, encouraging participants to be open, kind, and respectful to one another. Much social learning is vicarious, happening through modeling and observation of behavior and how that behaviour is received (Bandura, 1986). As such, the co-creation of learning experiences by facilitators and third age learners creates the most effective learning situations for third agers (Findsen, 2006). Hence, modeling is an important aspect of the art hive. Behaviour modeling and vicarious learning enacts Bandura's (1986) concept of reciprocal interaction between the learner and their environment: behaviour influences the environment, and the environment in turn influences behaviour. This relates to the enactivist learning

perspective, in that the learner is in constant interaction with the environment (including other learners) and thus in a constant state of co-creating the environment and established norms.

Learning How Art Can Heal

Three of the eleven participants disclosed their struggle with chronic illness, and shared their discovery of the healing aspect of making art at the art hive, and the ways in which the studio has taken a prominent and vital role in their lives. Deena shared that she been suffering with chronic mental illness for many years, and described her access to the studio as an important part of her wellbeing: "Just to know that I can come here, and be out in the garden in the summer is enough." She has found making art at La Ruche d'Art offers her a sense of engagement, peace and respite:

> I think I am getting brighter and brighter the more I make art because I am generating more and more creativity. I feel better when I make [art], I don't get so depressed. I am still very fragile… Inspiration comes, it just happens automatically, and it is finished when it is finished. And then I am ok.

Reminiscent of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions and learning (Frederickson, 2001), Deena's statement of expressing creativity and feeling 'better' relates to the relationship between emotion, creativity and the effect on learning. Making art is an imaginative activity that evokes images that function as symbols of emotions and experiences that can offer a sense of release and shed light and meaning on aspects of ourselves and our concept of reality (Watkins, 2000). Encounters with creativity and the arts have the ability to nurture personal growth, self-efficacy and a sense of optimism: "Art offers life; it offers hope; it offers the prospect of discovery; it offers light" (Greene, 1995, p. 133). In this way, such engagement with the

unconscious through creative activity and expressions of imagination foster embodied learning, making meaningful connections and building wisdom (Dirkx, 1997).

The embodied learning perspective stresses the importance of somatic awareness in experiential learning, recognizing the body as a source of knowledge and seeing emotions as conveying intimate connections with the internal and external worlds (Dirkx, 2008). As part of the physiology of the body, emotions represent expressions and interactions of one's subconscious, which is considered a fundamental source of creativity and meaning (Dirkx, 2008). Boud et al. (1985) note that feelings evoked by an experience are important to consider in a learning situation, and particularly that negative feelings must be consciously addressed by the learner if learning is to be effective.

Kathy has been struggling with chronic illness due to an accident six years ago. Since then, much of her time and energy is devoted to healing and getting her health back. She cites the art hive as a place of respite from what she refers to as the 'chaos' of her health condition: "[At La Ruche] there is no structure, there are no demands on your time. When you have so many restrictions and demands on your time, I need this place because it is my break, it is my freedom." The studio has become a place for Kathy to express her creativity and build personal strength from her artwork, so much so that she is currently looking for more places to do that:

> I'm at the point now where all of my health conditions are declared permanent. I have to make a stand and acknowledge that I will never go back to who I was or what I did before, and I need to find things that will provide me with that release of creativity.

Making art at the studio has helped Kathy recognize she has an alternative outlet for continuing to grow and to live her life to the fullest:

> Making art helps you to see things in deeper ways. There is so much stuff I can't do because of my health, it is pointless to want to do things that are not practical for me. What would I really like to do? I would like to be free from the restrictions in my life. The only way that [experience] is going to happen now is through my art.

She continued to describe her continued participation at the studio is essential to her wellbeing:

> [La Ruche] is a necessity – it's mandatory – I don't believe I would exist without it. It's like getting a shot of a tranquillizer to carry you through from one week to the next. My family sees the difference when I don't come.

Kathy's fierce expressions of reverence and discovery through her creative expression seem to constitute what Zeivots (2016) considers to be an emotional high: "the inner deep satisfaction a learner experiences when they have absorbed something meaningful" (p. 368). Emotional highs are characterized as important learning experiences, whereby one achieves clarity about something of value through an embodied experience and feeling a sense of expansion and enrichment (Zeivots, 2016). This relates to Lindauer et al.'s (1997) findings that creative efforts in old age led to a more positive outlook on the self, one's relationships and view of the world. Approached from a perspective of fostering personal growth, intense experiences of embodied knowing such as art making can lead to transformative learning and the fostering of wisdom.

Judy also disclosed that she suffers with chronic illness and depression, and finds that the art hive is a place that allows her to be herself and to feel more 'normal':

> This place made me realize I have a choice – it saved my life, literally – I do not know what I would have done – and still now, if I didn't have La Ruche, I don't know what I would do. [Here] I am not a patient or a client; I am here to participate like everyone else. It's organic. It's not therapy, it's not a doctor-patient relationship. Anyone can come here.

> Anyone of different ages and class – anyone. That is what I like, *I feel normal*, and not like a person that someone needs to fix.

Judy's expression of enlightened experiences and empowerment at the art hive has had a profound psychological impact. She continued to describe the art hive as her preferred place to go to feel well and increase her quality of life:

> [I continue to attend] for psychological support. Because I tend toward depression, I have to have a really good reason to go out, and La Ruche does that, it really does. Otherwise it is just doctor's appointments, and that's it. When you are older and not well, a lot of your outings are for doctor's appointments, so you need something for the brain, a creative aspect. If [my partner and I] were really unwell, we wouldn't go out, but when we are well enough, La Ruche is the first place we want to go. Not a restaurant – nothing like that – La Ruche d'Art.

Judy clearly identifies the art hive as having an important role in her life, through building autonomy and a sense of empowerment. Her sentiment is consistent with the goals of third spaces and informal sites for self-directed learning, which are likely to foster transformative learning. The safe and supportive norms of such environments protect learners from humiliation, personal attack and discourage competition. Mezirow (1991) considers such settings to be ideal sites for learners going through life transitions (such as those in the third age), as they can find others sharing similar experiences, feel a sense of solidarity and identify with each other as role models. This relates to Liang and Luo's (2012) call for initiatives that recognize the specific challenges and opportunities that arise in old age, and that foster empowerment and emancipation for older adults. Such initiatives should include opportunities for reflection,

connection and creation (Liang & Luo, 2012). The art hive operates on all these tenets, thus offering opportunities to foster personal growth and empowerment in older adults.

How do Third Agers Learn at the Art Hive?

After discussing what participants thought they learned at the art hive, I asked them to consider in what ways they perceived learning to happen in the studio, for both themselves and for others. The participants discussed the various ways they perceived learning to happen at the art hive, including learning from others and/or learning through self-initiated processes.

Learning From Others: Inspiration

Ten of the eleven interviewed participants said they learned from others in some way at the art hive. Some suggested they learned by following the inspiration they found from others' work, while others suggested they learned by observing others' creative processes, and still others claimed to learn through executing a collaborative project.

Celia is usually focused on her own drawing practice and works individually while visiting the art hive, but she commented on how she was inspired by the work of others: "I love the community of people. Even though I do my own thing, I am inspired by everyone else's work."

Eileen also shared being inspired by others' work, and by the abilities of others to express resilience and openness, even in the face of hardship:

> I continued to attend because of the social aspect – the kids, watching them do things. And watching how poor people can be blocked, but still be so open. I saw [people] develop with time, and I think that's great. That aspect is important.

Eileen's sentiment describes how the creative process and the social environment have inspired a sense of hopeful optimism and faith in humanity through the witnessing of resiliency

and emancipatory learning of others. In emancipatory learning, learners break free from underlying and seemingly unchangeable systemic, epistemic and institutional forces that somehow limit one's options for fulfilling their true capacities (Friere, 1970; Mezirow, 1991). Such dramatic changes in perspective only become possible when one can recognize the psychological and cultural assumptions that have perpetuated a dependence on those outside forces that seem unchangeable (Mezirow, 1991). As Eileen witnessed, emancipatory learning can be transformative for individuals, and can also lead to the transformation of perspectives and overall culture of a group. In this way, the art hive functions as an 'authentic space' (Greene, 1995) where resiliency may grow strong and freedom may be achieved.

Kathy also expressed finding inspiration from watching others work at the studio. Seeing how others progress in their own process' motivated her to continue working through her own creative process:

> I am totally inspired by others' work and it inspires me to want to do more [of my own artwork…] For example, [at the time] I was into acrylic painting, and I was enjoying making cards – and then I saw the pencil drawings that [Celia] was doing, and I really wanted to get into that. [Seeing others' work and process] is where you get motivated to do something different.

Kathy has since signed up for a drawing course at a local seniors' centre to learn techniques in drawing. "Now will I go back to painting? Yes. But when, I can't tell you because now I am into pencil drawing!"

Being inspired by others' work sometimes led to collaborative working or re-invented projects. Participants often found themselves following the spirit of spontaneity at the art hive, moving fluidly between projects, or changing directions as influenced by other participants and

projects happening simultaneously. Thus, the art hive is a site that encourages enactive learning, and the co-emergence of knowledge by the interactions of all participants in the environment. Deena expressed being inspired by the work of others in the studio, particularly by the more technical and mechanical art pieces made at the art hive:

> [I was so inspired by] the robot that came from [Hendrik]. It even had lights – it was like [it came] from a science fiction movie, like Wall-E. It talked and made sounds, and lit up. That was something. I was just fascinated by it, and [by the fact] that he made it! And [Marc] who is a real mechanic, he makes good stuff too.

The more technical and mechanical work at the studio inspired Deena to work collaboratively with artists more adept in this area, expanding her knowledge and comfort in working with new tools.

Barbara also reported enjoying making art on her own at the studio, but often found herself involved in collaborative projects: "That's an interesting thing about working at La Ruche; you intend to work separately and before you know it [you think], 'gosh – I would like to participate in that project!' It's just great to be a part of this."

These testimonies of learning describe the various ways participants translate and channel inspiration in the self-directed and social environment. There are many ways to learn in a social environment, and the successful methods will depend on the nature of the individual learner, the quality of the environment and the level of interaction with other learners (Beatty & Wolf, 1996). This is congruent with the social constructivist view of learning, in that learners construct their own knowledge from their experiences and interactions with others and environments, and the ongoing correspondence between all perspectives is how reality is constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This is also harmonious with the social learning perspective, highlighting

Bandura's (1986) notion that behaviour is a result of the reciprocal interaction of a learner and their environment. Similarly, self-direction in social learning environments emphasizes the combination of independence, active inquiry, and fostering individuality in learning activities, and all the while being influenced by the interactions within the social environment (Candy, 1991). All of this supports the enactivist theory of learning, suggesting that learning in social environments is a co-emergent process of becoming between the learner and the setting (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

Learning From Others: Observation

Many participants cited learning at the art hive through simple observation. For instance, Irene said learning at the studio is as easy as watching others make art: "[Here] you learn from watching others. You see people doing something, and if you are inspired, you can do that! You just try it out!" Judy also shared her thoughts on how easy it is to learn from others at the studio: "If anything, I learn from the kids and the people around me. By being around other people and seeing what they are doing, it showed me that you can make things so easily!" Kathy also reported how other participants become inspired by and learn from each others' work:

> People learn here from watching each other. I have seen people flit around and talk [with other participants] and not get involved [in their own art], and then all of the sudden, they were involved and making art. Everyone needs a creative outlet!

Observing the creative process of others is a common way for participants to inspire one another and learn new media and techniques at the art hive. Learning from observation is most effective when novel patterns of behaviour or skills are exhibited by models, which observers did not already possess, but by observing the skill or behaviour, the observer can try it and produce a

similar behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Creative endeavours are often learned by example and practice, and innovators continue to learn things through observing others, and trying aspects of the modelled behaviour that may add new dimension to their work (Bandura, 1986). Observing others in the creative process can contribute to the innovation of new styles, as creative achievements are partially built on preceding creative innovation of others. In fact, new patterns and innovations are most likely to arise when learners see a large amount of variety and diversity in modelling around them (Bandura, 1986). This could explain why many participants view the art hive as an inspiring place, buzzing with creative activity: the environment encourages self-directed creative activity, and thus many projects and media are being modelled at any given time.

Learning From Others: Intergenerational Learning

The weekend days at the art hive offer third agers unique opportunities to informally socialize and share skills and techniques with participants of all ages. Most research on the effects of intergenerational programming focus on addressing and changing ageist attitudes toward older generations (Anderson, Fast, Keating, Eales, Chivers & Barnet, 2017; Penick, Falishore & Spencer, 2014), to support social inclusion for older adults (Moody & Phinny, 2012) and for the promotion and maintenance of physical and mental health (Adams et al., 2011; Anderson et al., 2017), while few focus on the interests and effects of intergenerational learning on older generations outside of health and wellbeing, including learning (Dauenhauer, Steitz & Cochran, 2016). Annette shared her experiences of learning from participants her own age as well as those much younger than her at the art hive, and even described learning new ways of working in her craft:

> There is a lot of arts and crafts for the elderly happening in church basements, but I am not interested in that. I am not there yet, even though I am a senior. The difference between the church basement and here is that young people do not go [to the church basement activities]. I think there is a lot of new stuff coming out of young people – like people my age, some of us are creative, some of us are not – I don't think I would learn that much [from other people my age]. Maybe I would learn a method, but not new ways of doing things, and what is trendy now.

Annette recalled an embroidery project she had been working on at the art hive, and had received help from a woman who was 75, and again from another woman in her early twenties:

> It was like night and day. A lot of times [older people] just show you what you have learned from back then, but you don't improve. And techniques have all improved – even in knitting – everything improves with time. So that is a great opportunity to learn if you have [people of] different ages in the same space.

In this way, the informal atmosphere of the art hive generates the possibility for intergenerational interaction, learning and building of relationships, supporting a disruption of a social hierarchy based on age. Such experiences of genuine intergenerational interaction invite the consideration of different perspectives, can be humbling and empowering for both parties, and can lead to significant and even transformative learning. This supports and embodies the called upon shift in aging discourse (Biggs, 2008), which suggests facilitating the strengthening of intergenerational relationships and understanding will largely affect social, ecological and economic sustainability in our communities.

The Effect of the Lack of Hierarchy on Learning

The lack of hierarchy that creates and maintains an inclusive atmosphere at the studio, also fosters a learning environment where participants actively learn from each other. Irene shared that she appreciates the openness of the participants who attend on Wednesdays, and is inspired by their work and processes:

> It's good that people can work in their own direction, because it leads to a cross pollination of ideas. The Wednesday group has so much collective knowledge, everyone brings something different, and people teach each other how to do what they like doing.

Barbara also declared learning from others and observing everyone learning from each other:

> I guess I really learn first-hand [here] about how we all teach each other… I don't see anyone as the teacher and anyone as the student, it's very equal. It's kind of like facilitating young children: the real joy is when they teach you; how it naturally flows in a reciprocal way all the time. I guess I am becoming aware of less and less ego.

The lack of hierarchy at the art hive seems to generate a mutual sense of acceptance and solidarity among participants, creating a rich environment for fostering informal learning. Through modelling, informal discussion and developing an openness to try new things, facilitators and participants equally contribute to how creativity and artistic skills get shared, learned and transformed by other participants. As discussed, modeling is an important aspect of learning in social environments. Although skills and techniques are not formally modelled by facilitators, informal modelling is happening all the time at the studio by both participants and facilitators. Maturana and Varela (1987) suggest imitation allows for an individual to go beyond their current biological capacity, expanding their level of capability. Similarly, Mezirow (1991) proposes that learners in just one stage of proficiency ahead of others can have a greater

influence in fostering transformative learning for others, than those who are more advanced. This aspect is congruent with the statements from participants regarding how they learn from one another at the art hive. It is the sense of a lack of hierarchy that makes such learning possible.

Learning as a Self-Initiated Process

Nine of the eleven participants cited they learned at the studio through a self-initiated creative process. This means that most participants thought they learned from others as well as through their own self-directed processes. This is consistent with the literature on informal learning: learning happens through everyday, un-orchestrated experiences from which something is learned (Beatty & Wolf, 1996; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Celia has been routinely practicing drawing portraits at the studio on Wednesdays. She expressed how she learned to develop her ability to focus more intently:

> What I learned about drawing by doing it more and more, was to really look at the model. Look more! Deep looking should come before the hand. Otherwise I would say, 'How come I didn't see that before? I have to always practice more.

Eileen found that following her own creative process led to unexpected and surprising results: "By making art spontaneously, I was getting surprised about myself and my creations. [My creations] took a completely different road. Making art at La Ruche d'Art was a wakeup call to my head." This is reminiscent of Greene's (1995) writings on the unexpected and unpredictable nature of art and the imagination: "It requires reflectiveness on our part to acknowledge the existence of these unexpected and unpredictable vistas and perspectives in our experiences" (p. 125). This self-directed and reflective process led to new realizations and shifts in perspective for Eileen, essential elements of transformative learning.

Deena too described the importance of following her own creative process and experimenting in her own way: "I have my own style and am always discovering my style. To sit and learn technique seems boring; I want to do it by myself, to experiment in my own way – it is more 'me'." She speculated that perhaps her solitary upbringing helped her develop a strong sense of self-motivation and initiative:

> I never had anyone willing to teach me anything. I do everything myself. If someone were to come [to the studio] and they didn't have their own initiative or inspiration, they would need help to make something. But most people who come here do their own thing easily. The people come because they want to come. The people who come here just do beautiful things. Everyone has talent in their own way.

What's more, three of the eleven participants mentioned attending the studio had become a part of their regular routine, which has helped them continue a regular artistic practice. Gabriel explained his routine of attendance over four years has helped him continue his own painting and drawing practice:

> In a way, because [the seniors' studio] is once a week, it gives me a certain discipline to continue. On my own, I probably won't feel like cleaning up the mess, or starting to draw – you feel like it sometimes, but not regularly enough.

These testimonies of self-directed learning exemplify how the unique personal worlds of individuals shape how learning is approached and how opportunities for change are embraced (Beatty & Wolf, 1996). For significant learning to take place, learning must include personal involvement and be self-initiated, meaning a sense of discovery must come from within (Rogers, 1983). The above statements display high levels of self-efficacy through the participants' positive judgements of their capabilities, irrelevant of their level of skill. Bandura (1986)

emphasizes individuals with high self-efficacy and high levels of motivation, are capable of self-directed activity and will continuously set challenges for themselves.

Maintaining a high sense of self-efficacy has a direct correlation to adult learning. A perceived strong sense of self-efficacy can support the maintenance of cognitive functioning as adults age, as well as buffer learning abilities in that a strong belief in one's ability to learn new tasks will protect against deteriorating effects from occasional failures (Bandura, 1986). A strong sense of self-efficacy also translates to a self-assuredness that is likely to produce personal accomplishments and the ability to approach unknown situations or tasks without anxiety and stress (Bandura, 1986). Thus, adults who can maintain a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to lead self-fulfilling lives (Bandura, 1986). This all points to the importance of the art hive as a safe, supportive environment that encourages self-directed learning: supporting self-initiated discovery buffers the level of self-efficacy of participants, which reciprocally encourages learning even in the face of failure. In this way, the art hive contributes to building self-efficacy and in turn, supports continued learning.

Desired Learning for the Future

After discussing participants' perspectives on learning at the art hive, I asked them about what they would like to learn now, or in the future. Despite their regular participation at la Ruche d'Art, about half of the participants interviewed declared they wanted to learn more arts media and techniques. Barbara discussed wanting to learn how to bind books, marble paper and learn the finer techniques in felting. Annette expressed looking forward to learning how to weave on the floor loom at the studio. Irene reported wanting to learn more about refinishing furniture, framing and computer technology, for the purposes of bringing her photos and poems together.

Deena also reported a desire to learn more technique in various media: "I would like more stimulus, to learn more ways to make art." Both Florence and Kathy expressed wanting to have a better grasp on colour theory. Kathy is also interested to learn techniques in drawing and painting, jewellery and fashion design.

It is not surprising that many participants are interested to learn more arts media and techniques. As we have seen, the art hive is an inclusive, self-directed creative hub for artists to gather and make art together. The 'cross pollination of ideas' (as Irene calls it) that is constant at the art hive, makes for an environment that offers participants continuous inspiration. This is perhaps why art making for third agers can be so good for their health and well-being: continuous inspiration leads to continuous engagement which again leads back to inspiration. The reciprocal cycle of inspiration and engagement encourages reflective thinking, making connections between experiences and even fostering clarity, wisdom and emotional highs (Zeivots, 2016). Learning is a fulfilling activity, and becoming engaged in one's own self-directed creative process offers infinite opportunities to learn.

Six of the eleven participants interviewed expressed they wanted to learn things unrelated to the arts. Celia reported wanting to deepen her learning on topics she already has some knowledge in, including geography, Spanish, chi gong, tai chi, anthropology, history and astronomy, just to name a few. Other participants cited wanting to learn or improve their knowledge of other languages, how to play an instrument and even how to surf.

Eileen expressed not wanting to learn anything in particular, but instead to follow her inspiration:

> I don't have anything specific [that I want to learn] because I am satisfied. When [something inspiring] comes around I will jump on it. I don't demand, 'Oh I want to learn

that'. I believe in proper timing in life. You see so many things done [at the art hive], so if [inspiration] doesn't get triggered, it is because it doesn't have to be triggered at that point in time. It will come in its own time. Trust the process.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Throughout the process of interviewing the participants, managing and organizing the data and mulling over their words, I have become enlightened to their learning experiences at La Ruche d'Art, and have been made aware of the important role this community art studio has in their lives. Through the participants' reflections and recollections, I learned the art hive is a truly unique community art space that offers opportunities for participants to express themselves creatively, build self-efficacy and autonomy as well as feel welcomed to be a part of an inclusive, loving community. La Ruche d'Art is a public homeplace, where learning is incidental to the process of participating.

The participants reported on the importance of the structure and environment of the art hive, (including the physical layout of the space, the expansive outdoor garden, the free access to available materials, and the egalitarian atmosphere) as important factors for their regular and continued participation. They also expressed how the structural and social aspects of the art hive influenced their creative processes. Many participants reported the studio's atmosphere led to feeling more comfortable to work intuitively and spontaneously. As such, participants allowed their art making processes to be influenced by the interactive environment of the art hive. In addition, many participants reported an increase in self-esteem and self-efficacy, as a result of adopting an artist identity and a sense of belonging to a creative community.

The structural and social aspects of the art hive have also greatly influenced what and how participants learn at the art hive. Participants reported learning instrumental skills such as artistic skills, techniques and social skills. In addition, many participants shared embodied and transformative learning experiences including learning how to freely express oneself, learning

essential meanings and life lessons, learning new or broadened perspectives, and learning the healing power of art making.

In terms of how participants learn at the art hive, it has been found that participants simultaneously learn from others and through self-initiated and directed processes. Motivation has been reported to occur through inspiration, and further learning has been reported to occur through informal processes including observation, conversation, and imitation. While this study focused on the specific experiences of third agers, the methods and notions of learning at the art hive discovered in this study can be applied to participants of all ages.

The boundaries of this study limit the depth and complexity of the participants' narrated experiences at the art hive. As previously acknowledged, the participants only had one hour to share their experiences, and the interviews were guided by seven questions related specifically to their learning experiences. Furthermore, the participants could have experienced a positive bias toward me and this study, preferring not to disclose any potential negative issues they might experience at the art hive. There are likely more complex stories to be told around experiences at the art hive as a whole, which further investigation could consider.

Further investigation could also focus on obtaining more details on how participants see the differences in learning outcomes between formal and informal arts-based learning situations. Additional analysis could also focus on the frequency of occurrence of learning online for third agers, and particularly the effectiveness of learning artistic skills and techniques on video-sharing websites such as YouTube.

As evidenced by this study, some third age participants took to searching for online tutorials to learn more instrumental methods and technical skills. This aspect of the study proves that some third age participants are still interested in learning and even mastering artistic skills

and techniques, and suggests that instructional methods for learning such skills are still needed for some older learners. The art hive is intentionally an unprogrammed art studio, offering the opportunity for participants to initiate, motivate and direct their own learning. This structure offers participants many freedoms, but lacks in instruction. As we have seen through the testimonies of participants frequenting YouTube on their own, learning artistic skills is possible on their own, thus participants must attend the art hive for different reasons. As such, this study in no way attempts to discredit formal and instructional methods of arts education, rather acknowledges the importance and apparent need for both formal and informal sites for arts education to provide for the different needs of individuals.

Finally, third age participants expressed their love and appreciation for the art hive, and acknowledged the impact their regular participation has on their lives. I am reminded of Kathy's passionate expressions of love and need for the art hive, declaring it as a 'necessity' and 'mandatory' in her life, as it offers a place of respite from the chaos of daily living. Many of the reported transformational learning encounters have led to experiences of personal growth, empowerment and profound fulfillment. Here, I am reminded of Irene's experience of painting the scene of Damascus, and Eileen's thoughtful reflections on her free expressions. Others have described the social aspect as being 'vital' to their mental health and well-being. Making friendships and intergenerational social connections, and feeling a sense of belonging to the community were common sentiments among participants. Here, I am reminded of Eileen's role as the 'neighbourhood mom', and Judy's account of feeling 'saved from depression' by the social aspect of the art hive.

As we know, aging adults are at a greater risk for social isolation, physical decline and depression. The art hive has offered older participants (and participants of all ages) a buffer to

those effects, by creating opportunities for genuine social connection, for building relationships and for creatively exploring dimensions of themselves and their environments. The art hive offers third agers a place to continue to learn about what is meaningful to them. It offers an expansive shared garden and green space so participants can feel more connected to nature. It offers a space to reflect and connect past experiences with new insights, fostering wisdom. I am reminded of Barbara's reflections about the aspects of herself that she has witnessed change through her participation at the art hive. The art hive offers a place to be engaged and inspired, renewing a sense of curiosity and possibility. I am reminded of Deena's enthusiasm around the abundant materials and Hendrik's spontaneous five-foot painting. Just as it does for the community at large, the art hive offers third agers a public homeplace.

Through the testimonies of third age participants, it is clear there is a need for such public homeplaces that encourage creative and community engagement for the continued development of the whole person. As we have seen, transformative learning is heavily influenced by social processes, and has significant implications for building solidarity and fostering compassion, respect, emancipation, and further social action and change. The structural and social aspects of the art hive allowed participants to help establish social and behavioural norms that have co-created a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment for all who attend the studio. In this way, all participants and facilitators equally contribute to the art hive as a public homeplace within the community. Self-directed learning experiences such as those manifested at the art hive, are vital for our continued adaptation and growth as individuals and as a society.

I am so grateful for the deeply personal and profound insights the eleven interviewees shared with me about their learning experiences at the art hive. Their stories, memories, and ideas about their experiences at La Ruche d'Art and the impact it has on their lives, has been a

real gift to me and to this project. It has been a pleasure to get to know each participant and stand witness to their experiences of personal growth, empowerment and learning at the studio. Throughout my time with the Wednesday seniors' studio, I was invited by the participants to become a part of the fluid and 'family-like' community at the art hive. Working alongside participants, I, too, shared inspiration and curiosity, made meaningful social relationships, learned and shared artistic skills and techniques, learned more about myself and about the people around me, and experienced many shifts in perspective. Just as the third age participants described, I, too, became lifted up by the art hive and the artists who frequent there. I, too, experienced the studio as a place to express and be accepted as myself, and to convey openness, care and kindness toward others. I, too, felt the art hive become my public homeplace. And as Eileen said, "That feels very good in my life".

My engagement in this study has re-invigorated my faith in the effectiveness of such liminal third spaces like the art hive to have profound effects on individuals and communities. It has echoed back to me the essence of why I do what I do, working in a community-centered way at the grassroots level, seasonally scrambling for funding and continuing contracts. Public homeplaces like the art hives are essential for the health and connection of our communities, and as such need to be supported by our larger institutions, greater communities and governments.

This study has provided a plethora of qualitative evidence to suggest the open studio model of the art hive and spontaneous, self-directed art making can be powerful instruments for transformative, informal learning experiences in the third age. As I prepare to finish this degree and move out into the world, I will continue to honor these stories and testimonies of love, discovery and learning by continuing to manifest public homeplaces in the form of art hives so

that those who feel most isolated, left behind and disengaged can find a sense of home within their communities too.

I leave you, dear reader, with the wise words of Irene, whose expression of heartfelt gratitude for the art hive's existence encapsulates the need for such hopeful spaces:

> La Ruche d'Art is a real gift. [The facilitators] have been there for us, [those] who are going to come fall on our retired days without the slightest clue on how we can afford ourselves. We are just a burden on society, unless we find a way to reinvent ourselves and enjoy life. To me, La Ruche is a soft place to fall. It is the place you can come to [in order] to find people who are very friendly, non-judgemental – in fact they are very supportive. No matter what you make they see something good in it. That kind of thing is priceless.

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Appendix A

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Nicole Macoretta

Department: Faculty of Fine Arts \ Art Education

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Learning in the Third Age: A Look into the Community Art Studio

Certification Number: 30006575

Valid From: August 12, 2016 **to:** August 11, 2017

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B

Thesis Interview Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews:

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:

1)What brought you to the art hive for the first time? Why do you continue to attend?

2) If you could recall one experience at La Ruche, what would it be?

3) What is your history with art education?

4) What do you think you learn at the art hive?

5) In what ways do you think you learn at the art hive?

6) At this point in your life, what would you like to learn?

7) How do you see the role of the art hive in your life?

Appendix C

Prominence of Individual Themes by Participant

Prominence of Individual Themes by Participant										
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure	Studio abundance & structure
Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection	Community connection
Learn from others	Learns from others	Learns from others	Learns from others	Learns from others	Learns from others		Learns from others	Learns from others	Learns from others	Learns from others
	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning	Atmosphere promotes informal learning
		Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated	Learn by own process: self-initiated
Learn skills & techniques	Learn skills & techniques	Learn skills & techniques	Learn skills & techniques		Learn skills & techniques			Learn skills & techniques	Learn skills & techniques	
	Nature access	Nature access	Nature access			Nature access	Nature access	Nature access	Nature access	
Lack of hierarchy	Lack of hierarchy			Lack of hierarchy		Lack of hierarchy	Lack of hierarchy	Lack of hierarchy	Lack of hierarchy	
Wants to learn things other than arts	Wants to learn things other than arts	Wants to learn things other than arts				Wants to learn things other than arts	Wants to learn things other than arts	Wants to learn things other than arts		
Free cost	Free cost		Free cost		Free cost			Free cost	Free cost	
Studio promotes Autonomy and Community		Studio promotes Autonomy and Community		Studio promotes Autonomy and Community		Studio promotes Autonomy and Community	Studio promotes Autonomy and Community		Studio promotes Autonomy and Community	
	Wants to learn more arts	Wants to learn more arts	Wants to learn more arts		Wants to learn more arts			Wants to learn more arts		Wants to learn more arts
Has some art/craft education				Has some art/craft education	Has some art/craft education	Has some art/craft education		Has some art/craft education		
	LR important place		LR important place	LR important place				LR important place	LR important place	LR important place
	Learn existential meanings			Learn existential meanings				Learn existential meanings	Learn existential meanings	Learn existential meanings
		LR - Pleasurable	LR - Pleasurable	LR - Pleasurable		LR - Pleasurable		LR - Pleasurable		
			How LR affects personally	How LR affects personally				How LR affects personally	How LR affects personally	How LR affects personally
			Promotes freedom of expression	Promotes freedom of expression	Promotes freedom of expression			Promotes freedom of expression		Promotes freedom of expression
	Always loved art/being creative	Always loved art/being creative	Always loved art/being creative			Always loved art/being creative		Always loved art/being creative	Always loved art/being creative	
	Learn social skills		Learn social skills	Learn social skills		Learn social skills		Learn social skills		
	No formal training		No formal training						No formal training	No formal training
					Variety important	Variety important		Variety important		
		Negative impressions about courses		Negative impressions about courses					Negative impressions about courses	
	Loves to learn	Loves to learn	Loves to learn							
	LR & courses differ		LR & courses differ	LR & courses differ						
			Chronic illness						Chronic illness	Chronic illness
		Routine			Routine	Role of facilitator	Role of facilitator	Role of facilitator	Role of facilitator	
						Routine				
						Doesn't learn skills and techniques at LR				Doesn't learn skills and techniques at LR
								LR - surprising, unexpected	LR - surprising, unexpected	

Appendix C

Prominence of Individual Themes by Participant (Outliers)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
		Learns technique through online resources								Learns technique through online resources
									Empowered	Empowered
Studio is accessible						Studio is accessible				
			How making art affects personally							How making art affects personally
						Has formal Fine Arts Training				
								LR helps one feel productive		
				Wants to learn nothing specific - follow inspiration						
		Took a few courses after discovering LR								
	Want to share own knowledge/expertise									
	Sense of urgency to live in present moment					Tips on teaching older ppl				

Appendix D

New Codes Made During Triangulation

Inspired by materials42	Sense of Belonging 43	Like the People 44	Social Aspect Important 45	Appreciates demographic atmosphere on days attended 46	Openness to share 47	Inspired by other's abilities/progress/work 48
Express creative potential 54	Follow own inspiration/ process 55	Surprised self with creation and ability 56	Learns contemporary techniques 57	Learns to observe more/focus 58	Learned personal potential 59	Teachers = learners 60
Place of respite 66	helps with daily struggles/chronic illness 67	Art Making is Healing process 68				
Learn by observation & Conversation 49	Inclusive, informal Atmosphere 50	Spontaneous Making 51	Optimistic perspective 52	Personal Growth 53		
no competition 61	Reflection 62	New perspective 63	Learned to accept others 64	Social: freedom of choice of contact 65		

Appendix E

Mind Map of Focused Codes